

The IB **Primary Years Programme**



21st century education

Students in the 21st century are faced with the challenge of learning about an interconnected world where knowledge is constantly developing. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme prepares students to be active participants in a lifelong journey of learning.

What is the IB Primary Years Programme?

The IB Primary Years Programme, for students aged 3 to 12, focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside.

The programme:

- encourages **international-mindedness** in IB students
- encourages a **positive attitude to learning** by engaging students in inquiries and developing their awareness of the process of learning so that they become lifelong learners
- reflects **real life** by encouraging learning beyond traditional subjects with meaningful, in-depth inquiries into real issues

- emphasizes, through the **learner profile**, the development of the whole student—physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically.

The IB Primary Years Programme frames the learning activities of the school community. Typically, the framework is flexible enough to incorporate national curriculum requirements. It is used in national and international, state and privately funded schools.

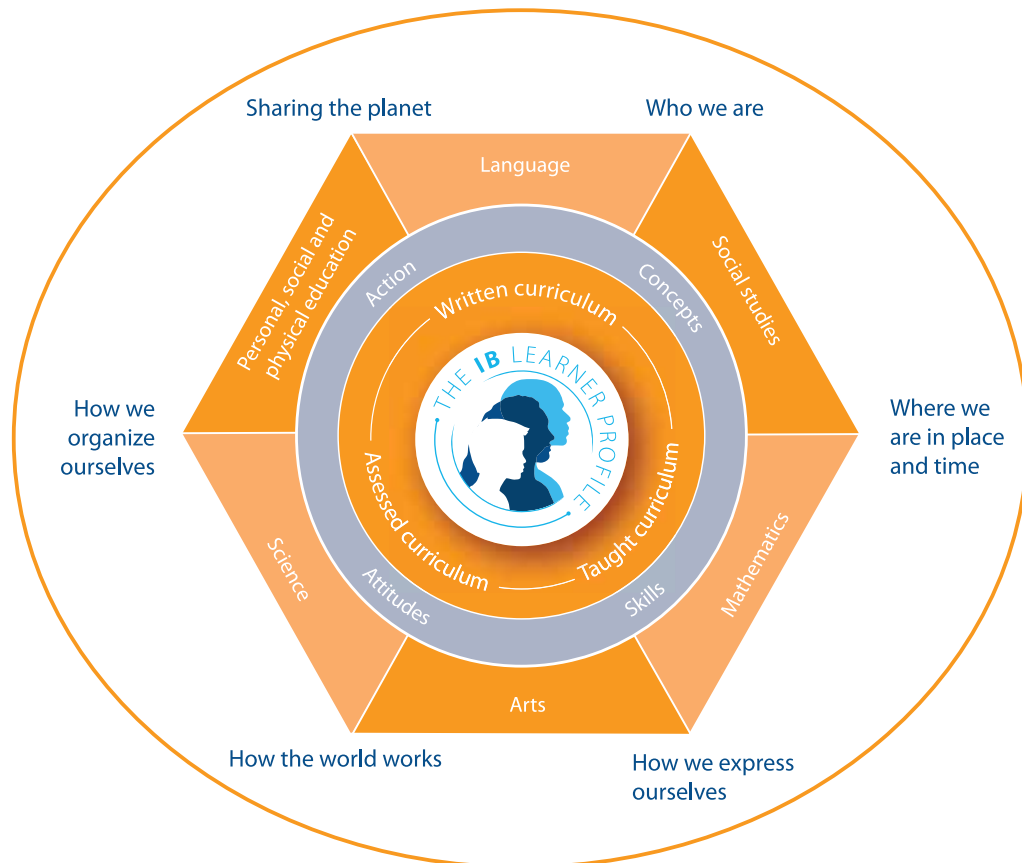
The written curriculum

The most significant and distinctive feature of the IB Primary Years Programme is the six transdisciplinary themes. These themes are about issues that have meaning for, and are important to, all of us. The programme offers a balance between learning **about** or **through** the subject areas, and learning **beyond** them. The six themes of global significance create a transdisciplinary framework that allows students to “step up” beyond the confines of learning within subject areas:

- Who we are
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- How we organize ourselves
- Sharing the planet

The programme puts great emphasis on learning about these transdisciplinary themes. Each theme is addressed each year by all students, with the exception of students aged 3 to 5, who may engage explicitly with four of the themes each year. The themes provide the opportunity to incorporate local and global issues into the curriculum

The traditional disciplines retain a role in the IB Primary Years Programme. The six specified subjects are language, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, and personal, social and physical education. The overall expectations for each subject area are defined for each year of the programme.



The taught curriculum

The six transdisciplinary themes help teachers to develop a programme of **inquiries**—in-depth investigations into important ideas, identified by the teachers, and requiring a high level of involvement on the part of the students. These inquiries are substantial, in-depth and usually last for several weeks.

For example, in an inquiry about “Sharing the planet” for students aged 8 to 9, we might look at “Finite resources—infinite demands”. In order to understand better the central idea that “Our planet has limited resources that are unevenly distributed” and using water as an example, we would inquire into where water comes from, how different people and countries use water, how much water we use, what happens after we have used it, the distribution of usable water around the world, how human activity has affected the availability of water, and our responsibility for water conservation. To support this inquiry, students would develop knowledge and acquire skills derived from science and social studies. In addition, they would develop transdisciplinary skills such as critical thinking, communication and time management.

In an inquiry about “Who we are” for students aged 4 to 5, we might look at “Families and friends”. In order to understand better the central idea that “People need families and friends” we might look at how families are similar and different across cultures, how we make and keep friends, why we need families and friends, and families

and friends through literature and the arts. To support this inquiry, students would develop knowledge and acquire skills derived from social studies, arts, and personal, social and physical education. In addition, they would develop transdisciplinary skills such as decision-making, listening, collecting data and working cooperatively.

Since these ideas are related to the world beyond the school, students see the relevance of the content and connect with it in ways that are engaging and challenging. Students who learn in this way begin to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as learners and become actively involved with their learning.

All students will know that a unit of inquiry will involve them in in-depth exploration of an important idea, and that the teacher will be collecting evidence of how well they understand that idea. They will expect to be able to work in a variety of ways, including on their own and in groups, to allow them to learn to their best advantage.

Students and parents will develop an understanding of the IB learner profile. The ten aspirational qualities of the learner profile inspire and motivate the work of teachers, students and schools, providing a statement of the aims and values of the IB and a definition of what we mean by “international-mindedness”. IB learners strive to be inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, knowledgeable, principled, open-minded, caring, balanced and reflective.

The assessed curriculum

Assessment is an important part of each unit of inquiry as it both enhances learning and provides opportunities for students to reflect on what they know, understand and can do. The teacher's feedback to the students provides the guidance, the tools and the incentive for them to become more competent, more skillful and better at understanding how to learn.

Deciding on how best to teach and how best to assess student learning is a collaborative process within the school. The IB has developed a planning tool to support effective collaboration on the part of all teachers and the programme coordinator.

Quality assurance and professional development

Any school wishing to offer the Primary Years Programme and attain IB World School status must first go through the authorization process. The requirements for authorization are the same for all schools, even though the process is administered slightly differently in each IB region. The process is designed to ensure schools are well prepared to implement the programme successfully.

This is a challenging programme that demands the best from both motivated students and teachers. Schools can access an extensive package of IB professional development for teachers and administrators and commit to ongoing professional development. Teams from the

organization visit IB World Schools from time to time in order to support an ongoing process of review and development, using standards and practices that apply to all IB World Schools.

IB teachers are challenged to constantly reflect upon and improve their practice. All teachers in IB World Schools have access to the online curriculum centre, which provides programme documentation, examples of student work, and also acts as the hub of an international online community. Teachers can talk to other teachers in IB World Schools around the world, give and receive advice, and post their own example resources for other teachers to share.

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- Become an IB World School
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