

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.

