

Dec. 15, 2015

## International Baccalaureate Programme at WHS

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at Westlake High School offers students a unique opportunity to study academic subjects in an integrated way while allowing personal choice in several aspects of their high school education.

In its inaugural year, the IBDP has five students taking the full program—three from WHS, one from Avon Lake High School, and one from Berea-Midpark High School. There are also nearly thirty students taking one or more IB courses as electives. Austin Goetz, a junior from Avon Lake High School, said he knew he wanted to get into a good college and set himself apart. He sees IB as a way to do that.

“I liked the high learning aspects, the challenge—it’s more challenging than Advanced Placement,” Austin said, adding that he is glad to be part of the pioneers in the first year of the program.

The IB Diploma Programme is an intensive, two-year academic program taken during the junior and senior years. Students study six academic content areas:

- **Language and Literature:** Survey of texts from multiple perspectives, literature from across cultures, writing and reflection
- **Individuals and Societies:** Global perspective of historical events with an intensive study of the history of North, Central and South America
- **Mathematics:** Algebra, functions and equations, circular functions, trigonometry, vectors, statistics and probability, calculus
- **Arts:** Studio-based 2D and 3D art, research history and practice of chosen art form
- **Sciences:** Application of knowledge to devise and perform investigations/implications of science in society
- **Language Acquisition:** Acquisition of sociocultural competencies, full-length literary works, fluency and accuracy

In addition to completing coursework and assessments, IB Diploma candidates also need to complete three core requirements:

- **Theory of Knowledge Course:** An inquiry into different kinds of knowledge. Students explore the nature of knowledge while applying the topics to academic subject areas.
- **Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) Requirement:** Fosters awareness and appreciation of life outside the academic area. Activities help students

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recognize the importance of educational experience that take place outside the classroom. These activities are completed outside of the school day.

- **Extended Essay:** A 4,000-word research project developed by the student, with assistance from a team of teachers. It requires an in-depth investigation of a topic of special interest to the student and helps them develop independent research and writing skills.

IB Diploma Programme Coordinator Matthew Planisek said the program is ideal for preparing students for university study by producing confident, independent learners who can think critically and explore connections between different areas of the curriculum.

Yousef Al-Shinnawi, a WHS junior, said he finds the program challenging, but he said he also learns more on a day-to-day basis and is confident the program is preparing him to succeed in college.

The research supports that statement. According to a research brief on the IBDP, IB participation improves secondary school academic performance, college enrollment and postsecondary persistence and achievement. Some findings:

- The first year retention rate of DP students enrolled in four-year institutions was 98 percent, compared to the national rate of 77 percent.
- The average four-year graduate rate of all DP students was 79 percent, compared to the national average of 39 percent.

And colleges and universities are starting to take note. IB students report increased academic opportunities over non-IB students. Many Ohio institutions are providing college credit and/or scholarships based on IB courses taken in high school. For example:

- Case Western Reserve University gives credit for IB examinations
- Kent State University awards college credit for most IB exams
- The Ohio State University awards credit in select higher level programs
- Ohio University awards credit for higher level exams
- University of Akron recognizes the academic quality of the IB program and awards credit for higher level exams
- University of Cincinnati accepts credit for exams in Advanced Placement, College-Level Examination Program and IB

At WHS, students have different options of participation in the IB programme:

- **Full Diploma Programme Candidate**—Two-year course of study in all six academic content areas, Theory of Knowledge course, CAS activities and the

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extended essay. Students may have the opportunity to take some elective classes if their schedule allows.

- **Individual IB Elective Courses**—Students have the opportunity to take IB courses as electives to partially fulfill their graduation requirements. Taking IB classes as electives allows students to blend IB, Advanced Placement and College Credit Plus classes to meet their individual needs.

IB courses offered this year include History, English Language A-Literature, Mathematics, Physics, Theory of Knowledge, Visual Art, French and Spanish.

WHS was approved as an authorized IB World School, adopting the Diploma Programme curriculum, in January 2015. Last summer, all four of Westlake's elementary schools—Bassett, Dover, Hilliard and Holly Lane—achieved IB World School status.

The WHS IBDP is recruiting for next school year. A parent informational meeting on Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate/College Credit Plus will be held at Westlake High School in January. More information will follow. If you have questions or would like to discuss the program, contact Matt Planisek at [planisek@wlake.org](mailto:planisek@wlake.org) or call 440.899.3075 x. 2837. You can also find more information on our website, [www.wlake.org](http://www.wlake.org), under the Westlake High School tab.

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