



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

To: District 97 Board of Education
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent

From: Jennifer DeBruin, IB Coordinator, Percy Julian Middle School
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Dr. Amy Warke, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer
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Re: **International Baccalaureate Board Report**

Date: January 18, 2018

Type of Report: Informational

Purpose of the Report: The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education with an overview of the IB Middle Years Program and the reauthorization process.

1) What is the history of the program? How did we get to here?

Prior to the adoption of the IB philosophy and framework the middle schools were quite different from one another. In addition, at each school there was a huge level of variation between classes of the same subject and grade level. In an effort to ensure all children received an equitable and appropriate education, the superintendent at the time recommended that board members, teachers, and parents look into the International Baccalaureate (IB) Organization. He believed that the IB encompasses best practices of education that we as a community believe in within one organized, supported, research-based program.

Exploration of the IB MYP program began with a school visit to an IB school in Shaker Heights, Ohio, in Spring 2012. This school's demographics and size were similar to District 97, and therefore we were able to see an IB program in action and the ways in which affected the school climate, culture and curriculum. From the conversations after our site visit and further investigations into the program, we as a district determined becoming IB schools made sense for multiple reasons: quality professional development grounded in best practices, focus on educational practices that prepare students for the real world, widening of student perspectives beyond the classroom, solid unit planning platform to guide curriculum planning in a consistent manner, and an all-school philosophy that is inclusive.

On July 17, 2012, the Board of Education endorsed the implementation of the IB MYP program at the middle schools, following a Board Report presented to the Board on June 26, 2012.

We were able to secure a grant that would help financially support the initial teacher training over three years. We began by training teachers both on- and off-site. These trainings focused on the IB philosophy of educational practices that are accessible and prepare all students for the real world, as well as planning practices that are organized and focused. From there, teachers worked collaboratively to reorganize their curriculum into inquiry-based units and developed rigorous, yet accessible assessments that followed the same grading practices for all subjects and grade-levels.

That brings us to where we are today. Now all subjects and grade levels have their curriculum organized into cohesive, consistent units with appropriate assessments. Of course there will be continuous review and improvement, but the initial task of creating units of study for our students is complete for all subjects and grade levels. In addition, our schools use the mission statement, program standards, and practices of IB to guide future changes.

2) How does IB support the district vision and student learning?

The ideals stated in the mission statement of IB is what will make achieving the goals in the Oak Park Vision Statement possible for our middle schools. IB provides the philosophy and organizational structure to "create a positive learning environment for all District 97 students that is equitable, inclusive and focused on the whole child" (Oak Park District 97 Vision Statement). The mission statement below reflects what our teachers will design in each and every classroom to create the environment we envision.

IB Mission Statement:

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

To this end the organization 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.

~International Baccalaureate Organization, <http://www.ibo.org/about-the-ib/mission/>

- Positive learning environment is achieved through the development of international mindedness. Students are taught to value that everyone is different, with the understanding that we can do things differently and both be right. The positive learning environment is developed through the IB look and feel. The classroom is designed as a microcosm of the real world. Teachers create a safe and comfortable environment for students to learn and take risks. Finally, IB units are engaging. They are based off students' interests and needs. The units of study sustain students' curiosity and challenge their current understandings of the world.
- Teaching the whole child is an essential part of the IB philosophy. The development of the whole child is practiced through teaching the learner profile attributes. The IB believes these attributes can help individuals and groups become more responsible members of local, national and global communities. Approaches to Learning skills are taught explicitly to support student understanding of how to learn. These skills are not discipline-specific, but support the development of strong, self-regulated, life-long learners.
- The IB MYP promotes equity through its concept-based curricular approach. A concept-based curriculum is "naturally more equitable than a traditional coverage-centered curriculum" (Stern, Lauriault and Ferraro, 2018). Facts are organized around key concepts, making them easier to remember and understand, and benefits students who struggle with strict memorization without context or meaning. Students find their own examples that support their conceptual understanding based on their own interests and experiences. This type of learning is meaningful and creates a deeper understanding for students.
- The MYP is a wall-to-wall program in both D07's middle schools and is inclusive in nature. All middle school students are exposed to the MYP and experiences the benefits of the program.

3) How is IB beneficial to our students and our teachers? The community?

The IB recognizes the spectrum of student needs, which values learning beyond the confines of subject areas. What is the most beneficial to the students is ***“the development of powers of the mind or ways of thinking which can be applied to new situations and new presentations of facts as they arise” (Alec Peterson, first IB director General 2003:47).*** These ways of thinking are developed through thematic, inquiry-based units of study and explicitly-taught learning skills called Approaches to Learning (ATLs). Thematic, concept-driven units of study encourage idea-centered teaching and learning that authentically connects to the world outside of their classroom. The common basis for conceptual understanding provides students with an ability to transfer and construct knowledge which is a sound foundation for future learning.

Additionally, ATL skills are taught across all subjects. These skills include communication skills, collaboration skills, research skills, self-management skills, and thinking skills. These are the skills students will need to be successful for years beyond their time in middle school. Because the world is rapidly changing, and career fields are developing quickly, right in front of our eyes, it is difficult to predict how our children will experience the workforce. For this reason we must prepare students to be 21st century learners by teaching the curriculum, which is aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the skills they need to be successful in any field or environment. For example, we know that skills like collaboration and communication will be beneficial for any path they take.

The culminating project for every eighth grade student is the IB Community Project. A central part of being an IB student is learning to look at the world through multiple perspectives and appreciate all human experiences similar to and different from your own. The community project allows students to apply this type of learning while making positive change within a local or global community. During students' last trimester of Integrated Studies or WIN class, they plan and conduct a project that makes a positive change in an area in which they are passionate. The project prepares our students to be productive citizens of the Oak Park community and the world.

The International Baccalaureate a cohesive program that provides a common language and multi-faceted framework that is followed in several thousands of districts and schools world-wide. IB is a framework grounded in current best practices and research-based concepts. It is led by brightest minds and educational leaders from around the world. IB affects every aspect of a student's and teacher's day, whether it is how students are learning or the way students are assessed. IB provides a common, cohesive language for these best practices. All teachers are using the same terminology, so that students are less overwhelmed and are able to make connections between classes. For example, in both an Arts class and a Math class, students are assessed using a rubric that is formatted similarly, and their teachers use the same language to explain the rubrics. Students take eight classes in middle school, so it is important that all eight classes have a common language for student learning and consistent assessment practices.

4) What is the timeline for reauthorization?

- **2017-2018** This year we continue with implementation and documentation of the written curriculum. All IB units of study are written and being taught this year. IB Coordinators review these units and provide feedback based on the purpose of the unit and clarity to students, rigor and relevance of the summative assessment, and learning experiences designed to prepare students for the summative assessment. This feedback drives unit reflection and improvements at the department level. Professional Development continues to be provided via FAR meetings, lunch-and-learn opportunities, department meetings, IB professional development workshops, and new teacher orientation.
- **2018-2019** We will be evaluating the program by participating in a self-study. The self-study is a multi-faceted, reflection-based analysis of our middle schools, including all aspects from leadership to daily instructional practices to organizational structures. This self-study will inform our action plan. Professional Development will continue to be provided via FAR meetings, lunch-and-learn opportunities, department meetings, IB professional development workshops, and new teacher orientation.
- **2019-2020** The reauthorization visit will take place during the spring of 2020. After the visit, IB will provide us with an evaluation report that includes findings from our self-study, unit plan review, and the on-site visit. The report is aligned with the IB standards and practices. Both our middle schools will be given feedback on each of the 72 standards and practices, with which we have been aligning our schools. The feedback for each of the standards and practices fall into one of the four categories:
 - Commendation - Praise given for the standard being in place in a creative and/or above and beyond way.
 - Finding - The standard is evident.
 - Recommendation - The standard may be evident but not entirely. Improvements will need to be made prior to the next evaluation visit in 5 years.
 - Matter to be Addressed - The standard is not evident, and this must be addressed prior to IB granting reauthorization.

This feedback is provided in the report, which will serve as a “compass” for our continued work in implementing the framework and in the action plan for continuous improvement.

5) Who is our reauthorization team?

The reauthorization team consists of: Christiana Harrington & Jennifer DeBruin (IB Coordinators); April Capuder and Dr. Todd Fitzgerald (Principals); Dr. Helen Wei (Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) and Dr. Amy Warke (Chief Academic and Accountability Officer). The team meets once a month to review the IB standards and practices action plan.

6) What is the professional development component of the program? How is professional development benefiting the program, staff and students?

There are two types of IB professional development:

1. off-site, structured workshops taught by IB professionals
2. on-site trainings for the entire staff or groups of teachers led by the IB coordinator and/or trained staff

Recognized IB schools must fulfill the requirements for off-site training. There must be at least one teacher formally trained in each of the 8 subjects, at all times. Additionally, the principal and coordinator must be trained off-site. These are intense and focused trainings that are designed to empower teachers as leaders of their content and the IB philosophy. Not all teachers will have the opportunity to attend these trainings, but all teachers will benefit from the knowledge gained. Attendees become experts and share their knowledge during department meetings, unit planning, and collaboration.

This leads to the second type of training, the on-site training. Trained teachers and the IB coordinator lead on-site trainings to share their knowledge with all staff. These trainings focus on particular elements of the IB program such as: writing rigorous, fair assessments, teaching learning skills within a unit, approaching a unit from a conceptual lens to make learning engaging, and connecting lessons to the world beyond the four walls of a classroom. Additionally as part of new teacher training, all new D97 teachers learn about the IB philosophy, curriculum planning tools, and how the philosophy should/will transform their practice.

Both on- and off-site trainings relate to how we make learning engaging and equitable for all students, which is grounded in the IB mission statement. The purpose of everything we do as educators is to make learning accessible and captivating for every child. All of these professional development opportunities empower teachers with the tools to do so.

7) How are we monitoring our unit plans? The fidelity of implementation?

Unit plans are monitored by the IB Coordinators with support from the department chairs. The IB Coordinators facilitate unit planning through building and district department meetings. During this collaborative time, teachers and coordinators design and evaluate assessments, build out learning experiences, unpack standards, and reflect on student performance through formative assessment results.

All written unit plans are reviewed by the IB Coordinators, and feedback is provided on the statement of inquiry (provides direction and purpose of the unit), summative assessment, and teaching and learning experiences throughout the unit. This feedback is an opportunity for further collaboration and provides teachers with meaningful ideas for revision.

The IB coordinators and department heads keep the units organized in the Subject Group Overview, the living document where all the units are stored. The Subject Group Overview for

each subject provides a horizontal and vertical articulation of the written curriculum. This provides a bird's eye view of how aspects of the MYP such as Approaches to Learning skills, as well as key and related concepts, are scaffolded and progress in complexity.

The fidelity of implementation is monitored through department meetings. Analyzing student work through FAR protocols serves as a method to facilitate the fidelity of implementation. Looking at student work informs the pace and direction of the unit and guides unit revisions. The leadership team conducts informal classroom visits to observe the implementation of the unit. In addition, the leadership team identifies teachers that have strong teaching strategies related to inquiry or concept-based teaching. Colleagues are encouraged to visit their classrooms to observe the implementation of constructivist and inquiry-based teaching methods that may inform their teaching and unit plan development.

8) What is the rigor of assessments?

The assessments are designed to be open-ended real world situations that offer student choice. The level of rigor is analyzed, reviewed, and discussed with grade level teams and the school leadership team. Several FAR protocols have been implemented to assess the level of rigor. This process is identified in the School Improvement Plan and is carried out by the department heads and the school leadership team. Analysis of summative assessments results in assessment revisions. In addition, this is an opportunity to reflect on the implementation of ATL skills. Based on results of analyzing student work and summative assessments, new ATL skills are identified to support students' skill development.

The coherence of instruction

Planning for instruction using the MYP framework mirrors components of the Danielson framework. Several aspects of the Danielson framework and the Middle Years Program overlap due to the fact that they are both rooted in best practices. For example, this is how the MYP supports the elements to plan for coherent instruction: designing learning activities, planning for instructional material, creating instructional groups, and unit structure.

- Learning experiences are designed to engage students and advance them through the content. In the MYP, a precursor to introducing the content is teaching the key concepts, or the "big ideas." *The key concepts are powerful, abstract ideas that have many dimensions and definitions. They have important interconnections and overlapping concerns. Key concepts engage students in higher-order thinking, helping them to connect facts and topics with more complex conceptual understandings. Key concepts create "intellectual synergy" (Erikson, 2007) and provide points of contact for transferring knowledge and understanding across disciplines (Principles into Practices).* The concepts are introduced first so students can make personal connections to the concept. This helps students develop a conceptual understanding to provide a solid foundation for future learning and helps the students connect to the content. The learning experiences in the MYP are: embedded into the curriculum, built upon prior knowledge, age-appropriate and engaging, and open-ended and involves teaching problem solving.

Teachers choose strategies that are provided for learning through inquiry and research. The learning experiences involve communication of ideas and personal reflection.

- Instructional materials and resources are designed and selected appropriately to meet the learning needs of students. Materials and resources that are developmentally appropriate, engaging, and accessible for all students are decided upon by the grade-level department teachers. Additional components inform these decisions, such as materials that facilitate the development of international mindedness and intercultural understanding. An example of this is the selection of novels with settings in different countries and within various cultures. These experiences help students expand their perspective and intercultural appreciation.
- Instructional groups to support student learning vary depending on the subject. Formative assessment results and NWEA data help teachers determine student groups for acceleration and intervention. The inquiry influences student grouping. Students pair or select a group based on interest and knowledge of a topic when engaged in an inquiry. This creates heterogeneous student grouping where students of varying levels are collaborating and supporting each other.
- Planning under the MYP framework facilitates producing clear and sequenced lesson and unit structures to advance student learning. The MYP unit plan follows a backwards design model. The planning of lesson sequence and learning experiences is determined by what the students are working towards on the summative assessment. The lessons are scaffolded and increase in complexity as the unit advances. This prepares students for success on the summative assessment.

The coherence of instruction is analyzed and reflected on with classroom observations completed by the leadership team and student work protocols. The analysis of student work informs the assessment revisions and updates to the learning plan with the units of study. Another aspect of the program that is a focus of the IB coordinators is the Approaches to Learning, (ATL) skills. The ATL skills are the “learning to learn” skills. These skills are being deliberately planned for based on teacher reflections of the teaching and student learning. These skills support students affective and cognitive development as the sequencing of the unit becomes more rigorous. In combination with the analysis of summative assessments, the student work protocols also speak to the coherence of instruction.

References

Stern, J., Lauriault, N. and Ferraro, K. (2018). *Tools for teaching conceptual understanding, elementary*. Thousand Oaks: Corsin.