

IB: Myths vs. Facts

MYTH: IB is funded by UNESCO.

FACT: The International Baccalaureate (IB) was funded by the United Nations Education Service and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the 20th Century Fund, and the Ford Foundation until 1976. From 1977 the Heads Standing Conference (HSC) of Diploma Programme (Diploma) schools was formed and they began to pay the IB an annual subscription fee. In countries where state schools offered the IB Diploma Programme, the governments made financial contributions, and some continue to do so on a reduced basis. In return for these fees, the IB helped schools implement the IB Diploma Programme, offered training workshops and teaching materials to IB teachers, and managed a system of external examinations for IB diploma candidates.

MYTH: IB programs are pilot programs for UNESCO and the UN, developed for the purpose of creating an “international education system.”¹

FACT: The IB was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation. Its original purpose was to facilitate the international mobility of students preparing for university by providing schools with a curriculum and diploma recognized by universities around the world. Since then its mission has expanded, and it now seeks to make an IB education available to students of all ages. The IB, along with approximately 400 other organizations, is part of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). This relationship with the United Nations and its agencies does not extend to curriculum development or assessments.

MYTH: The IB “promotes socialism, disarmament, radical environmentalism, and moral relativism, while attempting to undermine Christian religious values and national sovereignty.”

FACT: The IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. IB programs do not advocate a single religion, or a political or economic system. Not only do many private schools with religious affiliations offer IB programs to their students, but also many denominational universities offer college credit for IB coursework. Also, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), dedicated to addressing the needs of children of US military personnel, has singled out the IB as a worthwhile and rigorous academic program for the children of US service members.

1 All quotations are actual accusations leveled at IB in newspaper articles and on websites.

MYTH: IB has a left-wing agenda.

FACT: The agenda of the IB is to provide students with the critical thinking skills to reach their own conclusions based on their own research and experiences. While the IB offers a framework for program curriculum, the strength of the IB programs is their flexibility in terms of content selection, classroom resources, pedagogy, and assessment. In this way, IB programs accommodate a diversity of thought, backgrounds, opinions, and worldviews.

MYTH: All tests and papers of American [IB] students are sent to Europe/Geneva for grading and evaluation.

FACT: Assessment of student achievement happens in a variety of ways throughout the course of the IB Diploma Programme. It includes assessment of student work both by outside examiners as well as the students' own teachers. The assessment itself undergoes careful review and moderation to ensure that a common standard is applied equally to the work of all students internationally. Additionally, educators nation and worldwide have realized the benefit of international standards of academic evaluation. Programs such as the College Board AP Program also send their exams to faculty around the world for scoring.

MYTH: The worldview taught by IB includes the promotion of the Earth Charter.

FACT: The IB reserves the right to endorse special projects developed by other organizations whose mission is seen as supporting or extending our own. We review our endorsements to ensure they are aligned with our mission to provide education programs that encourage students worldwide to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners. As a result of a recent review, IB withdrew its endorsement of the Earth Charter, as it no longer meets these criteria.

MYTH: IB Programmes are non-academic "fad" programs and many colleges and universities will not accept IB courses as fulfilling undergraduate requirements for admissions.

FACT: The IB has been offering academic programs to schools for nearly 40 years. Presently, IB programs are offered by over 2,000 schools in over 125 countries.

Over 800 universities in the United States alone recognize the IB Diploma as a mark of academic excellence. Such universities include Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, MIT, Princeton University, Stanford University, the US Air Force Academy, and the US Naval Academy, among others.

MYTH: America's foundational principles of national sovereignty, natural law and inalienable rights are at odds with the IB curriculum and are not taught.

FACT: The IB believes that relevant education begins with an understanding and appreciation of one's own culture. From that perspective comes an understanding and appreciation of differing cultures and histories.