

MINNESOTA IB PROGRAM

Program Profile¹

As previously described in the Accelerating Student Success Through Credit-Based Transition Programs September 2004 site profiles,² the Minnesota site is an IB program. In general, the IB program offers college-level classes to 11th- and 12th-graders, with the possibility of earning college credit upon successful completion of examinations.³ Courses taken before the 11th- and 12th-grade years are classified as Pre-IB classes.

The Minnesota IB program, located in a high school, has been in existence since the early 1990s. During the 2003–04 school year, the high school's total enrollment was 1,415 students, with 692 students enrolled in the IB program. The school's student body is diverse; approximately 30 percent of the students are African-American or Hispanic, 20 percent are Asian, and 50 percent are white. Approximately 45 percent of the school's students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 10 percent are classified as ELL. Of those in the IB program, 10 percent are African-American or Hispanic, 15 percent are Asian, and 75 percent are white.

The district in which Minnesota IB High School is located has a school choice program that allows students to select their high school based on interest rather than neighborhood. Students rank high schools in order of preference, and the district uses a lottery system to place students in the schools. This system ensures that each high school has students with a range of academic abilities and that high schools in the district draw their students from the entire city, rather than only the surrounding neighborhood.

Minnesota IB High School is located in a middle-class, affluent neighborhood with the typical wide, quiet streets and large lawns, and consists of one main building with several floors.⁴ The school has been undergoing significant organizational changes during the last four years, due to its implementation of a smaller learning communities⁵ grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The four smaller learning communities are organized around the broad themes called: Technology and Science, Global Vision, Health and Human Services, and Liberal Arts. All students in the IB program also belong to a smaller learning community.

¹ In order to give the study participants anonymity, the specific research sites were given pseudonyms. However, the name of the general program is used in some cases.

² Please see the Accelerating Student Success Through Credit-Based Transition Programs study's Web page on the U.S. Department of Education's Web site to download and view two-page profiles of each of the study's five case sites at: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/cbtrans/index.html.

³ Please also see on the study Web page, listed above, the program description for more information on the IB program model.

⁴ This descriptive information is provided so the reader has a better understanding of the program environment.

⁵ Smaller learning communities are defined by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as small high schools or schools-within-schools (ideally 400 students or fewer) that provide a personalized learning environment where every student has an adult advocate, students feel less alienated, and students are actively engaged in school activities. For more information on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Smaller Learning Communities program, please visit: www.gatesfoundation.org/education/transformingHighschools/default.htm. Last accessed on Sept. 2, 2005.

As part of the smaller learning communities reorganization, the school implemented advisory periods, during which groups of approximately 20 students meet with a teacher so that they develop a close relationship with at least one adult. Students remain with the same advisory teacher for their entire high school experience. (The exception to this is that students in the most intense IB pathways are placed in their own advisories for their junior and senior years). During advisories, which meet three times per week, students engage in informal activities to get to know one another and spend time developing a six-year plan encompassing high school course work and post-high school education and employment goals.

Although the IB program is the largest CBTP in the school, there are other opportunities for students to earn college credit. The school offers a number of Tech-Prep courses as well as Advanced Placement (AP) English. Students also may take a limited number of courses through College in the High Schools or the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program, which are state dual enrollment programs offering students the opportunity to take college classes, either in high school or on a college campus.

Classes run from 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The school is on a block schedule, with classes meeting 90 minutes a day for one semester. The school administration is composed of a principal, three assistant principals, and three counselors. IB administrative staff includes an IB program coordinator and the IB calculus teacher who coordinates IB classes and testing

schedules. Additional service providers include a parent coordinator, a career and college center staff person, and the coordinator of the school's Multicultural Excellence Program (MEP), a program encouraging minority students to plan for and attend college.

All students in the high school have the opportunity to participate in the IB program. In the ninth and 10th grades, students can begin taking pre-IB classes. During their 10th grade year, students meet with IB staff to discuss the three alternate pathways for continuing in the program. One pathway is to pursue a full IB diploma, which comprises the majority of a student's class schedule. Students who pursue the full IB diploma must take exams in all six IB subject areas, as well as additional requirements detailed below. The second pathway is the IB honors program, which includes most of the components of the IB diploma pathway. Finally, there is the certificate option, which allows students to choose to take an IB course or exam in their junior or senior year in at least one subject area. Students select from these options based on their interests and academic goals.

Student Outreach

Outreach and recruitment for the Minnesota IB program has historically focused on two moments in students' educational careers: when they select their high school as eighth-graders, and when they choose their IB pathway in 11th grade.

The Minnesota IB program serves to attract students to the high school itself, as the program gives parents a reason to select the high school over others in the district. Each November, prospective parents are invited to attend an open house at the high school. An additional event is held each January, when the school participates in a citywide recruitment fair as part of the district's school choice initiative. Finally, prospective parents can visit the school during the month of February, to observe IB and non-IB classes.

The IB coordinator attends all of these events, and an IB parent volunteer, IB teachers, and current IB students often attend, as well. Parents are encouraged to select the high school for their children and enroll them in pre-IB courses beginning in the ninth grade. At these recruiting sessions, the IB coordinator communicates to prospective students and parents that the IB program will give all students the opportunity to enjoy learning, work hard, and be challenged by the program's project-based work and assessments. The coordinator also answers parents' questions and concerns. Brochures and information packets are available to provide program details.

The IB program coordinator and IB instructors encourage students to stay enrolled during the ninth and 10th grades. Usually, this includes identifying those students at risk of leaving the IB program and speaking with them one-on-one about the benefits of participating. In addition, IB instructors work to recruit additional ninth and 10th graders into the program. Because all IB instructors teach non-IB classes as well, they are able to

identify potential candidates and encourage them to consider one of the three IB pathways.

At the beginning of 11th grade, students must decide whether to pursue the diploma, honors or certificate pathway. This process is more informal than the recruitment into the pre-IB program. Students meet with the IB coordinator (and, frequently, their IB teachers) to discuss the each pathway. The coordinator works with students to ensure that they enroll in a pathway that is both rigorous and aligned with their goals.

Despite the program's open-access status, and the goal of including a range of students in IB courses, IB students are not as diverse as the school as a whole. Therefore, in 2004–05, the staff instituted new recruiting mechanisms targeted at underrepresented groups. In the fall of 2004, the IB coordinator held an IB recruitment session for parents of current high school students as part of a larger school-wide parent event. This session, which was held in the evening to accommodate parents' schedules, included a presentation demonstrating that the program is appropriate for all students in the school.

The principal and the IB coordinator are also working with middle school counselors, who are responsible for registering students for their ninth grade classes, to ensure that they understand that IB is not a program only for elite students. The high school administration hopes that this will increase the number of students enrolled in pre-IB courses and that this will eventually broaden diploma, honors and certificate participation.

In addition, the IB coordinator is working with the coordinator of the school's MEP to develop support systems for students of color in IB courses. The MEP coordinator is encouraging minority students to enroll (or remain enrolled) in IB courses as part of their MEP participation. The MEP and IB coordinators also are working together to help students of color in the IB program connect with one another in order to develop a network of supportive peers. Finally, the IB coordinator also has established relationships with community groups, such as the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Hmong American Alliance (a local Minnesota organization that provides support services to the growing Hmong refugee population from Laos in Minnesota), in an effort to provide mentors for IB students of color.

IB Application Process

The Minnesota IB program is committed to enrolling students with a range of academic backgrounds. Therefore, it has no official application process or prerequisites. Students need only to register for pre-IB courses during the regular high school registration period.

There are two exceptions to this open-access policy. Students who have not passed the eighth grade reading exam are discouraged (though not forbidden) from enrolling in pre-IB courses. The reasons for this are two-fold: first, passing the exam is required for high school graduation, and students who have not passed it are enrolled in a special language arts class. The curriculum of this class focuses on preparation for the exam and does not align with the IB language arts curriculum. Secondly, students who cannot pass the

eighth-grade exam are unlikely to have the reading and analytic skills needed for IB course work.

Students in their junior and senior years may encounter difficulties enrolling in IB Diploma courses, even with the open enrollment policy, if they did not take the pre-IB course of study. Although in theory students may switch from non-IB into the IB program at any point in their academic careers, those students who did not take pre-IB courses frequently find that they do not have the academic background and knowledge to pursue diploma-level study in their junior and senior years. For this reason, the school tries to encourage all students to take pre-IB courses, even if they do not think they will eventually pursue the diploma program.

Pre-IB Curriculum and Program

The ninth and 10th grade pre-IB program is designed to provide broad preparation for the 11th- and 12th-grade IB classes. Pre-IB classes help to develop and refine higher level thinking skills, writing techniques, and oral communications so that students are prepared for the IB classes they will take in their junior and senior years. All pre-IB classes are taught by IB-trained teachers and are closely aligned with the IB diploma curriculum. The pre-IB program offers classes in all six standard IB subject areas, as described below.

IB Curriculum and Program

The IB program has six core academic subject areas: English, second languages, experimental sciences, arts, mathematics, and individuals and societies. The curriculum of each subject area is developed by the IBO and updated every seven years. Teachers work to ensure

that the IB curriculum is closely aligned with Minnesota state standards in each academic area.

The IBO offers its curriculum at two levels, the *Standard Level* and the *Higher Level*. Although both levels are academically rigorous, the Standard Level course work and examinations require less content knowledge and mastery than those in the Higher Level. Schools may choose which courses to offer at each level based on the expertise and interest of their faculty. The Minnesota IB High School offers nine subjects at the Higher Level and ten at the Standard Level. In order to be eligible for an IB Diploma, students must take at least three Higher Level courses. Students select which courses they want to take at each level based on those offered by their school.

IB students take examinations developed by the IBO in May of their junior and senior years. IB examinations are graded by examiners from around the world, and they measure students' progress against consistent, well-defined, international standards of achievement. Examinations are scored on a scale of one to seven, and those that receive a score of four or higher generally lead to college credit, although each postsecondary institution's policies on credit acceptance and credit award vary.

IB Diploma

Students in the IB diploma pathway take classes and exams in all six IB academic subject areas, and therefore this pathway is the most academically challenging IB option. In addition to course work and examinations in all six subject areas, the IB diploma pathway

also requires students to fulfill additional components. First, students must complete what is known as the *Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) project*, through which they become involved in their community by completing and reflecting upon at least 150 hours of some or all of the following: community service activities, sports, and theater or musical productions.

Students enrolled in the IB diploma pathway also are expected to take a semester-long interdisciplinary course, *Theory of Knowledge (TOK)*, during their senior year. In this class, students look at moral, political and aesthetic judgments that individuals make in their daily lives. The TOK course was designed to stimulate students' critical reflection on the concept of knowledge. It challenges them to question how knowledge is formed, to be aware of biases (subjective and ideological), and to encourage them to appreciate other cultural and social perspectives.

IB Diploma students must also write a *4,000-word essay* about a topic of special interest to them. This essay is based on independent research and is expected to convey the higher-level writing skills expected at the postsecondary level. Finally, Diploma students are enrolled in a special IB advisory section in order to provide them with additional program information and a network of peer support.

IB Honors

The second IB pathway, IB honors, includes most of the components of the IB Diploma pathway. This pathway was designed to recognize that many students want to pursue a

rigorous IB course of study but may not wish to commit to pursuing the full Diploma. IB Honors requires students to take IB exams in four subject areas, instead of six. Students are still expected to complete the CAS project, take the TOK course, and participate in an IB advisory. Students in the IB Honors pathway, however, are not expected to write the 4,000-word essay.

Certificate Option

The third pathway that students in the Minnesota IB program can select is the certificate option. In this pathway, students can choose to complete the course work and exams in one or more IB courses during their

junior or senior years, yet they do not have to complete either the 4,000-word essay or the CAS project, take the TOK class, or leave their smaller learning community advisory. The Certificate option enables students who may be wary of the rigorous Diploma or Honors pathways to still participate in the program.

Although it is not considered a pathway, the Minnesota IB program does allow students who are not enrolled in the IB program to take one or more classes without taking an IB examination. This option gives all students the opportunity to take the rigorous classes.

Exhibit A-6: Minnesota IB Program Pathways, Options and Requirements

Requirements	Full IB Diploma	IB Honors Program	IB Exam Certificate	Enrollment In IB classes^a
IB Exams	Must take exams in all six subject areas	Must take exams in four subject areas	Must take exam in one or more subject areas	Not required
Extended Essay	Required	Not required	Not required	Not required
Community Action Service (CAS) (at least 150 hours)	Required	Required	Not required	Not required
Theory of Knowledge Course	Required	Required	Not required	Not required
IB Advisory	Required	Required	Not required	Not required

^a Although enrollment in an IB class is not considered a pathway, it is an option available to students.

The components of the three pathways at Minnesota IB program are further detailed in the chart below.

IB Course Selection Process

Students must individually decide to which pathway they can devote their time and energy, and inform the IB coordinator before registering for classes. The IB coordinator is available to discuss the academic and nonacademic expectations for all three pathways. Students also may discuss their options with IB teachers and their guidance counselor and can consult the school's course catalogue for additional information. After conferring with adults (including their parents), students select their courses and register for them as they would for any high school courses.

Because successful completion of the IB Diploma requires much advance planning, Diploma students work closely with the IB coordinator as soon as they declare their intention to pursue the pathway. The structure of the school's schedule presents some challenges. The four-period block schedule (in which classes last for only one semester) sometimes means that students are unable to take the courses they need in the proper sequence. The IB calculus teacher works with the IB coordinator to schedule pre-IB and IB classes so that such conflicts are minimized. However, if there are scheduling issues or there are not enough students to schedule a specific class, the Minnesota IB program allows students to engage in independent study so that they can complete their requirements for the Diploma pathway.

Award of Credit for Courses

Students receive college credit for IB classes depending upon their IB examination scores, and the postsecondary institution's policies on the award and acceptance of college credit. Typically, students earn credit if they receive a four or better on their IB exams. Students receive credit for each course individually, and so they do not need to earn an IB Diploma in order to be eligible for IB credit at the postsecondary level.

Support Services

The purpose of the IB program is to prepare students for a postsecondary liberal arts education. Therefore, support services focus on academics and college preparation. Career awareness is not part of the IB program's focus.

Academic Counseling

All students receive academic counseling and support (though not specific to the IB program) in their advisories and are assigned a guidance counselor who helps them with course selection. In addition, ninth and 10th graders in the pre-IB program receive group counseling, in which the IB coordinator makes sure that they have all the information they need about the IB program for their junior and senior years. Juniors and seniors meet with the IB coordinator individually, to talk about their questions, concerns, support needs, and which exams and IB pathway they are going to pursue. Most IB students also receive informal academic counseling from IB teachers.

The IB program coordinator sends out four mailings a year to the family of each student

enrolled in one of the pre-IB or IB classes. The mailings focus on specific topics, such as registration or preparing for the IB examinations. In addition, throughout the year, the IB program coordinator holds evening information sessions to talk to IB parents about the program. Finally, the coordinator and IB teachers meet to discuss the needs of individual students, if necessary.

Academic Tutoring

Most IB teachers offer tutoring after school, but there is no formal tutoring program. Because the high school's schedule consists of semester-long classes, many IB teachers offer review sessions after school for students who are preparing for May examinations, yet took the course during their fall semester. Students also act as teaching assistants for IB classes that they took the previous semester and can review the materials and content during school hours.

The IB program encourages students who are ELLs to sign up for a writing and reading class during the summer at a local community college. The program specifically focuses on students who need extra help and instruction and ensures that they build critical analysis skills.

College Awareness

College awareness is infused throughout the Minnesota IB program because the program focuses heavily on liberal arts preparation. Students are encouraged to apply to and enroll in four-year postsecondary institutions. The IB program often brings in alumni to talk to current students about their college experiences.

At the high school, a number of college awareness activities exist, and IB students are able to take advantage of these opportunities. The school works with Admission Possible, a Minnesota organization that helps students apply to college. The group works with students after school, encouraging them to take the Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test (PSAT), ACT and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), and assisting them with their applications and resumes. Similarly, the Multicultural Excellence Program (MEP) is a statewide program that helps first-generation college-goers prepare for and apply to college. The high school's MEP coordinator arranges tours of college campuses and discusses with students the need to pursue advanced classes.

The high school's career and college center provides scholarship information, organizes visits and interviews, and manages college admission fairs and recruiting events. The center's staff person also works with the counseling department to provide additional college awareness information to students. The career and college center brings in college admissions people to help interested students apply for financial aid. Finally, all students are encouraged to consider postsecondary options as they develop their six-year plan.

College Transition

The rigorous curriculum of the IB program helps prepare students for the academic demands of college by developing their critical thinking skills and helping them to become independent learners. Ninety-five percent of students in the Minnesota IB program go on to a four-year postsecondary institution. Approximately 55 percent of students at the

high school go on to pursue further education and training at postsecondary institutions.

The high school makes many efforts towards a “culture of high expectations.” The district and the high school are in the process of aligning their courses with new state standards and course requirements currently being established by the state legislature. The school’s course registration book, given to all students, contains a section that focuses on planning for postsecondary education, including the requirements for admission to the University of Minnesota and other four-year institutions. The high school also holds financial planning seminars for parents. Parent breakfasts are held by the counseling department to provide 10th- and 11th-grade parents with information and resources about college preparation and success. The high school also offers preparatory classes for the PSAT.

Funding

Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

The Minnesota IB program receives state-, district-, and school-level funding. The school district, through its regular operating budget, provides the school with funds for IB equipment, instructor salaries, and textbooks. The state provides some additional funding for IB-related operating costs and professional development. In recent years, however, state funding has been drastically reduced.

Fees and Textbooks

Each IB exam costs \$180, in addition to a \$50 registration fee per student. In the past, state funds allocated by the school district covered

these costs, making the exams free to students. Recent budgetary problems have reduced the funds available for these purposes, so that students in the Minnesota IB program now must pay the \$50 registration fee themselves and possibly in the future some or all of the exam costs as well. School-level fundraising, conducted primarily by IB parents, provides additional resources that are used for field trips, materials, and textbooks not covered by the school budget.

Exhibit A-7: Minnesota International Baccalaureate Outcomes, 2003–04

Student Outcomes^a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The total enrollment at the high school where Minnesota IB is located was 1,415 students; 130 students are classified as ELLs, and 216 students are classified as special education students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ During the 2003–04 school year, a total of 692 students (49 percent) were enrolled in either pre-IB or IB classes; 19 IB students are classified as special education students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ During the 2003–04 school year, 420 of the 629 Pre-IB and IB students were enrolled in the pre-IB program (ninth or 10th grade), and 272 students were enrolled in the IB program (11th or 12th grade).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A total of 129 Minnesota IB took 276 IB exams in the spring of 2004.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eight of the nine IB Diploma candidates at Minnesota IB program during the 2003–04 school year successfully earned the IB Diploma.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The average number of exam points obtained by Minnesota IB candidates who passed the diploma was 31. (The maximum is 45 points—seven points for each of six exams, plus one point each for completing the Theory of Knowledge course, Creativity, Action, Service project, and the extended essay.) The average IB examination grade received by Minnesota IB students was 4.91.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Of the 276 IB exams taken in spring 2004 at Minnesota IB High School, 75 percent were given a score of 4 or better, which is generally the score needed for students to receive college credit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The highest diploma points awarded to an IB candidate at Minnesota IB was 36 credits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ According to student survey data, 148 of the 158 IB graduates (94 percent) planned to attend college.

^a All data come from school staff and were not externally validated.