



Overview

International Baccalaureate

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 1200 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • Fax: 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

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By Jennifer Dounay

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What Is International Baccalaureate?

International Baccalaureate (IB) is an educational program established by the nonprofit International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 to provide the children of diplomats with a common curriculum that would be recognized as these students moved across international borders. Today the IB program extends beyond its original goals to offer highly motivated students the opportunity to complete a cohesive, challenging curriculum aligned with international standards.

The IB Diploma Program, a rigorous two-year curriculum that in the U.S. corresponds with the 11th and 12th grades, consists of six subject areas:

1. Language A1, the study of literature in the student's first language
2. Second Language
3. "Individuals and Societies," a collection of nine social studies disciplines
4. Experimental Sciences, a collection of five subjects
5. Mathematics and Computer Science (Mathematics is required, while Computer Science is an elective)
6. The Arts.

Students may take individual courses from the IB curriculum, but in order to earn the IB diploma, students must study at least one subject from six subject areas, typically studying three at the "standard" level and three at the "higher" level, and pass an exam in each of the six program subjects, although students may substitute a second social science, experimental science, or language exam for the arts exam. IB diploma candidates likewise complete the following program elements:

1. Theory of Knowledge, an interdisciplinary study assessed internally and externally.
2. Extended Essay, a maximum 4,000-word, externally assessed, independent research assignment in one of the six subject areas.
3. Creativity, Action, Service, at least 150 hours in creative, physical and service activities completed over the two years of the program.

In addition to providing a challenging curriculum, the program stresses critical thinking and international understanding and offers diploma holders the opportunity to finish college in as few as three years, since many postsecondary institutions award credit for minimum IB scores. However, to offer IB a school must be designated an "IB school" and must pay certain fees. Specifically, to offer the IB program, a school must:

- Be authorized by the IBO and pay an authorization fee.
- Pay an annual school fee (as of September 2007, \$8,850 for a high school offering the diploma program and neither the early or middle grades programs).
- Pay assessment fees:
 - A one-time student registration fee for each student who takes one or more exams during a particular examination session (students often take all exams for the IB diploma at the end of the second year of diploma program studies; this fee was \$123 for the 2007-2008 school year).
 - An \$84 fee is also assessed for each subject area exam taken. Assessment fees are not assessed for the theory of knowledge or extended essay assessments.

- Undergo a self-study process every five years.

Source: International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) Web site, <http://www.ibo.org/>

Jennifer Dounay, project manager, [ECS High School Policy Center](#), compiled this report. Email: jdounay@ecs.org.

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