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# School Counseling Toward a Mission of “IB for All”

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## Abstract

Although the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) recognizes the importance of school counselors, there is limited guidance about the expectations and roles of school counselors in serving the diverse needs of students in IB schools. With the IBO’s movement toward a mission of “IB for All” to address equitable access to academic rigor, this also aligns with school counselors’ ethical responsibilities as advocates, collaborators, and leaders to promote access and equity for all students. The authors (a) highlight the work of one school counseling program that developed and implemented initiatives, using the U.S.-based ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a) as a framework, to increase access to the IB program for diverse students and families; and (b) articulate the potential roles of school counselors in promoting students’ academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development and trajectories from grades nine through 12 in the IB Middle Years and Diploma Programs.

*Keywords:* International Baccalaureate, school counseling, ASCA National Model, Middle Years Program, Diploma Program

## Introduction

There is an increasing need for schools to respond to the growing diversity of students in the United States and enhance access to high quality, rigorous education for all students, especially those from historically marginalized populations. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), school counselors are uniquely positioned to support the academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development of all students (ASCA, 2019). School counselors implement data-driven, comprehensive school counseling programs framed by equity-driven goals to work toward closing achievement and opportunity gaps. These gaps most often affect students from underrepresented backgrounds, including (but not limited to) students who identify as racial and ethnic minorities, those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, those who are first-generation college students, students with disabilities, English language learners, and others. Underrepresented students are also less

likely to have access to, be identified and recruited for, and succeed in college preparatory coursework (Akos, Lambie, Milsom, & Gilbert, 2007; Cataldi, Bennett, Chen, & Simone, 2018; Engle & Tinto, 2008). The disparities in access to and persistence in rigorous coursework is a social justice issue, as the achievement and opportunity gaps among those historically advantaged and disadvantaged continue to widen (Caspary, Woodworth, Keating, & Sands, 2015; Theokas & Saaris, 2013).

In the United States, common forms of high school-based college preparatory and credit-bearing coursework include Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment (DE), and International Baccalaureate (IB). The AP program, offered by the College Board, includes year-long college credit-bearing high school courses in various academic subject areas followed by end-of-year examinations (College Board, 2018). Another college-preparatory program, DE, also called early college, offers a way to earn college credits while attending high school, resulting in both high school and college credits through concurrent enrollment in high school and a college or university (An, 2012; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009). Moreover, the IB program, offered by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), spans across the elementary, middle, and high school grade levels, which include the Primary Years Program (PYP; i.e., Kindergarten through fifth grades), Middle Years Program (MYP; i.e., grades six through 10), Diploma Program (DP; i.e., grades 11 and 12), and Career Program (CP; i.e., grades 11 and 12), respectively (IBO, 2015). Like the AP program, the IB DP level includes college credit-bearing coursework of various subject areas, along with its own recommended pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment systems (Siskin & Weinstein, 2008).

However, among these three college preparatory programs, there are fewer conceptual articles and empirical studies pertaining to the IB program within the extant literature since AP and DE are more widely offered than IB in U.S. schools (Foust, Hertberg-Davis, & Callahan, 2009), despite this program’s international existence since 1968 and first U.S. establishment in 1971. Historically, IB programs have been highly selective in nature and attractive for mostly White, middle- and upper-income students and students identified as gifted for competitive college admissions, and the program has even been perceived as

elitist (Callahan, 2003; Hill, 2012; Mayer, 2008). In 2004, the IBO promoted a new goal within its strategic plan to increase equitable access to IB programs across elementary and secondary levels, especially for underrepresented student populations, and respond to the changing demographics and needs of students as a means of closing achievement and opportunity gaps (IBO, 2004; IBO, 2010; Mayer, 2008; Siskin & Weinstein, 2008). Hence, a new motto, “IB for All,” became the call to enhance equity and diversity in IB schools. Although researchers have focused on administrators and educators in connection with student development and achievement, additional focus on the roles and impact of school counselors and school counseling programs in IB schools can also contribute to the IBO’s mission for access and equity, as there is currently limited literature about school counselors in IB schools (Gerry & Corcoran, 2010; Siskin, Weinstein, & Sperling, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to offer background information about the IB program and the roles of school counselors in the United States using a U.S.-based framework for comprehensive school counseling programming (i.e., the ASCA National Model; ASCA, 2019a), articulate the potential roles of U.S. school counselors across the MYP and DP programs at the high school level, and present a case of a U.S.-based school counseling department working toward a mission of “IB for All.”

### **The International Baccalaureate Program**

The IB program was founded in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland as a college preparatory curriculum for children whose families frequently traveled internationally (IBO, 2017). The mission of the IBO is 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 (IBO, 2015, p. 1).

There are currently 4,940 IB World schools across the globe, and since the first IB World School in 1971, there are 1,836 IB World schools in the United States that offer one or more IB programs (IBO, 2019). Despite the IBO’s beginnings in Europe, most IB World schools today are in the Americas region (58.3%), which includes the North, Central, and South Americas (IBO, 2019).

As a world-class education, universities around the world recognize the rigorous nature of the IB program, and the IB program encourages students to take on global perspectives, gain exposure to a challenging academic curriculum, and develop non-cognitive attributes for

successful learning through the IB Learner Profile (Conner, 2008; Van Oord, 2007). For example, upon examining students at an honors college program at the University of Oregon, researchers found that students who took IB DP coursework exhibited greater college readiness than students without IB DP experiences. Specifically, DP students were more likely to persist academically in college (i.e., graduation from college within five years or promotion to second, third, and fourth years in college), demonstrate higher order critical thinking skills, adjust better to the rigor and expectations of college, and cope with the heavy workload of college (Conley, McGaughy, Davis-Molin, Farkas, & Fukuda, 2014). With the increasing prevalence of IB schools and understanding the academic and non-academic (i.e., social and emotional adjustment, critical thinking skills, appreciation for learning) values of IB’s rigor, educators and school counselors have the increasing responsibility to facilitate access to its rigorous curriculum so that all students can equitably succeed in the IB program.

### **The IB Program and Equity**

The IBO published a handbook for building and designing the Diploma Program and included specific ways to increase access to IB DP within existing IB World Schools for students who have historically experienced barriers to rigor and encourage equitable participation (IBO, 2009). First, the IBO encouraged schools to select students regardless of their ability to financially afford participation in the courses or full program. Next, it is important that schools not only allow for multiple points of entry or pathways into the DP with supports in place, but also use multiple sources of information to understand students’ backgrounds to include a wider range and diversity of students. Specifically, the IBO stated:

...the IB believes that the IB Diploma Programme is not for an academic elite and that all students who can benefit and succeed should be encouraged to take part. Success in the Diploma Programme is best measured by the value added in individual student development and not by the diploma score (IBO, 2009, p. 21).

The IBO’s stance for equity and building an accessible program that includes students who have been historically disenfranchised communicate the mission for “IB for All.”

Recent studies about the IB program have sought to understand equity issues, such as access to and outcomes of participation in IB, which reflect the inequalities of educational opportunities. There have been changes in student demographics among IB schools from 1995-2009, including an increase in IB programs that are located in rural areas, Title I-eligible schools (i.e., schools enrolling at least 40% of students from low-income families; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015), students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, and non-White students, especially Hispanic students (May & Perna, 2011). There has been a

reported increase in the participation of low-income students in IB courses and programs, as well as the enrollment and one-year retention rate of DP candidates identified as low-income in four-year colleges after high school, matching the retention rate of their higher income peers (Caspary et al., 2015). In addition, approximately 60% of public schools in the United States with an IB program were Title I schools, reflecting an increase in availability and access to IB's rigorous program, specifically for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (Gordon, Vanderkamp, & Halic, 2015).

Although the IB DP continued to be offered in more diverse school settings, the opportunity to access the IB program continues to be based on students' racial and ethnic backgrounds and their families' income status. For example, low-income, Black, and Hispanic students experienced less access to enrolling and succeeding in the program (Kettler & Hurst, 2017; Perna et al., 2011, 2015). Despite increases in IB participation and positive postsecondary outcomes, there continues to be persistent opportunity and achievement gaps. Low-income students are reported to continue to be underrepresented in IB courses and programs, have lower performance levels on IB examinations, and have lower long-term college retention outcomes (i.e., more than two years), compared to their higher-income peers (Caspary et al., 2015). In a study of IB DP students in Chicago Public Schools in the United States, where IB DP programs expanded across the district as a means of education reform, these students not only exhibited strong academic qualifications and felt prepared for the college experience, but also reported experiencing limited social capital (i.e., knowledge, resources, and supports connected to and about college access and opportunities) in navigating academic experiences in college, such as course selections and establishing relationships with faculty (Coca et al., 2012).

Despite gaps in access, IB courses and programs have the potential to close opportunity and achievement gaps, especially for low-income students in IB programs. Low-income students in IB courses and programs reported experiencing more high quality and rigorous academic programs, greater engagement in the classroom and extracurricular activities, increased likelihood to receive college going supports, and higher aspirations toward college, compared to students who were not in IB programs (Aldana & Mayer, 2017). In studying the district-wide outcomes of IB DP students in Chicago Public Schools, IB DP students were more likely to attend four-year colleges, attend selective institutions, persist in college, and felt prepared upon entering college (Coca et al., 2012). For IB schools in urban areas, research has also shown that detracking reform, such as open admissions programs, can increase access for and retain low-income students of color (Burris, Wiley, Welner, & Murphy, 2008). Moreover, with greater access to DP in IB schools in urban locales, students' IB diploma attainment, academic achievement (as measured by ACT scores), graduation rates, and college enrollment

also increased (Mayer, 2008; Saavedra, 2014). When school district leadership supported IB programs and their implementation within its schools (e.g., financial support, structural reorganization, provision of professional development opportunities, community engagement), there was an increase in underrepresented students' participation in IB and their academic performance, including test scores and course exams (Siskin & Weinstein, 2008).

### **The Roles of School Counselors**

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a) is a recommended framework for school counselors in the United States to develop, deliver, and implement comprehensive school counseling programs that are data-driven and focused on promoting student achievement, social and emotional development, and career and college readiness. The National Model is comprised of four components: Define, Manage, Deliver, and Assess (ASCA, 2019a). ASCA proposed the National Model as a means of providing equitable access to rigorous education for all students and identifying students' knowledge and behaviors for success within the context of U.S.-based education for elementary and secondary students (ASCA, 2019a). Based on the National Model, U.S. school counselors are leaders in schools and of school counseling programs; collaborate with teachers, administrators, and stakeholders; advocate for and on behalf of students and families; and impact systemic change (ASCA, 2019a). With a social justice-focused mindset, school counselors can address students' needs, identify opportunity and achievement gaps, and advocate for equitable access to academically rigorous programs (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

The IBO offers some yet limited guidance about the roles of school counselors in IB schools. Formally, the IBO encourages the collaborative efforts of teachers, counselors, and DP coordinators to support students in selecting challenging yet appropriate IB courses from those offered at the school (IBO, 2009). In addition, this team of teachers, counselors, and DP coordinators monitors students' progress and offer interventions with needed strategies and services to support students' academic and social and emotional success in the DP (IBO, 2009; IBO, n.d.). Moreover, the IBO also mentions the roles that whole schools have in student development. According to the IB Program Standards and Practices, IB schools across the continuum are to have "systems in place to guide and counsel students through the programme(s)" (IBO, 2014b, p. 2), and for DP programs, IB schools are expected to provide "guidance to students on postsecondary educational options" (IBO, 2014b, p. 23).

The IBO has hosted content sessions that highlighted school counselors as collaborators and important supports in IB schools. Such presentations included: IB Coordinators and Counselors Together (Machczynski, Eischen, & Vivas, 2015), Counseling IB Students (Hanna et al., 2013), and the Growing DP Participation webinar series (Weiss, Ilhardt,

Baron, & Powell, 2018). These presentations demonstrated the IBO's acknowledgement and recognition of the positive work and potential of school counselors in IB schools; however, these presentations typically focused on school counselors' roles in course selections and advisement. To enhance understanding of school counselors as advocates, additional presentations were facilitated, including Integrating IB Philosophy into School Counseling Practice (Chae, 2018) and Redefining School Counselors' Roles: A Collaborative Forum (Chae & Culpepper, 2019), to connect school counselors and educators across the IB continuum and begin discussions about school counselors as advocates for equity for all students rather than gatekeepers to IB programming. Although academic planning is a critical aspect of school counseling, school counselors are and do much more than course selections; they are leaders, collaborators, and advocates who increase access and equity to educational opportunities, especially for students and families from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Considering the academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary needs of students in IB schools, school counselors are well-equipped and ethically mandated to serve their needs. When considering issues of access and equity, the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2016), which are recommended ethical guidelines for U.S. school counselors, articulate that it is school counselors' ethical responsibility to promote equitable educational access for all students, which includes academic rigor and data-driven comprehensive school counseling programs. The ethical standards also emphasize school counselors' responsibility to and advocacy for underserved and at-risk students, who (like all students) deserve equitable access to education opportunities and college and career counseling services that are free from discriminatory and biased practices (ASCA, 2016).

Understanding the inequities in access to and postsecondary outcomes of IB courses and programs, particularly for underrepresented students, school counselors have a critical role in supporting students' entry into and success in IB programs and beyond. Academic and social supports, such as counseling, academic enrichment programs, tutoring, peer group connections, high expectations from teachers and school counselors, and an open admissions program, can impact students' ability, motivation, and success in the IB program (Aldana & Mayer, 2017; Mayer, 2008). When school counselors receive training about IB programs and become involved in whole-school programming, they gain the knowledge, capacity, and potential to remove barriers and expand access to IB courses and programs for students (Siskin et al., 2010). School counselors are also in the position of screening, encouraging, and recruiting underrepresented students to pursue IB DP courses, as well as providing services, such as social, emotional, academic, and college planning supports and interventions to encourage persistence and success (Caspary et al., 2015; Gerry & Corcoran, 2011; Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyburg, 2006).

In schools where one or few school counselors are solely assigned to students in the IB program or where all students do not access or participate in the IB program or courses, there may be a difference in the roles of school counselors or the types of services provided in such circumstances. Because one or few school counselors are focused on a set of IB students, those school counselors who serve students that are not in the IB program may be less knowledgeable about the affordances of the IB program or less aware of IB program offerings to be able to advocate for students' recruitment, entry into, and persistence in the IB program, especially for underrepresented students (Siskin et al., 2010). Such division of labor and how students are assigned to school counselors can be reconsidered and reconfigured to ensure that all school counselors are trained and knowledgeable about IB programming, regardless of caseload assignments. Therefore, school counselors can be a part of creating an increasingly inclusive environment that enhances students' equitable access to the IB program.

As leaders, collaborators, and advocates, school counselors can provide the necessary academic, social, and emotional supports and resources for students to pursue and advance in their postsecondary endeavors when they equitably access rigorous academic opportunities. Social justice-focused school counselors identify achievement and opportunity gaps among student groups and consider school counseling programming and services to respond to closing such gaps in educational opportunities. In school counselors' work with diverse students and families, school counselors play important roles in promoting, gaining buy-in for, and supporting students in accessing and succeeding in IB courses and programs. Therefore, due to the lack of literature on school-based models of counseling in IB schools and programs, we present a school counseling department and program in an IB World School that continue to work toward enhancing access and equity to IB with a school-wide mission of "IB for All."

### **Integrating IB Philosophy into a School Counseling Program: A Case Study**

"IB High School" (IBHS, a pseudonym) is a public high school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. IBHS's DP was authorized in 1998, and their MYP was authorized in 2009. IBHS is located in a large urban school district and serves students from all reaches of the city. Previously, IBHS's IB program served a small group of high achieving students who pursued and achieved the IB Diploma. During the past decade, the administrators, teachers, and staff, including the school counseling department, pursued the mantra of "IB for All" to address and increase access and equity to the IB program because the demographics of the IB program did not reflect that of the entire school population. IBHS's student population is predominantly comprised of African American students (78%), along with White (14%), Hispanic (6%), and Asian

(2%) students. However, initially, its DP program had a greater representation of White students than students of color, despite the fewer numbers of White students among the total school population. Thus, the school counseling department at IBHS (henceforth mentioned as the Department) took steps toward redesigning the promotion, support, scheduling, and advisement into the IB program to align with the school-wide mission of “IB for All.”

### **Redesigning the School Counseling Program at IBHS**

IBHS’s school counseling department was organized by a cohort model in which each school counselor (total of four school counselors) was assigned to one cohort, or grade level, of students for all four years of high school (i.e., one counselor remained with a cohort from grades nine through 12 and returned to grade nine students after graduation of the 12th grade students). A cohort model-based system allowed for each school counselor to continue building relationships with students and families across four years and offered consistency for those students and families as well. Each school counselor received training in and supported program development for both IB MYP and DP programs. Moreover, in keeping with the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a), it has been the mission of IBHS’s school counseling department to support students and families throughout their tenure at IBHS. As such, the early development of a four-year plan includes academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary supports. These plans are created with each individual student and refined over time. IBHS’s comprehensive school counseling program includes direct student services, including teaching core curriculum lessons, appraisal and advisement, and individual counseling, as well as indirect services on behalf of students, including consultation, collaboration, and referrals within and outside of the school (ASCA, 2019a). A set of grade-specific programs, competencies, and interventions, including grade level-based parent meetings, individualized and systemic college advising interventions for students and parents, and school-wide advisory programming, were developed to assist students in being both academically and socially successful, cultivate parent buy-in and understanding, and accompany the IB program’s philosophy and school-based curriculum. School counselors also work alongside college advisors to help prepare students to matriculate into colleges across the United States, Canada, and Europe.

While adhering to the competencies as outlined by the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a) and Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2014) for students’ academic, career, and social and emotional development, it has been important for the school counseling department to recognize that marginalized communities are often overlooked, excluded, and ignored by those in charge of placement and the teaching of academically rigorous courses, specifically the IB courses and programs. At IBHS, the school counselors, as advocates, engaged in critical self-

reflection as and challenged those gatekeepers, who previously created or sustained barriers in students’ access to IB courses and programs, as well as a leadership role by taking a seat at the table of equity and inclusion, alongside administrators and department leads. In 2012, the Department, in collaboration with school leadership, decided to embody and model a growth mindset by having courageous conversations, blunt talk, self-examination, and radical curriculum review. The school-wide and Department’s goal was to change the calculus for teaching and supporting students who are racial and ethnic minorities, specifically African American and Hispanic students, so that these students may no longer simply enter and then survive the IB program and curriculum, but rather, thrive within it. Through a data-driven comprehensive school counseling program, the Department critically examined the school-wide data (i.e., state testing scores, grade reports, attendance data, IB examination data), which made the Department acutely aware of the needs of students, particularly those from historically marginalized backgrounds, in the IB program. The Department also observed the components of the ASCA National Model (i.e., Define, Manage, Deliver, and Assess) to reflect on how to address the gaps in the school counseling programming to adequately meet the needs of students and families and ultimately, live up to the mission and vision of IBHS.

**Define.** Student standards (i.e., ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success; ASCA, 2014) and professional standards (i.e., ASCA Ethical Standards [ASCA, 2016]; and ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies [ASCA, 2019b]) define the school counseling profession and articulate how school counselors develop, implement, and assess school counseling programs to enhance student outcomes (ASCA, 2019a). First, the ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors operationalize student knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are important for academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development. At IBHS, the Department utilized the Mindsets & Behaviors to inform grade-level competencies important for student success and align them with IB learning expectations and standards, such as the IB Learner Profile (IBO, 2013) and IB Approaches to Learning (IBO, 2014a). The comprehensive school counseling program at IBHS is also designed to align with the district-wide school counseling mission, vision, and plan; however, its purpose is to meet the needs of the student population specific to IBHS.

Moreover, the ASCA Ethical Standards (ASCA, 2016) articulate principles of ethical behavior that are important for integrity, leadership, and professionalism required of the school counseling profession. School counselors at IBHS utilize and reflect upon the standards for ethical professional practice to ensure that students’ and families’ needs are equitably met. Consistent with the mission of “IB for All,” IBHS school counselors understand their ethical responsibility to promote equitable educational access for all students. The ethical standards also help to inform how

school counselors can assess and provide interventions that work toward closing achievement and opportunity gaps.

The ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards & Competencies (ASCA, 2019b) help school counselors to assess and reflect upon their own mindsets and behaviors to rigorously develop and implement school counseling programs that address students' academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development. At IBHS, the practice of school counseling is a reflective one that requires school counselors as individuals and as a department to assess their knowledge, attitudes, and skills and bridge any gaps to ensure that the Department can adequately serve the school and students. This resulted in redesigning the entire school counseling program to fulfill the school-wide mission of "IB for All" and continuously reflecting upon daily counseling practices and interactions that best facilitate positive academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary outcomes.

**Manage.** The "Manage" component consists of program foci (e.g., beliefs, vision, and mission) and program planning tools to design and assess the outcomes of the school counseling program (ASCA, 2019a). First, the Department questioned how the IB philosophy was reflected in the school counseling program. In addition, the Department disaggregated the school- and student-level data about the opportunity and achievement gaps in IB courses and programs, particularly for students of color and low-income students. Thus, the Department aligned the program's mission, vision, and goals to reflect the need for equitable access and success in the DP program. For example, one of the Department's primary goals, written in a S.M.A.R.T. goal format (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused, and time-bound) was to "increase the number of students of color and low-income students successfully completing the IB Diploma program in grade 12 from 50% in the 2013-2014 school year to 60% in the 2014-2015 school year." (As a note of good news, the Department achieved this goal with the collaboration of the school team.) Second, the Department recognized the need to have a presence at the table among the school leadership, who included administrators and department leads that make critical decisions for and on behalf of educators, students, and families' access to IB courses and programs. Therefore, the Department enhanced their capacity as school counselor leaders via representation on leadership teams, curriculum planning committees, and support service meetings. The Department also advocated for a proactive presence through the use of school-wide calendars (e.g., displayed in the main and school counseling offices and school website and distributed during school-wide meetings), planned individual counseling sessions with students, conducting school counseling core curriculum lessons in classrooms focused on advocating for equity and access needs, and assessing the needs and interests of students and families through school-wide needs assessments.

The Department also addressed the need for a school-wide intervention to promote the IB Learner Profile attributes (IBO, 2013) and Approaches to Learning skills (IBO, 2014a) by revising and re-implementing a bi-monthly school-wide advisory curriculum that integrated the IB curricula while focusing on academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development. The advisory program and curricula were led by the school counseling department, and as a transformative endeavor, the lessons were delivered by all adults in the school building, including teachers, administrators, and support staff (i.e., hall monitors, attendance clerks, school social workers). The advisory curriculum was specific to the needs of each grade level, which included ready-made lessons to be taught and distributed to students, either on paper or electronically, as well as fostered relationships between adults and students and among students in small-group settings. Across all grade levels, advisory sessions were held bimonthly, especially during progress report and report card distribution periods, so that advisors can guide advisees in reflection about their academic progress and areas for improvement.

Advisory curriculum topics for ninth grade students (MYP Year Five) included lessons to prepare for the general high school experience (e.g., stress management, test taking and study skills development, time management and organization, goal development, self-reflective activities, and beginning the Personal Project, a required capstone for the MYP). For tenth grade students (MYP Year Six), the year-long advisory curriculum topics focused on initiating, developing, and presenting IB Personal Projects with support from advisors, workshops aligned with courses, and additional time in school to work on their Personal Projects. Advisory curriculum topics for 11th grade students (DP Year One) focused on preparing for the college admissions process, including academic self-reflection, goal development, preparing for college admissions examinations, drafting resumes and college essays, and understanding the college search process. For 12th grade students (DP Year Two), advisory curriculum topics were geared toward actively supporting the college process, including drafting a list of colleges for application submissions, financial aid and scholarship information, understanding financial aid award letters and packages, and discussing resources to navigate the college experience, such as accessing college support services, college-level academic expectations and preparation, joining extracurricular activities, and approaching college professors. Altogether, the scaffolded nature of the advisory curriculum, which was designed and managed by the school counseling department, met the developmental needs of students while integrating IB curricula and philosophy and communicating a college-going culture.

**Deliver.** Third, the Department responded by redesigning the direct and indirect services provided to students and families. As for direct services, the Department already conducted individual counseling sessions and core

curriculum lessons, but pre-planned and redesigned the academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary supports to facilitate students' experiences in IB courses and program. The school counselors visited classrooms on a quarterly basis to address various topics, including time management, college readiness information, and course selections (see Table 1). When presenting on course selections in the classroom or discussing individually with students and families, the school counselors were knowledgeable about the rigorous course options available in the school, and they were well-equipped to have conversations with students about the types of rigor that suited their needs (rather than conversations about whether rigor, in general, suited their needs). Such shifts in mindset and practices were consistent with the IBO's message of building accessible and equitable programs (IBO, 2009). Further, the school counselors conducted regular reviews of mid-quarter and quarterly grade reports to identify students who needed support, contact their families, and implement interventions to support student academic improvement and social and emotional well-being.

Understanding that students in IB programs reported feeling stressed (Shaunessy & Suldo, 2010), the Department's response to the social and emotional needs of students was to create a wraparound approach by collaborating with related services (e.g., school social workers, school psychologists) to offer responsive counseling services (i.e., crisis response, grief and loss, suicidal ideation) and proactive counseling services (i.e., coping mechanisms, stress and anxiety management, advocacy for 504 and Individualized Education Plans [IEPs] to address student success in IB courses). Postsecondary supports for students could not be siloed to the school counseling department, but rather, an active collaboration with the team of college advising colleagues was also necessary to ensure that students and families received information from a variety of perspectives. With the support of the college advising office, the school gained a better understanding of where IBHS's students often applied and were accepted as well as which universities were supportive of IB programs and the student population. More importantly, it was important to understand the academic, financial, and social and emotional demands of postsecondary education, especially considering that many of IBHS's students were first in their families to pursue higher education. Programs and initiatives were implemented to meet the unique needs of IBHS's students and families, including (but not limited to) financial aid workshops (scheduled during various times during the day, evenings, and weekends to accommodate family's diverse schedules), college essay writing workshops, college fairs, an interview clinic for 11th grade students, and grade-level parent meetings.

To advocate on behalf of students, the Department realized the need for changing perceptions and providing support for the various involved stakeholders, including teachers, families, and the community. Administrators and

IB coordinators implemented in-school workshops and provided additional professional development opportunities through the IBO. Throughout this process, the school counseling department worked alongside teachers as consultants and collaborators to advocate for students through quarterly and ongoing communication about student progress. The Department scheduled and led ongoing psychoeducation for families in individual and school-wide formats, including parent-student conferences and bi-annual parent nights (which included collaborative presentations with IB coordinators, college advisors, administrators, and Spanish teachers for translation services). The aim for ongoing psychoeducation sessions for families was to teach parents to feel empowered to navigate academic rigor with, rather than for, their children, provide positive parenting strategies to support their children's social and emotional needs, and prepare for future-oriented discussions about connecting current academic experiences to future college and career pathways.

In the community, the Department worked with IBHS's admissions office to inform prospective students and families about the content and value of an IB education, especially considering that IB sounded unfamiliar to most students and families. Equity-based community outreach included traveling to various middle schools across the district to gain a wide representation of students from all parts of the city, infusing cultural considerations for prospective students (especially speakers of languages other than English), and empowering IBHS students as panelists, representatives, and leaders to speak from their own IB experiences. The Department also sought and welcomed partnerships with school alumni. For example, IBHS hosts an annual event for alumni to return and share their college experiences as a result of their IB education at IBHS. The Department also partnered with local organizations and universities, which offered free SAT courses and college readiness programming, such as Upward Bound. Moreover, the Department referred students for school- and community-based mentorship programs for career-oriented services, including pre-health career mentoring, and relationship building, such as a mentorship program focused on supporting the academic achievement and social and emotional development of African American males, an underserved population in academic rigor locally and nationally. As a result of what the school counseling department at IBHS has learned from redesigning the program to promote access and equity to IB courses and programs, Table 1 offers a suggested articulation of tasks and roles that school counselors can implement in high schools with IB MYP and DP programs.

**Assess.** Finally, the Department had to assess how students were different as a result of the redesigned school counseling program to enhance equitable access to the IB program. The Department tracked and reviewed school-level data (i.e., student achievement data; college applications, acceptance, and enrollment data; counseling



referrals; attendance data) and Department-developed data (i.e., needs assessments, pre- and post-assessments from parent nights and core curriculum lessons, daily visits with students, families and teachers) to measure the progress toward “IB for All.” In 2011, IBHS registered 159 IB Diploma student candidates with only seven receiving the full IB Diploma. By the time the class of 2014 graduated, after the Department advocated for full inclusion of all students into the IB program two years prior (with full support from the administration and IB coordinators), the number of IB Diploma candidates grew to 178 registered and 21 awarded; then 208 registered and 52 full diplomas awarded by 2018. Student engagement among our students who identify as racial and ethnic minorities in the rigorous IB DP program grew from 19% of the entire graduating cohort of IB Diploma candidates in 2013 to 66% in 2018. The transformational impact of the school counseling program together with the efforts of the Department in collaboration with administrators, teachers, support staff, and IB coordinators are evident in the data.

### **Reflection of the Progress of Advocacy at IBHS**

The outcomes shown through the data is not the sole result of IBHS’s school counseling initiatives, but a collaborative effort within and outside the IBHS community with a shared mission and vision of access and equity for all students’ success—hence, “IB for All.” Other contributors (to name a few) to IBHS’s increase in registration and awards of IB courses and Diplomas were due to administrative leadership spearheading a vision for increased access to rigor for all students; professional development for teachers and school counselors focused on critically reflecting upon and evaluating current academic needs of students and developing strategies to enhance student access and success; an overall communication of high expectations and beliefs in students’ potential by IBHS teachers, administrators, counselors, and all staff; ongoing support and availability from school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health staff to facilitate wellness and crisis interventions for all students; and mentorship from alumni and community members for students. Collectively, the Department, along with the administrators, IB coordinators, and teachers, took the bold stance to break from selective selection into the IB program and instead, create options and opportunities and set high expectations for all students to experience and benefit from academically rigorous experiences by opening access to and providing supports for success in the IB program.

First, student entry into IB courses became mandatory for all students. Specifically, all ninth and 10th grade students were enrolled in MYP, and all 11th and 12th grade students are registered for IB English HL. It was no longer an all-or-nothing decision of participating in the DP, but rather, students could determine how many or few (i.e., at minimum, one DP course) DP courses to enroll. As such, there was no division of school counseling services (e.g.,

parent night topics, core curriculum lessons) for students who were or were not in the IB program since all students participated in the IB program. Next, DP course offerings drastically expanded (i.e., a range of IB courses were offered in various core courses, such as sciences and foreign languages, and electives, such as technology and film). Most importantly, IBHS had financial support from the district to cover course and examination fees for all students to take as many IB courses or to pursue the full IB Diploma program.

“IB for All” is a radical shift in thinking and action. The Department advocated for and confidently challenged educators to shift their fixed mindsets to growth mindsets. The school-wide culture transformed by upholding the outlook that all IBHS students could and should access high quality, rigorous educational opportunities as well as be and feel successful when they are provided with effective and meaningful academic, social, and emotional supports. In addition, students from underserved populations can succeed in IB when they have family support and buy-in, positive relationships with peers and educators, receive encouragement, and are communicated high expectations. At IBHS, prescribed scheduling for the elite few gave way to open access as well as student-centered and student-driven inclusion to reflect the mission of “IB for All.”

### **Implications and Future Research**

There are several implications for school counselors, school leaders, and policy makers. First, although there may not be prescribed roles of school counselors from the IBO, school counselors can feel empowered to develop school counseling programs and interventions that address the needs of students, families, and staff in their unique school contexts. School counselors can examine and evaluate school and student data by administering needs assessments and delivering relevant interventions that support students’ academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development (Isaacs, 2003). Moreover, it is also important that school counselors acknowledge their roles as potential gatekeepers to IB courses and programs and reframe and redefine their roles as advocates (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; May et al., 2013). School counselors are encouraged to examine school and student data to observe any access gaps, and their roles in academic planning can serve as a form of advocacy to promote equitable access rigor for all students, especially for students from historically marginalized populations (ASCA, 2018). Caspary et al. (2015) suggested that school counselors play an important role in enhancing low-income student participation and enrollment in IB DPs. School counselors have significant capacity to impact students’ academic trajectories and school-wide culture, as they are critical contributors to school-wide academic support (Suldo et al., 2018).

Next, school leaders are encouraged to include school counselors in leadership team meetings because school counselors are also leaders who can contribute important

perspectives of individual, classroom-based, and school-wide needs of students. School leaders, including administrators and IB program coordinators, can collaborate and consult with school counselors in proactive ways, not only reactively. For example, school leaders can provide school counselors with opportunities to connect with and inform school staff about school counselors' roles and responsibilities in supporting the student development, families, and teacher needs. Also, administrators and IB coordinators can provide, incentivize, support, and advocate for school counselors to seek training in understanding IB programming to expand access to IB courses for more students (Siskin et al., 2010). Administrator and school counselor relationships are critical to supporting student needs, implementing meaningful and data-driven programs, and promoting positive relationships and a successful school community (Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Odegard-Koester & Watkins, 2016).

Lastly, for policy makers, it is important to advocate for school counselor presence and availability in elementary and secondary schools. Studies have shown that lowered school counselor to student ratios can positive impact student outcomes, such as attendance and graduation, especially for students attending high-poverty schools (Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley, & Pierce, 2012; Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, 2012). Based on a nationally representative data set of U.S. public school students, researchers found that lower school counselor to student ratios were associated with higher student grade point averages (GPAs), and in addition, students attending Title I schools (i.e., schools with more than 40% of student receiving free and reduced lunches) earned fewer AP or IB credits than students from non-Title I schools (Goodman-Scott, Sink, Cholewa, & Burgess, 2018). This finding connects to Perna et al.'s (2011) study in that that school counselors are often less available in Title I schools to support IB students. The researchers advocated for considering contextual factors of schools and student populations, as school counselors have the potential to significantly impact student academic outcomes. When students have greater access to school counselors, they are likely to receive information about academic, college, and career information, an especially critical impact for students and families of underrepresented backgrounds who may have less social capital about pursuing postsecondary education (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011). In addition, research has shown that the IB program can be a way to close achievement and opportunity gaps for low-income students (Coca et al., 2012; Gordon et al., 2015; LaCour, York, Welner, Valladares, & Kelley, 2017).

Future research directions can include identifying primary roles of school counselors in IB schools across the PYP, MYP, DP, and CP levels and how their roles support students' experiences and outcomes in academic, social and emotional, and postsecondary development. Next steps can also include developing a research-based framework to

support school counselors' development of school counseling programs that are consistent with the philosophy of IB programs. Such a framework can support new and existing school counselors in IB schools to collaborate with school-based staff and administrators to implement meaningful interventions for their students, families, and staff and utilize data to inform changes in IB programming and the overall school culture. Further, aligned with the IBO's mission and vision toward equitable access to IB programming and rigor, especially for students from historically marginalized backgrounds, further research can also focus on how school counselors in various school contexts implement initiatives and program goals that work toward closing achievement and opportunity gaps in IB programs. Such initiatives can include examining student outcomes as the result of school counselor-led evidence-based curricula and practices to target specific student needs and conducting comprehensive school counseling program evaluations to assess the inputs and outputs that contribute to the overall missions and visions of schools and the IBO.

### Conclusion

School counselors can impact the trajectories of students' futures and lives. When students, especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds, have access to IB courses and programs, they have the opportunity to build their academic, social, and emotional resilience, which they will carry into their postsecondary endeavors. School counselors can empower their respective schools and school counseling programs to align with the IBO's mission to increase equitable access to rigorous educational opportunities for all students. Through collaboration, advocacy, and leadership and an "IB for All" mindset, school counselors, in partnership with the school community, can transform a school culture and community that sets high expectations for all students and change perceptions of educators from fixed to growth mindsets. In turn, students and families who are new to academic rigor and the postsecondary experience are empowered to make decisions that will impact their efficacy for educational success and opportunities afforded to future generations.

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Table 1

*Suggested Articulation of School Counselors' Roles in IB MYP and DP*

<b>Program</b>	<b>Semester 1</b>	<b>Semester 2</b>
MYP 9	<p><b>Parent night topics:</b> Developmental expectations of and parenting high school students; College readiness; Orientation to MYP</p> <p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> Orientation to high school and MYP; GPS your way to graduation; Time and stress management; Study and test preparation skills</p>	<p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> MYP course selections; Where do I fit now that “everyone” is smart?; Building your extracurricular resume; Preparing for college now</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> MYP course selections; MYP Personal Project preparation</p>
MYP 10	<p><b>Parent night topics:</b> Expectations of final year of MYP; Parenting your sophomore; College planning</p> <p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> Understanding your academic responsibilities; Career exploration; PSAT preparation</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> Developing the MYP Personal Project</p>	<p><b>Parent night topics:</b> The IB journey: Expectations of DP</p> <p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> DP course selections (e.g., To go full DP or not: What are my strengths?); Continuing to build your academic reputation</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> DP course selections; Finalizing MYP Personal Projects</p>
DP 11	<p><b>Parent night topics:</b> Expectations of and Succeeding in DP; Parenting your junior; High stakes testing; College admissions</p> <p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> Study skills and time management; Your academic reputation matters; High stakes tests (the PSAT) and my immediate future: Taking control</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> Career and college exploration; DP guidance; Academic progress check-ins</p>	<p><b>Parent night topics:</b> College applications and financial planning; Preparing for DP Year 2</p> <p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> DP course selections and exam expectations; What drives your college selections?; PSAT score review and preparing for college admissions testing; Professional resume and portfolio development</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> Academic progress check-ins; College list planning meetings (including families)</p>
DP 12	<p><b>Parent night topics:</b> Parenting your senior and transition to adulthood; College applications and financial planning; DP assessments and examinations</p> <p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> Understanding your postsecondary options; Writing the college essay; Managing your time, stress, and emotions</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> Academic and college planning meetings (including families); Fulfilling DP requirements</p>	<p><b>Core curriculum lessons:</b> Transition from high school to college and the world of work; Recognizing signs of separation anxiety and how to cope</p> <p><b>Individual academic planning:</b> College decision family meetings and preparing for the college and career transition</p>