

## Introduction of the International Baccalaureate Program at Deerfield Beach High School

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This report is an introduction to the International Baccalaureate (IB), an academic foundation established in 1968. We specifically focused on the Diploma Program, one of the four IB programs, aimed at ages 16-19, and its unique requirements for graduation. We looked at the IB exams, the Extended Essay research paper, and the hours of extracurricular activities that IB diploma candidates are required to complete in order to receive the IB diploma. We interviewed one Diploma Program graduate from an American IB school, asking her about her classes, exams, and other IB activities. This report details the personal experience of Student A from Deerfield Beach High School in Deerfield Beach, Florida. We looked at the six subjects she had selected in the program, and how she recalls those selected courses, along with the required Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course, were taught at Deerfield Beach High School in order to prepare for the IB exams. The student also explained her extracurricular activities related to IB, specifically the Community, Action, and Service (CAS) hours. We then examined the IB Mission Statement and IB Learner Profile, which illustrate the goals IB has for its students. We compared Student A's experience with the IB Diploma Program at Deerfield Beach High School to these ideals set by the International Baccalaureate Organization.

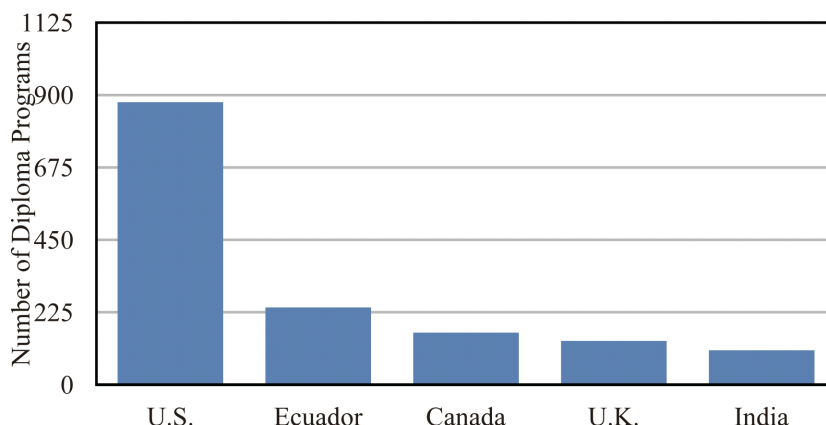
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### 1. IB Program Facts

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is an international educational foundation that was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968. Now, there are IB programs at over 4,000 schools in over 100 countries and areas. IB includes four programs: the Primary Years Program for ages 3-12, the Middle Years Program for ages 11-16, the Diploma Program for ages 16-19, and the Career-Related Program for ages 16-19. The Diploma Program is the oldest and most common of the four programs (<http://www.ibo.org/>, hereinafter "IB website").

The United States, which began teaching IB in 1971, has 878 Diploma Programs throughout the country, compared to 602 Middle Years Programs, 488 Primary Years Programs, and 70 Career-Related Programs (IB website).

Japan, which began teaching IB in 1979, has 26 Diploma Programs, compared to 9 Middle Years Programs, 19 Primary Years Programs, and 0 Career-Related Programs. The countries with the highest number of IB Diploma Programs are the United States (878), Ecuador (240), Canada (162), the United Kingdom (136), and India (107) (IB website) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Countries with Largest Number of IB Diploma Programs  
(created by author based on IB website)**

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## 2. IB Exams

According to IB's list of World Schools, IB schools usually favor English as the language of instruction, but French and Spanish are also main languages. In the United States, all IB programs are taught in English with some schools also offering instruction in Spanish, French, and Japanese. In Japan, all programs are taught in English with two schools also offering instruction in Japanese (IB website).

In order to graduate the IB Diploma Program, students must take six tests in different subjects (General Regulations, p. 4). Each test is worth a total of 7 points, and 24 points are needed to receive the IB diploma. In addition to those six tests, students must also complete the Theory of Knowledge course (TOK); complete 150 or more hours of creativity, action, and service activities (CAS); and complete an extended essay (EE) on a chosen topic supervised by a qualified teacher (General Regulations, p. 5).

### 2-1. Deerfield Beach High School IB Test Subjects

Student A attended Deerfield Beach High School and graduated from the IB Diploma Program in 2008. For the IB class of 2008 at Student A's school, it was required to select three Standard Level (SL) subjects and three Higher Level (HL) subjects, she said. According to Student A, two of the SL tests would be taken at the end of the junior year, and all of the HL tests along with the one remaining Standard Level test would be taken at the end of the senior year. Each IB school offers different subjects and courses. The subjects/tests from which to choose at Deerfield Beach High School were as follows:

1. English Literature (SL/HL)
2. History (SL/HL) or Cultural Anthropology (SL)
3. Art (SL/HL) or Music (SL) or Theater (SL)
4. Math Studies (SL) or Calculus (SL/HL)
5. Chemistry (SL) or Biology (SL/HL)
6. Spanish (SL/HL) or French (SL/HL) or Japanese (SL)

### 2-2. Selected Test Subjects

Student A chose to take the Japanese (SL) and Chemistry (SL) tests at the end of her junior year in 2007. At the end of her senior year in 2008, she took the tests for English Literature (HL), History (HL), Art (HL), and Calculus (SL). According to her, these were her test scores:

1. English Literature (HL): 5 points
  2. History (HL): 4 points
  3. Art (HL): 5 points
  4. Calculus (SL): 5 points
  5. Chemistry (SL): 5 points
  6. Japanese (SL): 7 points
- (Total: 31 points out of 45 points)

According to the IB General Regulations, "performance in each subject is graded on a scale of 1 point (minimum) to 7 points (maximum). For the IB diploma, a maximum of 3 points is awarded for combined performance in TOK and the extended essay. The maximum total Diploma Programme points score is 45" (General Regulations, p. 6).

These scores were sufficient for her to receive an IB diploma in 2008 (General Regulations, p. 6). According to Student A, while the English, History, Calculus, and Chemistry tests were regular written tests, the Japanese test included an interview, and the Art test consisted of an art show and notebook review.

#### 2-2-1. IB English Course (HL)

Student A reports that the English IB test was geared more towards literature understanding and interpretation, so while the student and her peers did drill some high-level English vocabulary words, most of the course consisted of reading various types of English literature as well as some translated literature. "Sometimes we wrote essays about our interpretations, trying to use literary terms like 'allegory,' 'metaphor,' 'personification,' etc.," she said. According to her, the goal was to understand, think deeply, and express their thoughts coherently and academically. She said her teachers often stressed that, "any interpretation can be supported through proper analysis," and that finding connections was more important than being necessarily correct.

#### 2-2-2. IB History Course (HL)

According to Student A, the IB history test included a choice of prompts, and almost always included a prompt about one of the World Wars. Therefore, the teacher prepared the students in Student A's class by focusing heavily on World War material. "For the test essays, we had to answer the prompt by referencing books or documents that we had read," said Student A. Therefore, much of the IB History course at Deerfield Beach High School was

reading articles and books on historical subjects and memorizing the content. Student A says, “we spent a lot of time reading Henry Kissinger and other documents, but the class did not focus very much on memorizing exact dates. We were encouraged to know the general timeline, but we just needed to memorize key facts to use as references on the test.” Student A and her peers also sometimes did debates and discussions about both past and current politics, including the current Israel/Palestine situation.

### **2-2-3. IB Calculus Course (SL)**

The Deerfield Beach High School IB program offered three different math courses: Math Studies (SL), Calculus (SL), and Calculus (HL), reports Student A. Math Studies was the least intensive of the three, with HL Calculus being the most intensive. Student A says, “I took the SL Calculus course, which was similar to the HL course, but with one fewer class. Our class focused heavily on memorizing formulas to use on the IB test.” Students were almost always allowed to use graphing calculators on tests, and were taught the correct way to use the calculators to check their answers. “We didn’t have to calculate in our heads, and just had to remember which formula to use and how to use it.” The teacher also had Student A and her peers do projects like crocheting, to help them conceptualize mathematical patterns.

### **2-2-4. IB Chemistry Course (HL)**

Student A’s IB Chemistry course focused heavily on lab reports and group experiments, according to her. Sometimes she had to write lab reports alone, and sometimes in a group. She says, “the reports were strictly graded, and any mistakes in data or format resulted in a loss of points. I preferred doing group labs because I could ask my classmates about things I didn’t understand.” The student and her peers also were taught to memorize the major chemical reactions, understand the linking of different elements, and appreciate the scientific process. According to the student, the labs were exciting to perform, but also tedious to record the appropriate data for the lab report.

### **2-2-5. IB Japanese Course (SL)**

Student A reports that the Japanese test consisted of a regular written test in addition to a recorded interview in Japanese. The IB Japanese course was a total of 6 classes over 3 years. In her freshman year, Student A took

Japanese I and Japanese II. In her sophomore year, she took Japanese III and Japanese IV. In her junior year, she took Japanese V and Japanese VI, and then took the Standard Level IB Japanese exam at the end of her junior year. “The course focused on grammar perfection, vocabulary memorization, and kanji drills once a week,” she says. The student and her peers often broke into pairs or groups to practice conversation, and to perform skits in Japanese. They were instructed to always use as much Japanese as possible. Some students participated in county-wide foreign language competitions, Japanese speech contests, and a national Japanese language and culture competition called The Japan Bowl. According to Student A, “it was a good balance of ‘fun’ and ‘study,’ and I was always encouraged to go beyond the syllabus and study in my own way. We learned about Japanese culture, too, even though it wasn’t on the IB test.”

### **2-2-6. IB Art Course (HL)**

The Art test was an examination of a student’s own art gallery, a collection of pieces chosen by the diploma candidate with an encompassing theme, says Student A. “There was also an examination of our “black books,” which are art journals we keep about the art pieces we are working on, art styles we are studying, or art history we are learning.” Student A’s art teacher assigned the student and her peers to fill 10 pages in their black books every week, and she says, “it was always a struggle to write a full 10 pages.” They also had to complete one work of art each week, usually related to a certain theme or using a certain technique. For example, when Student A learned about Impressionism, she had to create an Impressionism-Style piece, but the subject and the medium were her choice. When she learned about pointillism, she had to create a piece utilizing pointillism, but the style was her choice. Using the pieces they created, Student A and her peers had to choose a theme and present their pieces to the IB art examiner, explaining why they chose their theme, how each of the pieces in their show related to the theme, and what techniques they used in each piece. She said, “we had to say which pieces we felt were successful, and which were not as successful. It was okay to display less-than-perfect pieces. We just had to say the reasons why we thought so, to show that we understood.” The IB Art test (HL), while being relatively subjective compared to the other IB tests, was the most time-consuming, according to Student A.



### 3. Extracurricular Activities

As stated earlier, the IB Diploma Program does not only require sufficient test scores. (General Regulations, p. 4). Diploma candidates must also devote many hours outside of the classroom, namely CAS activities. CAS stands for “creativity,” “action,” and “service.” According to Student A, “creativity can be anything that involves one creating something, like painting, playing music, or writing. Action was anything in which you moved your body, like sports or exercise. Service was basically volunteering.” At Deerfield Beach High School, Student A and her IB peers were required to complete at least 50 hours of each activity, making 150 hours in total. But, some activities could count as two categories. For example, Student A would sometimes go to a homeless shelter after school to do arts and crafts with kids while the kids’ parents went to night school. This counted as hours towards both “creativity” and “service.”

The Deerfield Beach High School IB program encouraged all students to be on a sports team, or at least in a club, she said. “This was less for IB requirements and more for being attractive to universities looking for ‘well-rounded’ applicants.” Student A was on the cross country team in Fall and the softball team in Spring. According to her, these were more than enough to cover her CAS “action” hours.

The CAS “service” hours were also easy to obtain, Student A says, because many students were already aiming for 200 total community service hours at her school. “If a student at Deerfield Beach High School logged 200 or more hours of community service, they would receive a silver cord at graduation. It sounds like a lot, but just a couple of hours every weekend adds up after a few years.” Student A’s main community service activity was volunteering at Horses and the Handicapped, a horse therapy organization in Coconut Creek, Florida. She usually did about 2 hours on Saturdays that she was free. She also got service hours for tutoring at a school for Japanese students.

The CAS “creativity” hours were the most difficult for Student A to complete. However, the teachers at Deerfield Beach High School would often let students know about events in which students could participate and get approved for CAS hours. “My IB art teacher invited students to stay after school to help paint some walls for a haunted house. I got a lot of hours for that.” She also got creativity hours from helping her softball team re-paint the dugout.

### 4. IB Mission Statement

From the official IB website:

*“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 programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right”* (<http://dbhsib.weebly.com/learner-profile.html>, hereinafter “Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

To achieve this mission statement, IB also has a list of 10 attributes of the ideal IB student. This is called the “IB learner profile.” IB schools encourage students to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

**4-1. Inquirers:** “We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

According to Student A, students in the Deerfield Beach High School IB Program were always encouraged to ask questions in class, especially in English class. For Student A’s Extended Essay, she had to choose a topic in which she was interested, and find at least 20 resources from which to draw information. “Also, the Theory of Knowledge class was basically devoted to asking questions we couldn’t completely answer. We learned that it was okay to not know the answer, but we should always ask questions.” According to her, whenever the students asked a question in class, the teacher answered them enthusiastically, and through the Extended Essay, the students gained confidence in finding their own answers, too. “We also did a lot of group projects, which taught us how to work together. And our class debates let us know it’s okay to disagree,” she said.

**4-2. Knowledgeable:** “We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of



disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

While Student A and her peers were essentially preparing for the IB exams, much of their education was also learning for the sake of learning. “In Japanese class, we often had to search for current events in Japan and report what we found to the class as homework.” She also studied Japanese history, even though it was not related to the IB Japanese test. In IB art, Student A and her peers learned about the lives of famous artists and the major art movements, even though she was only tested on the art she created herself. “In history class, we had to learn about current events and relate them to historical events,” said Student A. “And in calculus class, we did projects like crocheting that don’t seem related to math at first.” This shows that the Diploma Program at Deerfield Beach High School didn’t focus exclusively on preparing for the IB exams, but also followed through with the IB Mission Statement to create “lifelong learners” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

**4-3. Thinkers:** “We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

In both art and English class, Student A spent a lot of time analyzing art and writing pieces. “We were told there was never a correct answer, and we were often praised for being able to support a unique theory,” she said. “Even if a student answered a question in class, the teacher would usually continue asking other students if they had a different idea and encourage many students to give different answers.”

**4-4. Communicators:** “We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

In Japanese class, Student A did many presentations. “For example, we had to pick a recipe and explain in Japanese how to make it. Speaking in front of the class was hard at first, but it got easier over time.” Student A and her peers also did group projects in Japanese class, where they were given certain grammar structures and vocabulary to use, and created a play entirely in Japanese to perform for the class. According to Student A, as long as

they were using Japanese, they were told they could do whatever they wanted. This shows how the class encouraged creativity in communication, following the IB Learner Profile.

Similarly, in TOK class and history class, Student A says, “teachers sometimes broke the class up into two sides and did a debate on a chosen topic. We could not choose which side we were on, but we had to construct arguments as a group. Although it was a little difficult to argue for a side we didn’t believe in, it helped up appreciate another way of thinking”.

**4-5. Principled:** “We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

At Deerfield Beach High School, all of the students’ recorded CAS hours and community service hours were up to the students to organize, according to Student A. “We had to obtain signatures from wherever we did community service, but it was easy to forget. It was also easy to be tempted to cheat, copy, or plagiarize because of how busy we always were. Being honest was a struggle,” she said. However, according to Student A, if students were ever caught, they were sent to the “IB Honor Court,” where their fellow classmates act out a trial and decide whether or not they are guilty and what the punishment will be. Sometimes, although rare, students were removed from the IB Program for dishonesty. IB students at Deerfield Beach High School all had an “Honor Code” which they promised to follow. Student A says, “we were taught that it was always better to be honest.” The fact that IB students can be expelled from the program for dishonesty shows that Deerfield Beach High School upheld this ideal of justice and consequences.

**4-6. Open-minded:** “We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

Deerfield Beach High School holds a cultural festival once a year. The cultural festival is when students create booths to represent a country of choice. IB students were usually encouraged to organize and design a booth to represent their or their parents’ cultural heritage. Student A and her peers were taught that it was important to respect

other cultures.

**4-7. Caring:** “We show empathy, compassion, and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

In addition to the 50 CAS service hours to complete in order to receive their IB diploma, Deerfield Beach High School IB students were also encouraged to complete a total of 200 community service hours in order to receive a silver cord at graduation, reported Student A. Her IB supervisor and teachers would let her and her peers know of any volunteer opportunities available. IB requiring community service hours in order to graduate shows that it encouraged IB students to help their community. Student A said, “we were free to choose whatever community service we wanted to do, as long as it was approved by our supervisor. I chose to volunteer with kids, because that was what I was interested in.”

**4-8. Risk-takers:** “We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

As for “new ideas,” the TOK class pushed Student A and her peers to think about questions for which there were no answers. According to Student A, “for many students, this was unsettling at first, because we were asking questions that had no answers. TOK was a very controversial class, with most students either enjoying it or struggling.” Other than TOK class, Student A reports not recalling any other times IB specifically fostered resilience.

**4-9. Balanced:** “We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives-intellectual, physical, and emotional-to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

Finding balance between school and social lives is commonly difficult for IB students, according to Student A. “Out of ‘intellectual,’ ‘physical,’ and ‘emotional,’ the IB Program definitely satisfies the intellectual part most easily,” she said. “With sports clubs, the physical aspect is usually covered easily, too. However, ‘emotional’ is not as easy.” Many IB students are stressed from their busy schedules, she says. During Student A’s time at Deerfield

Beach High School, sometimes her art teacher would have the students to stretch, or listen to calm music while working on their art pieces. IB counseling was also available, but not often utilized as far as Student A recalls. She says that almost every IB student at Deerfield Beach High School felt a large amount of stress, and consequently had unhealthy lifestyles including lack of sleep. This shows that the IB program at Student A’s school did not successfully cultivate a balanced environment for the students.

However, based on Student A’s report, balance between working independently and working in a group was well established. “Nearly every IB class involved individual assignments as well as pair or group projects,” she said. “Many IB students became very close with each other, and almost everyone got along well.”

**4-10. Reflective:** “We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development” (Deerfield Beach High School IB website).

Student A said she found this to be especially true in the IB art class. “Each student did better with different media or styles than others. Our teacher encouraged us to find our own style, and to not compare our art to our classmates’ art.” The IB Diploma Program, while having many guidelines, seems to offer a great deal of customizability from selecting the IB exams to choosing community service activities.

## 5. Conclusion

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program is present in many countries and areas throughout the world, and has the goal of raising students to be “inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect,” according to the IB mission statement. IB Diploma Programs do this by fostering 10 attributes in their students, called the IB Learner Profile: “inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.”

Student A is an IB Diploma Program graduate, and she recounted her experiences with IB with regards to the mission statement and Learner Profile. Based on her report, we can conclude that the IB Diploma Program at Deerfield Beach High School from 2004-2008 was mostly

successful. Student A reported that she felt she and her peers became more inquisitive, knowledgeable, understanding, and eloquent throughout the program. However, Student A reported that honesty and stress management were constant challenges that were never quite mastered. She says, “overall, I believe that being in the IB Diploma Program has made me a better person, and also opened up new doors for me in the future. It was a very difficult and stressful four years, but I would recommend the program to anyone.”

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