



International Baccalaureate®
Baccalauréat International
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Middle Years Programme

The Middle Years Programme: A basis for practice





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IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate 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 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.

IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers	They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.
Knowledgeable	They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
Thinkers	They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
Communicators	They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
Principled	They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
Open-minded	They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.
Caring	They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.
Risk-takers	They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.
Balanced	They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.
Reflective	They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

Contents

The continuum of international education	1
The origins of the MYP	1
The aims of the MYP	2
The three fundamental concepts of the MYP	3
Holistic learning	3
Intercultural awareness	4
Communication	4
The MYP curriculum framework	5
The areas of interaction	7
Commonality of the areas of interaction	8
The personal project	9
Planning for teaching and learning	10
MYP assessment	12
Moderation and monitoring of assessment	13
Conclusion	14
References	14

The continuum of international education

The International Baccalaureate (IB) offers three programmes of international education:

- the Primary Years Programme (PYP)—introduced in 1997
- the Middle Years Programme (MYP)—introduced in 1994
- the Diploma Programme (DP)—introduced in 1969.

The three programmes have a common educational framework: a consistent philosophy about teaching and learning that focuses on the development of the whole child, and an overarching concept of how to develop international-mindedness. Each programme promotes the education of the whole person, emphasizing intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth, involving the traditions of learning in languages, humanities, sciences, mathematics and the arts.

Each programme is self-contained, since there is no requirement for schools to offer more than one programme, but these programmes also provide the opportunity for schools to offer a continuous international educational experience from early childhood through to school graduation.

The IB's mission statement and the IB learner profile connect the three programmes, articulating the learning outcomes for IB students of all ages. The commonalities and differences between the programmes are identified in the IB document *Programme standards and practices*. These standards and practices are a set of criteria against which both the IB World School and the IB can measure success in the implementation of the three programmes.

Examples of MYP practice are included throughout this document. The examples are modified versions of those supplied by IB World Schools offering the MYP. They are to be considered examples of good MYP practice, and not read as practices recommended by the IB. They indicate the interpretive nature of the programme, and the responsibility that school communities have to construct their own meaning in the context of the MYP framework.

The origins of the MYP

The MYP, designed for students aged 11–16, has been offered by the IB since 1994. It began as an initiative of the International Schools Association (ISA) and was formulated by groups of practising teachers and administrators in international education who wanted to develop a curriculum for the middle years of schooling. The aim was to develop a curriculum encouraging international awareness in young people with emphasis on the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to participate in an increasingly global society.

It was intended that this curriculum would share much of the same philosophy as the DP and would prepare students for success in the DP. The first draft of the MYP curriculum was produced in 1987 when a group of practitioners created a framework that allowed for a degree of diversity. This framework placed the student at the centre, with a structure that encouraged teachers to work in teams to engage students in meaningful, challenging and rigorous study that incorporated a range of skills, attitudes and values. Hence, the MYP grew out of the work and vision of practising teachers in schools.

The ISA created a framework that allowed schools sufficient flexibility to meet local educational requirements while stating required objectives in each subject (ISA 1991). The IB has not changed the original concept of the MYP framework in any way. However, the programme has developed significantly since its inception and will continue to do so in response to the needs of students and the perceived demands of the 21st century.

As the programme itself develops, the curriculum guides of the MYP are subject to a regular cycle of review and development. In addition, the IB makes available to schools a variety of teacher support materials, such as sample units of work and assessed student work.

The MYP is a coherent and comprehensive curriculum framework that provides academic challenges and develops the life skills appropriate to this age group. As part of the IB's continuum of international education, the MYP naturally follows the PYP and can serve as excellent preparation for the DP. It is not a requirement that schools adopt more than one programme. However, many choose to do so because of the similarity in philosophy and the coherence of their approaches.

The aims of the MYP

The principles of the MYP are deeply rooted in international education. They are shared by all the IB programmes, are contained within the IB's mission statement and provide a framework for constructing a school's own curriculum.

The driving force behind all IB programmes is a deeply held philosophy about the nature of international education. This philosophy is reflected firstly in the IB mission statement, which expresses the IB's overall purpose as an organization promoting and developing programmes of international education, and secondly in the IB learner profile, which is the IB mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes for the 21st century.

The ten aspirational qualities of the learner profile represent the essence of the programme and describe the kind of student who, in establishing a personal set of values, will be laying the foundation upon which international-mindedness will develop and flourish. IB learners strive to be inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, open-minded, caring, balanced and reflective.

MYP students are at an important age of transition, of personal, social, physical and intellectual development, of uncertainty and questioning, of searching for relevance and meaning. Emerging adolescents, influenced by their years of primary schooling, are entering a phase where their social and cultural experiences in and outside school have a determining impact on their perception of themselves, their self-esteem, their sense of identity and their capacity to relate to others. The programme is devised to help students develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to participate actively and responsibly in a changing and increasingly interrelated world. This implies a "living curriculum" (Beane 1993), one which calls for more than "knowing": it involves reflective thinking, both critical and creative, about ideas and behaviour. It includes problem solving and analysis, clarification and discussion of personal beliefs and standards on which decisions are made. It also leads to critical thinking and action.

The MYP is designed to teach students to become independent learners who can recognize relationships between school subjects and the world outside, who can adapt to new situations and combine relevant knowledge, practical and social intelligence to solve authentic problems alone or in groups. Successful teaching of the programme requires commitment to its fundamental principles on the part of the whole school community, and a high degree of communication and collaboration between teachers.

The programme aims to enable students to:

- build upon their spirit of discovery to develop an understanding and enjoyment of the process of learning, independently and in cooperation with others
- acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, and prepare for further learning
- recognize the extent to which knowledge is interrelated

- learn to communicate effectively in a variety of ways
- develop a sense of personal and cultural identity and a respect for themselves and for others
- acquire insights into local and global concerns affecting health, the community and the environment, and develop a sense of individual and collective responsibility and citizenship.

Example 1

The science department taught students in year 5 about nuclear power, the basic science behind it, its uses and the impacts. The unit asking the question “Nuclear power: the key to the future or the path to disaster?” was completed shortly after the 20th anniversary of the disaster at Chernobyl. All students viewed a film about the causes and effects of the disaster. Following this, the humanities department taught aspects of the politics, economics and geography concerned with Chernobyl. The culminating activity was a one-day Model United Nations (MUN) involving over 100 students. Every student involved had a role and worked in teams where they had to listen, think and respond quickly. They used a wide range of skills—research, time management, communication and social skills—to ensure the work had relevance and meaning, and to emphasize links with modern issues. Given the anniversary of Chernobyl and the attention it received in the international press, the students were moved and affected by the scale of the disaster and the incompetence that had caused it. This event was a fitting culmination to the final year of the MYP, bringing together skills, attitudes and values.

The three fundamental concepts of the MYP

Adolescents are confronted with a vast and often bewildering array of choices. The MYP is designed to provide students with the values and opportunities that will enable them to develop sound judgment. From its beginning, the MYP has been guided by three **fundamental concepts** that are rooted in the IB mission statement. These three fundamental concepts are:

- **holistic learning**—representing the notions that all knowledge is interrelated and that the curriculum should promote the development of the whole person, whose attributes are described by the IB learner profile
- **intercultural awareness**—representing the notion that school communities should encourage and promote international-mindedness by engaging with and exploring other cultures, a key feature of international education as reflected in the attributes of the IB learner profile
- **communication**—representing the notion that schools should encourage open and effective communication, important skills that contribute to international understanding as exemplified by the attributes of the IB learner profile.

Holistic learning

Like the PYP, the development of the MYP has been substantially influenced by a constructivist, process-led view of learning in which the student develops an understanding by consciously learning how to learn and linking new knowledge to existing knowledge. Theorists such as Gardner (1999), and Wiggins and McTighe (2005) stress the vital importance of thoughtful learning and connections within a pedagogy of understanding.

The focus of holistic learning is the discovery of relationships between areas of knowledge, and between the individual, communities and the world. The MYP emphasizes the study of traditional subject groups: languages (mother tongue and second language), humanities, sciences, mathematics, arts, physical education and technology. However, the MYP requires schools to organize learning so that students will become increasingly aware of the connections between subjects, and between subject content and the real world. The fundamental concept of holistic learning has led to the programme model of the MYP,

providing five central elements called the “areas of interaction”, to which all disciplines contribute subject knowledge, conceptual understanding and skills. As students realize that most real-world issues require insights gained from a variety of disciplines, they are encouraged to draw on the many different approaches to acquiring knowledge. Helping students discover how knowledge is interrelated not only helps their intrinsic motivation but encourages deeper, lasting understanding, and facilitates transfer of learning (see, for example, Jacobs 1997).

The MYP requires teachers to become concerned with the total experience of the student at school. Organizing a well-rounded experience over the five years of the MYP requires team planning across subjects on the part of teachers as well as discussion of, and reflection on, the curriculum and learning activities from the perspective of the student.

Intercultural awareness

This concept is concerned with developing students’ attitudes, knowledge and skills as they learn about their own and others’ cultures. For adolescents, this means considering the many facets of the concept of culture, and experiencing and reflecting on its manifestations in various contexts. This is particularly important at an age when adolescents discover and affirm an identity while they experience the need to be accepted by a social group, when they discover a cultural heritage increasingly influenced and transformed by a globalized world. By encouraging students to consider multiple perspectives, intercultural awareness not only fosters tolerance and respect, but also aims to develop empathy and understanding, and the acceptance of others’ rights in being different.

The MYP is taught in a range of schools, some with students and teachers of many nationalities, and others with a more homogeneous student population and teaching staff. Developing intercultural awareness involves the whole school. It affects the organizational structure, policies and practices, the climate within the school, the relationships with the community outside, as well as the content of the curriculum taught through the subjects and interdisciplinary activities. This fundamental concept guides the development of the curriculum framework within the subject groups, affecting content (focusing on global issues, on languages and varied manifestations of cultures) and pedagogical approaches (allowing reflection, dialogue, active inquiry and action). As they learn to construct meaning by exploring other ways of being and different points of view, students become more informed about, and sensitive to, the experiences of others locally, nationally and internationally. Intercultural awareness also means considering the attitudes created as a result of learning and encouraging involvement in action and service. It is central to the programme, a critical element in developing internationally minded students.

Communication

The curriculum requirements and the aims and objectives of the MYP subjects emphasize the central importance of communication, verbal and non-verbal, as a vehicle to realize the aims of the programme. A good command of expression in all of its forms is fundamental to learning. In most MYP subject groups, development of communication is a key objective and an explicit part of the assessment. It supports understanding and allows student reflection and expression in different forms.

The IB places particular emphasis on language acquisition, which does more than promote cognitive growth: it is crucial for exploring and sustaining cultural identity, personal development and intercultural understanding. Students are required to develop at least two languages within the MYP, their mother tongue and a second language. Many schools, depending on their circumstance and needs, will encourage students to study more than two languages.

This fundamental concept also touches the development of the students’ understanding and appreciation of different modes of thinking and expression, including the arts and the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Like the other fundamental concepts of holistic learning and intercultural awareness, it affects the delivery of the programme itself, requiring teachers to engage in common planning across subjects and ensuring students learn to work in teams.

Example 2

At the beginning of each course, an English B teacher asks his group of students to fill out the language background survey. He then sits down with each student individually and uses the survey as a “prompt” to obtain more details and find out a bit more about the student. This provides him with:

- vital background information for course design, for example, about the student’s “exposure” to formal English language tuition
- an understanding of the student’s interaction in English outside the classroom
- an indication of proficiency in the student’s mother tongue
- the level of support available to the student outside school.

It also gives the students a chance to “celebrate” their mother-tongue strengths. Hence, the apparently routine action of filling out a form proved richly rewarding for both teacher and students.

The MYP curriculum framework

The MYP offers a curriculum framework that allows school-specific (national, state, provincial or other) and subject-specific curricular requirements to be met while maintaining the IB mission and philosophy. To ensure this, the IB prescribes aims and objectives for all subject groups and for the personal project. Every IB World School offering the MYP must ensure that its stated curricular requirements for each subject are aligned with the corresponding MYP curricular requirements.

The MYP requires schools to teach a broad and balanced choice of subjects in every year of the programme, organized into eight subject groups:

- language A (ideally, the student’s mother tongue)
- language B (a second modern language)
- humanities
- sciences
- mathematics
- arts
- physical education
- technology.

The MYP curriculum guides, published by the IB for every subject group, outline a framework of concepts and skills intended to provide appropriate direction and advice to schools, and ensure commonality among MYP schools worldwide. All MYP schools are required to structure their curriculum to allow their students to achieve the aims and objectives of each subject group, confirmed by the IB in terms of final achievement at the end of the programme.

While the objectives of the MYP subject groups ensure an academic challenge, the MYP is not designed as a selective programme for a limited number of students. Indeed, the flexibility of the MYP is designed to allow all young people to benefit in different ways from the programme’s holistic, integrative approach to teaching and learning.

The MYP requires teachers to consider their subject as part of a group within the curriculum framework. As a team, they develop the content taught in each subject in every year of the programme and the details of their assessment practices according to the requirements of the subject group.

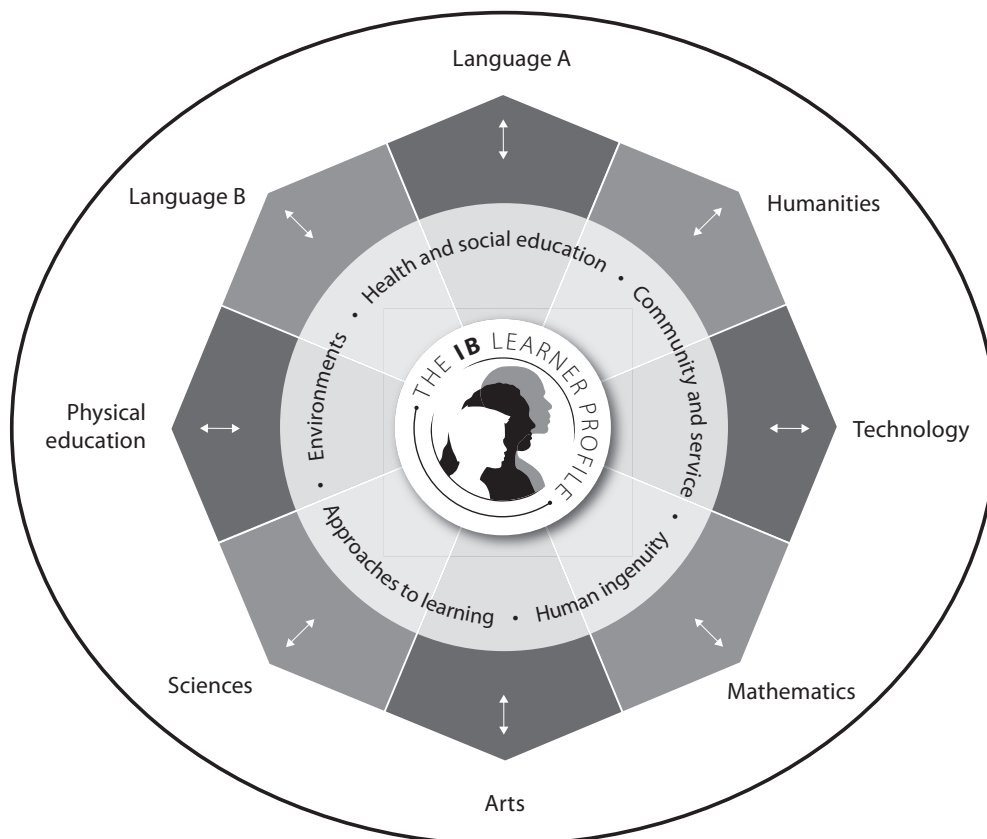


Figure 1
MYP model

The programme model is based on the concept of balance. This is important to the programme in a number of ways.

- The programme provides learning in a broad base of disciplines to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare for the future.
- The subject-group objectives include skills, attitudes and knowledge in addition to the understanding of concepts; the aim is to ensure that students are not only knowledgeable about a subject area, but also develop a genuine understanding of ideas and an ability to apply these in new contexts, in preparation for further learning.
- The programme promotes the principle of concurrency of learning, whereby students deal with a balanced curriculum each year in which different subjects are studied simultaneously. As students mature and develop higher-order thinking skills, they explore the disciplines in increasing depth and realize how they are linked to each other and to local and global issues.
- The programme encourages the use of a variety of teaching and learning methodologies to foster a climate in which students discover how they learn best in different situations.
- The programme emphasizes the development of the whole person—*affective, cognitive, creative and physical*—and its effective implementation depends on the school's concern for the whole educational experience, including what students learn outside the classroom.

Example 3

A DP coordinator was delighted to find that the MYP experience had allowed students to have a full range of subject choices when studying for the diploma. It was clear that the breadth of subjects studied in the MYP and the significant disciplinary concepts learned had prepared the students for the transition to the DP. In particular it was satisfying to see that students had a choice between all science options, having studied each science during all five years of the MYP.



The areas of interaction

The areas of interaction provide the MYP with its unique core. Teaching subject areas through these contexts allows teaching and learning to focus on attitudes, values and skills.

Approaches to learning (ATL) represents general and subject-specific learning skills that the student will develop and apply during the programme and beyond. The focus of this area is on teaching students how to learn and on helping students find out about themselves as learners so that they can develop learning skills.

Community and service considers how a student engages with his or her immediate family, classmates and friends, as well as in the outside world as a member of these communities. Through effective planning and teaching, students can learn about their place within communities and be motivated to act in a new context.

Health and social education delves into the range of human issues that exists in human societies, such as social structures, relationships and health. The area can be used by students to find out how these issues affect societies, communities and individuals, including the students themselves. Through the area of health and social education, students can identify and develop skills that will enable them to function as effective members of societies, as well as learning about how they are changing and how to make informed decisions that may relate to their welfare.

Environments considers how humans interact with the world at large and the parts we play in our environments. It extends into areas beyond human issues and asks students to examine the interrelationship of different environments. This area can lead students to consider both their immediate classroom environments and global environments.

Human ingenuity deals with the way in which human minds have influenced the world, for example, the way we behave, think, interact with each other, create, cause and find solutions to problems, transform ideas and rationalize thought. It also considers the consequences of human thought and action.

In the final year of the programme, students are engaged in the personal project. The personal project will reflect how effectively the areas of interaction have been integrated within the school. Through the project, students should be able to demonstrate ATL skills learned through the programme while focusing research and project development around at least one other area of interaction.

Commonality of the areas of interaction

These contexts for learning, the five areas of interaction, are common to the programme in all IB World Schools offering the MYP and serve to bring together the varied subject content that will be found in the diversity of cultural and linguistic settings around the world. Even though all schools share this commonality, the use that teachers make of the areas of interaction can lead to very different learning expectations. Thus, the areas of interaction provide common organizing strategies and also allow for the diversity of student needs, interests and motivations. Using all of the areas of interaction as contexts for learning gives teachers a great opportunity to help their students engage with environmental, health and community issues such as sustainability that affect students today, and to reflect on how humans can solve the problems for the future.

The areas of interaction:

- give meaning to what is learned through the exploration of real-world issues
- provide the contexts for units of work, and for the MYP fundamental concepts and the IB learner profile, which underpin the philosophy of the programme
- encourage higher-order thinking skills to deepen understanding
- provide a framework for student inquiry
- can help students develop positive attitudes and a sense of personal and social responsibility
- engage students in reflection to better understand themselves as learners
- can lead students from academic knowledge to thoughtful action
- contribute to an interdisciplinary approach to learning
- provide a common language for constructing and organizing the curriculum.

Example 4

As part of an interdisciplinary unit, students in year 5 asked the question: “How can I contribute to the community?” This was particularly relevant because of the wide income disparities in the school’s local neighbourhood. In a language A class they interviewed a guest speaker about the needs of small businesses. Students then designed a questionnaire and translated it into the host nation’s language (the school’s second language A). Afterwards, they went out into the community to interview the owner of a (very) small business, in order to focus on that business’s specific needs. Back in the classroom, the students summarized these needs in graphic organizers. After focusing with the technology teacher on how the design cycle should be used in this project, pairs of students each created a proposed new look for the front of the owner’s business premises. The owner looked at each design and chose the one he preferred. Taking bids, drawing up contracts and working with local artisans, the students then oversaw the work to transform the look of the business. This included community and service, as they painted the murals on the front and side walls of the business under the guidance of an artist who lives and works in the same neighbourhood.



The personal project

The personal project is a very important part of the MYP for all students. The personal project is a reflection of a student's ability to manage and direct their own inquiry, and a reflection of the skills learned through the MYP experience. It is a significant body of work produced over an extended period, a product of the students' own initiative, and should reflect their experience of the MYP. The personal project holds a very important place in the programme in that it provides an excellent opportunity for students to produce a truly personal piece of work of their choice and to demonstrate the skills they have developed. The process of completing the personal project is led by the student, with supervision by a teacher. The student is required to demonstrate the appropriate commitment, as well as the ability and initiative to work independently.

As shown in the programme model, and exemplified in the subject-group guides and other MYP documents, the five areas of interaction form the core of the programme: they are addressed through the subjects; they bind various disciplines together; they are the focus of varied learning experiences through project work, interdisciplinary activities and real-life community involvement. Although the areas of interaction are not awarded individual grades, they are central to the experience of the personal project, which is intended to be the culmination of the student's involvement with the five areas of interaction; the project is therefore completed during the fifth year of the MYP.

The assessment of the personal project is a summative assessment of students' ability to conduct independent work using the areas of interaction as contexts for their inquiries. It includes explicit reference to the treatment of the areas of interaction through the assessment criteria.

Example 5

An excellent personal project involved an artistic representation of the suffering of people with HIV/AIDS. The product is a pencil drawing of faces of people of different races, joined together with a symbolic holding of hands in the centre. The project explores the response of national and international organizations to patients and their families, and how people of different cultures support sufferers. It looks at how suffering and loneliness join peoples. It was inspired by a number of experiences throughout the curriculum. During year 4 the student was affected by AIDS Day activities in her health and physical education lessons and by school assembly messages. In addition, through her language A (Korean) she explored current affairs on a weekly basis and the issue of how to treat HIV/AIDS became a recurring theme. During her English A course in year 4 she studied *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe as part of a world literature unit. This examination of African culture through language had a profound impact on the student. In exploring issues in language classes (each inspired by the area of interaction of community and service) she wanted to explore how communities help people with HIV/AIDS. She used background knowledge from humanities to look at cultures around the world. Ultimately the project is mainly based in the arts, and the student chose to spend a lot of time examining how messages can be conveyed through art. It was a life-changing experience for the student.

Planning for teaching and learning

MYP teachers have a crucial role to play in curriculum development, as well as in teaching itself. To make the whole MYP experience coherent for the students, teachers need to be aware of the whole-school curriculum beyond the age group(s) and subject(s) for which they are directly responsible. Schools are expected to organize staff meetings at which experiences are shared, cooperation sought, and linking work among departments developed.

Teaching the MYP requires vertical and horizontal planning by teams of teachers. Vertical planning involves the selection of content, and agreement on expected levels of achievement within individual disciplines, as well as the progression of learning within the areas of interaction for each year of the programme. Horizontal planning involves interdepartmental discussions among teachers of a particular grade level. The purpose of these meetings is to develop awareness among teachers about the content, processes and objectives taught in other subjects.

The MYP encourages the use of a variety of teaching and learning methodologies suitable for different age groups, to produce a climate where students discover how they learn best in different contexts. The MYP requires teachers to reflect individually and collectively on the methods and resources used within their classes to choose appropriate approaches for their subject, using the areas of interaction at the core of their planning, and addressing a variety of learning styles. Effective activities need to be developed, to challenge students on a personal level, deepen understanding, stimulate inquiry, and encourage reflection and creativity. Examples include:

- formal teacher instruction, using one or several areas of interaction as a focus
- presentations and inquiry-based projects led by the students themselves
- open-ended investigations and problem-solving activities within or outside the classroom context, involving individual or collaborative work
- games, role plays, field trips, extra-curricular activities.

The aims and objectives of each subject group emphasize critical thinking, values and attitudes in addition to knowledge, understanding and skills. Reflection on the learning process, as well as the subject content, is therefore crucial.

Example 6

Students in year 3 were given the challenge to write a funding proposal for scientific research into a disease as part of a science unit. In this work, students were able to see the role of the genre of persuasive writing across disciplines and to understand the importance of audience in writing. The layout and content of the funding proposal was structured by the teacher using a template that outlined to students the expectations and examples of good practice, focusing on:

- topic knowledge or content
- text structure or organization
- language features or style
- writing processes.

This unit illustrated the way in which teachers across all disciplines are teachers of language.



Example 7

Students of English B in year 4 matched key vocabulary to its definitions and predicted the content of a news report they were about to hear regarding land reform in Zimbabwe. They listened to the report and answered questions related to its meaning to check their prediction, then listened twice more, taking notes as they did so. In groups the students then reconstructed the news report (making it as close to the original as possible) and wrote it up as a newspaper article. This is an activity that incorporates note-taking, listening skills, review of tenses and change of a text framework, from spoken to written. The subject matter was also addressed in their humanities class and lead to greater understanding of concepts in both disciplines.

Interdisciplinary learning, where the central concept has been carefully chosen in the light of the areas of interaction, can be a very useful mechanism for applying the connections between subjects in a real-world context, provided the subject-specific objectives are carefully considered for all subjects involved. Most of these experiences will be organized naturally through subject teaching: teachers synchronize their teaching relating to common concepts and plan a more comprehensive unit involving perspectives from several subject groups and shared assessment of more complex projects. Within these projects, the subject groups will contribute their methodologies to enrich and enhance the learning experience.

Example 8

A school developed a unit called “The Sound of Music”. It addressed the phenomenon of sound from the physics and musical perspective, involving the understanding of how sound is produced, what are its physical properties, and what are its musical qualities and expressive possibilities. These formed the disciplinary foundations for this interdisciplinary unit. Teachers and students became purposefully and increasingly aware of the topic’s complexity and the need to go beyond the information contained in each discipline to achieve an integrated perspective. The grammar of the topic is such that one can see the interdisciplinary intention and direction easily, even in its title: “The Sound of Music”. It is significant to note that in successful interdisciplinary units such as this one, the purpose of the inquiry is framed using the kind of language both teachers and students will need to employ in order to explore those particular aspects that link both disciplines.

MYP assessment

Assessment in the MYP is an integral part of learning, involving students in self-assessment and providing feedback on the thinking strategies and processes as well as the outcome. The MYP requires teachers to organize continuous assessment, over the course of the programme, according to specified criteria that correspond to the objectives of each subject group. Regular internal assessment and reporting play a major role in the students’ and parents’ understanding of the objectives and criteria, in the students’ preparation for final assessment, and more generally in their development according to the principles of the programme.

The MYP offers a criterion-related model of assessment. Teachers are responsible for structuring varied and valid assessment tasks that will allow students to demonstrate achievement according to the required objectives within each subject group. These include open-ended problem-solving activities and investigations, organized debates, tests and examinations, hands-on experimentation, analysis and reflection.

In keeping with the ethos of approaches to learning, schools are encouraged to use a variety of formative assessment methods that involve the learner. The choice of quantitative and qualitative assessment strategies and tools (rubrics, performance records and checklists, portfolios) is the responsibility of the subject teachers, with an emphasis on self-assessment and peer-assessment. These strategies and tools should be designed to allow the students to show real understanding through flexible and appropriate application in new contexts (Gardner 1999). Recording and reporting should be organized by teachers to provide students with detailed feedback on their level of achievement according to the criteria of the subjects.

The MYP does not provide externally set examinations, tests or other assessments. Some schools may have national or other requirements that do include the use of externally set examinations.

Example 9

A parent in an MYP school praised the programme for promoting creativity and being free from prejudice. The parent was delighted that MYP assessment records achievement levels against criteria rather than measuring a student's performance against the rest of the peer group. This parent was particularly impressed that MYP students are taught how to learn.

Example 10

School communities find the MYP academically rigorous due to the nature of the internal assessment model. The complex, higher-level educational skills that form the focus of MYP assessment do not lend themselves readily to mechanized marking. Student responses to many tasks can be highly varied with several equally valid forms of response. Much depends on the professional judgment of teachers and subsequently on MYP trained moderators.

Moderation and monitoring of assessment

Final assessment in the MYP requires teachers to make judgments based on the rigorous application of the prescribed assessment criteria defined in each subject-group guide. Schools may request IB-validated grades on official MYP records of achievement and MYP certificates for students completing the programme. For schools opting for this validation procedure, standardization of assessment according to MYP standards is ensured through a process of external moderation of teachers' internal assessment. The official MYP subject-group criteria and corresponding levels of achievement (described in the subject-group guides) must be used as the basis for results submitted to the IB. External moderation involves trained, experienced MYP teachers. It results in the application of a moderation factor, where needed, and in detailed, subject-specific advice to the school regarding the understanding of subject objectives and assessment criteria.

Example 11

A school reviewed its assessment policy using the moderation report it received from the IB as a catalyst for change. Teachers acted on recommendations that encouraged them to create tasks that were more open-ended in order to ensure that the students could reach the highest levels of achievement. The school found there was a marked improvement in teaching and learning as a result of developing tasks using strategies suggested by moderators.

Monitoring of assessment is a service available to IB World Schools offering the MYP that allows schools to send samples of assessed student work in order to receive feedback from an experienced MYP moderator in the form of a report. It is intended to provide support and guidance in the implementation and development of the programme with regard to internal assessment procedures and practices.

Example 12

A school opting for monitoring of assessment felt that the ability to monitor their students' achievements each year was the critical factor in keeping instructional and assessment practices aligned with the MYP standards and requirements. They believed that the ability to monitor some subjects at levels 3 and 5 each year was critical in order for them to know how they were doing, and whether they were on the right track.

Conclusion

The MYP emphasizes a broad and balanced education that focuses on values as well as knowledge. It addresses the students' physical, affective, social and intellectual development. In helping students to understand the interconnectedness and applications of knowledge and skills, it serves their search for relevance and meaning, and helps them acquire a deeper understanding of the concepts. At the same time, the MYP allows the nature of each subject to emerge with integrity and rigour and prepares students for the DP.

Example 13

A first year DP student felt that the MYP was a great learning experience. The MYP helped to prepare her and her classmates in developing all or most of the qualities of the IB learner profile. She feels that the MYP taught her several lessons, independence and techniques to survive future challenges, including the DP.

The MYP is designed to help adolescents to develop a knowledge of, and interest in, local and global issues. The explicit emphasis on communication and intercultural awareness encourages international-mindedness and responsible citizenship. In age-appropriate ways, the programme involves students in concrete, socially responsible action and service, both individually and in groups.

The framework of the MYP requires schools and the teachers within them to work as teams in reflecting on, developing, organizing and delivering the curriculum, paying close attention to the perspectives of the students. It empowers teachers and students to shape a stimulating but rigorous learning experience.

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