



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme Board Report January 13, 2015

Oak Park Elementary School District 97 is currently in its third year of implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) in the district's two middle schools, Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School and Percy Julian Middle School. Brooks and Julian are considered IB candidate schools.

2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Request for IB Candidacy	IB Candidate Status	IB Candidate Status	Fully Authorized IB School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing Professional Development Collaborate with IB Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing Professional Development Submit Authorization Application Authorization Visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing Professional Development

Following the submission of our applications this past September, the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) School Services Team recently scheduled the authorization visit dates, the final step in the authorization process. The authorization visits will take place at Brooks Middle School on April 6-7, 2015 and at Julian Middle School on April 13-14, 2015. We are looking forward to these visits and view them as opportunities to receive valuable feedback on the emerging IB Programme at our middle schools.

Authorization Visits and Preparation

The authorization visits will provide the reviewers the opportunity to assess every aspect of our schools, through interviews with administrators, teachers, and students, as well as classroom visits and a comprehensive school walkthrough. Reviewers are interested in learning the daily experiences of our students, teachers, and parents. Reviewers will also arrive with background knowledge of our schools, having read the schools' completed thirty-page applications.

Some sample interview questions expected during the authorization visit are:

- How are you and the school committed to the principles of IB mission statement?
- How has your classroom changed?
- Do teachers have access to off-site workshop training?
- What standards and benchmarks are used in MYP units?
- How do you incorporate the Global Contexts in your classroom?
- How do you plan and collaborate?
- How can teachers work together to compare assessments?

- Describe the student support system at your school.
- How are student inquiry and critical thinking skills incorporated into the classroom?
- What does the Learner Profile mean to your students?
- How do you communicate with parents?
- How are you involved in the community service component of the MYP?
- How do you encourage/support the understanding of the MYP to families?
- Does your school have an Academic Honesty Policy?

To prepare staff members for the authorization visits, we are conducting mock interviews with each department on our January 16 Institute Day. During the mock interviews, staff members will be asked questions that are likely to be asked during the authorization visit interviews, such as those listed above. The International Baccalaureate Organization does not publish statistics about number of schools that pass the authorization process. However, we believe that our schools and staff members will be well prepared to represent what we have accomplished in our implementation of the IB Programme.

Our teachers also continue to deepen their understanding of the connection between IB and the Common Core State Standards. During our January 16 district Institute Day, all Math, Language A, Humanities, and Special Education co-teachers will attend a professional learning session on the IB and Common Core State Standards connection. This session is designed to support the principle that the Common Core State Standards are the “what” of instruction and IB Programme is the “how” and “why” of instruction. In other words, the Common Core State Standards identify what our students are to know and be able to do at each grade level, while the IB Programme identifies the pedagogical practices to be used for students to best construct knowledge, and connect and apply that knowledge to their learner profile, as well as global contexts.

Assessment Policy

Both Brooks and Julian Middle Schools received feedback on their submitted applications from the IB Organization. Although each middle school was required to submit individual IB applications, the feedback on the applications was nearly identical. In our applications, we demonstrated sufficient evidence for 36 of the 37 identified practices, with only one practice requiring additional evidence--the development and implementation of an assessment policy that is consistent with IB expectations. More specifically, the additional information requested included:

- Identifying common practices in using the MYP assessment criteria and determining achievement levels
- Identifying common practices in recording and reporting MYP assessment
- Identifying the frequency of formative and summative assessments
- Describing how the assessment policy was created collaboratively

The feedback we received on our application was anticipated, because both schools had worked closely with an assigned IB consultant and had received their feedback. During the 2013-2014 school year, the IB Coordinators and the IB consultant worked together to review policies and practices in place and determined strengths and areas of growth. Collaboratively a plan was devised to ensure both schools were prepared to complete the application for authorization. It is evident from the feedback on our application that all areas of growth were addressed, aside from the assessment policy, which was a work in progress at the time of submission in September 2014.

In response to both the feedback from our IB consultants last year, and following feedback on our applications this past fall, important changes have been made to the Middle School grading and assessment policy since the spring. Although many of the changes have been driven by our transition to the IB Programme, the changes are also grounded in best practice for grading and assessment and have been informed by experts in the field. The primary objective of a grading system is to communicate student

learning in relation to academic standards. This means that practices that have historically been common in grading such as awarding extra credit and including behavior evaluations as a component of subject area grades, are no longer valid.

One key change has been with the 90% and 10% weight given to summative and formative assessments, respectively. This change was driven by two needs: an inconsistent assessment policy between the middle schools and the IB application requirement to have a clearly stated assessment policy. Prior to the 2014-2015 school year, grade level teams and academic departments had their own policies and practices related to late work, zeroes, and the weighing of formative and summative assessments for final trimester grades. The IB authorization process provided an opportunity to take a critical look at uneven assessment practice and create a policy that is aligned with best practice and more focused on student learning as opposed to students earning grades. The 90% summative weight supports the emphasis on what students are able to demonstrate as learners in terms of mastery of academic standards.

The middle schools have also adopted a “no zero” policy which was proposed last school year and was adopted as middle school policy this year. Research has shown that when students earn zeroes on assignments it has several negative consequences that undermine the importance of students demonstrating their learning. Evidence indicates that grades affect student motivation and the effort students put forth (Cameron & Pierce, 1996), yet at the same time, there is no research to support the principle that low grades prompt students to apply more effort. What is more typical is for students to withdraw from the learning process by either feeling hopeless to improve or seeing the low grade as meaningless (Selby & Murphy, 1992). Giving a zero to a student also supports an “opt-out” culture that is counter to the work we have been doing as a school district on creating a growth mindset in our students, as well as our work with Research for Better Teaching.

To support the aforementioned policy changes, an assessment policy committee has been created. The committee consists of:

- Todd Fitzgerald-Principal, Julian Middle School
- Mike Michowski-Principal, Brooks Middle School
- April Capuder-Assistant Principal, Brooks Middle School
- Helen Wei-Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Carrie Kamm-Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Patty Feierberg-IB Coordinator, Brooks Middle School
- Jennifer DeBruin-IB Coordinator, Julian Middle School
- Elise Fiechtner - Data Coach, Brooks Middle School
- Jen Nelson - Media Center Specialist, Brooks Middle School
- Anna Kinnaman- 7th Grade Math Teacher, Brooks Middle School
- Amanda Skubbina - 8th Grade Math Teacher, Brooks Middle School
- Jessica Moncatch-6th Grade Math Teacher, Julian Middle School
- Jason Morrell-6th Grade Science Teacher, Julian Middle School
- Katie Mucha-Physical Education Teacher, Julian Middle School
- Joe Parratore-7th Grade Humanities Teacher, Julian Middle School
- Sarah Somers - 8th Grade ELA Teacher, Brooks Middle School
- Megan Vervynck - 8Th Grade ELA Teacher, Brooks Middle School

The Assessment Policy Committee has focused on two areas related to our assessment policy changes: Retakes and Redos and an IB Conversion Scale. In an effort to support a growth mindset with our students and to emphasize the importance of learning and gaining mastery towards standards, creating opportunities for students to retake assessments is imperative. What is equally imperative is having common expectations for what retakes look like from classroom to classroom and department to department. The Retakes and Redos subcommittee has created a draft policy that will be shared with teachers in an upcoming staff meeting in order to seek feedback and make revisions prior to sharing with students and families. Given that

it is the middle of the school year, the Assessment Policy Committee recommends that the retake/redo policy does not go into effect until the 2015-2016 school year.

IB requires use of its 8-point achievement scale for assessment scoring. This requires a conversion to the A-U letter grade system that is used at the middle schools to communicate trimester final grades. The IB Conversion Scale subcommittee is recommending the following conversion scale:

IB Achievement Level	% Conversion	Grade
8	100%	A
7	94%	A
6	88%	B
5	82%	B
4	76%	C
3	70%	C
2	64%	D
1	58%	U
0	0%	U

Again, due to the timing of the school year, this policy will go into effect for the 2015-2016 school year. Professional development will be provided to teachers on the retake/redo policy and the IB conversion scale in Spring 2015. These policies will also be shared with families in a District 97 Middle Schools Assessment Policy handbook.

IB and Middle School Curriculum

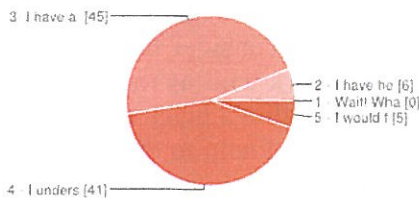
The transition to the IB Programme has created an opportunity to unify our middle school curriculum beyond the use of common curricular materials. Time has been dedicated during district Institute Days for departments to work together on common unit plans that are aligned with IB subject area objectives. Since the unit planning work is housed in Google Drive, teachers have the space to collaborate beyond face-to-face opportunities. At each school, IB coordinators meet regularly with departments to advise on subject area planning and alignment to IB subject area objectives. To date, departments have completed the following number of unit plans:

- Language A: 8
- Math: 13
- Humanities: 13
- Language B: 5
- Science: 8 (3 are Design driven)
- PE/Health: 4
- Design: 2 (with Science 5)
- Arts (Applied, Fine, Arts & Culture, Band, Orchestra, and Chorus): 6

A key component for developing teachers' IB subject area knowledge has been participation in IB sponsored workshops. 51% of our middle school teachers have attended an IB sponsored workshop. A survey given to

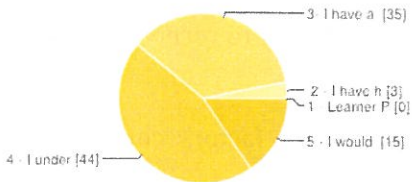
District 97 middle school teachers in December 2014, gives insight into teachers' levels of understanding of the IB Programme:

Please rate your understanding of the overall IB philosophy.



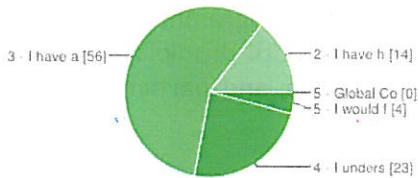
5 - I would feel comfortable teaching other teachers about the philosophy.	5	5%
4 - I understand the philosophy well enough to infuse it into my instruction.	41	42%
3 - I have a basic understanding.	45	46%
2 - I have heard a few things, but do not have a complete understanding.	6	6%
1 - Wait! What is IB?	0	0%

Please rate your understanding of the IB Learner Profile.



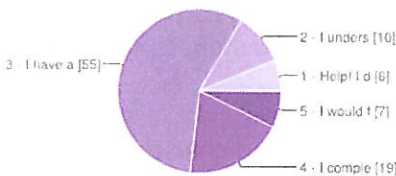
5 - I would feel comfortable teaching other teachers about the IB Learner Profile.	15	15%
4 - I understand the IB Learner Profile well enough to infuse it into my instruction.	44	45%
3 - I have a basic understanding of the IB Learner Profile.	35	36%
2 - I have heard a few things, but do not have a complete understanding	3	3%
1 - Learner Profile?! I have never heard of this.	0	0%

Please rate your understanding of the IB Global Contexts.



5 - I would feel comfortable teaching other teachers about the IB Global Contexts.	4	4%
4 - I understand the IB Global Contexts well enough to infuse them into my instruction.	23	24%
3 - I have a basic understanding of the IB Global Contexts.	56	58%
2 - I have heard a few things, but do not have a complete understanding.	14	14%
5 - Global Contexts?! I have never heard of these.	0	0%

Please rate your understanding of IB Unit Planning, including the unit planning guide, subject guide(s), and designing curriculum based on the unit plan.



5 - I would feel comfortable teaching other teachers about IB unit planning.	7	7%
4 - I completely understand the IB unit plan and feel confident designing instruction based on it.	19	20%
3 - I have a basic understanding of the IB unit plan and how to use it to plan instruction.	55	57%
2 - I understand how to write an IB unit plan, but I am still unclear about how to teach from it.	10	10%
1 - Help! I do not understand how to write an IB unit plan.	6	6%

This survey highlights areas for professional learning that need continued attention, especially IB unit planning and deepening teachers understanding of the IB Global Contexts. Professional learning will be addressed in several ways. First, we will continue to support teachers and staff attending subject and role specific IB workshops. Not only do these workshops serve as important learning opportunities about IB, they are also excellent opportunities for our teachers to add to their Personal Learning Networks (PLNs). We need to be more strategic and thoughtful about making sure that teachers who attend IB workshops are sharing their learning with colleagues in a formal way. Second, we will support teachers' participation in IB Organization webinars by providing Illinois CPDU credit. Recently, the state has awarded districts the ability to approve professional learning providers, which will allow District 97 to make participation in these webinars credit eligible. Again, we want to make sure that we are creating opportunities for teachers to share their learning with their subject area team. A plan for how webinar learning will be shared with staff will be required if teachers wish to earn CPDU credit for their webinar participation.

Program Implementation and Evaluation

We recognize the importance of evaluating IB program implementation and having the ability to measure the effects on student learning. Our plan for program evaluation includes working with Hanover Research, the IB Organization, as well as using our own indicators of success.

First, District 97 has partnered with Hanover Research to conduct literature reviews and studies on various program areas. Once our schools have become IB authorized, we will want to consider how to conduct an internal evaluation of IB program implementation. Hanover Research will work with us to determine what the program evaluation will consist of and what data needs to be collected within a given time period. We believe that beginning with an evaluation framework and clear benchmarks will help to ensure that we are collecting the right data along the way, as well as keeping all stakeholders focused on the implementation process.

Second, IB has its own process for monitoring schools using the IB model. IB will conduct these verification visits every five years. These verification visits will serve as another opportunity to receive valuable data on program implementation and areas for development.

Third, we view student, teacher, and community engagement as important factors contributing to the successful implementation of the IB Programme in District 97's middle schools.

Student Engagement

Student engagement is integral to the successful implementation of the IB Programme, as students and student learning are at the core of this effort. Students have been engaged at both Brooks and Julian Middle Schools through a variety of methods, including community service projects, and participation in the IB student advisory committees.

First, students are engaged through community service efforts. In their Integrated Studies classes, students have partnered with Project Linus, to make blankets for children in hospitals, shelters, and other places of need. In addition, eighth graders are piloting the community service project, for which small groups of two to three students work together to select a cause in which they are passionate, as well as plan and launch an awareness campaign. Next year, students will be expected to plan and deliver action steps that promote their causes, in addition to their awareness campaigns.

Students at both middle schools also regularly participate in community service and charity efforts, such as food and coat drives. While many of these programs were not direct products of the implementation of the IB Programme, these causes are well aligned with the IB philosophy and have encouraged students, teachers, and staff to continue these traditions.

Second, students are engaged through IB student advisory committees at each middle school. At both Brooks and Julian, students are selected to serve on the committees, to focus on increasing student understanding of the program, engage other students in the elements of the program, and share with other students what it truly means to be an IB school. The main objective of these groups is to make IB relevant and meaningful for every middle school student in their respective schools.

Currently, at Brooks, sixth graders are selected through an application process to serve on the sixth grade Board of Directors. These students are creating an IB component for the Brooks Spirit Days and are honoring the IB Students of the Month. At Julian, students are nominated by their teacher teams to serve on the Student Advisory Panel at each grade level. This student group meets every other week, to discuss what is going well in IB implementation and what they would like to see changed. The panel also reviews student reflections before parent-teacher conferences to give their peers feedback.

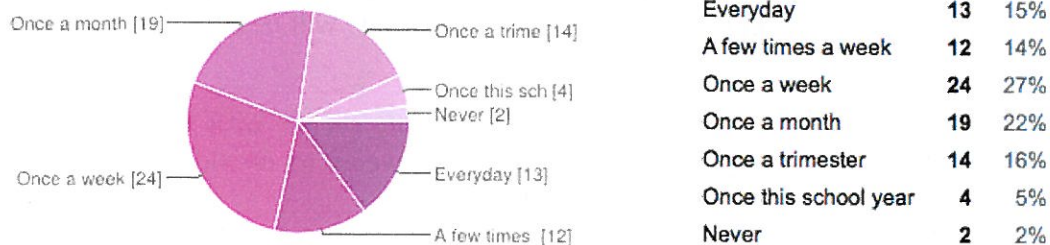
Third, students are engaged through formal recognition of exemplary IB students. During the school week, teachers pass out IB tickets to students who are displaying attributes of the learner profile, which are drawn from a jar on a weekly basis. Two tickets from each grade level are selected from the jar of tickets, and these

students are announced over loudspeaker, receive a special lanyard and/or reward from the prize bin (e.g. ranging from trinkets to elevator passes). Brooks and Julian principals also send home postcards to the students' parents, recognizing their achievement.

Teacher Engagement

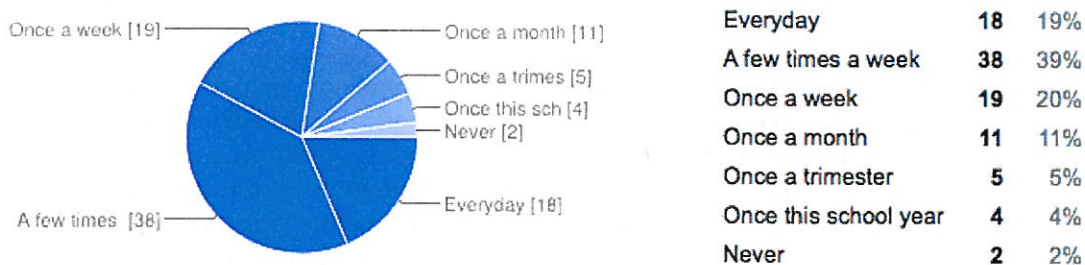
Teacher engagement ensures that the IB philosophy and approach are carried out and implemented in the classrooms, and is an indicator of successful implementation. As discussed in an earlier section, middle school teachers participated in a survey to measure their understanding and implementation of the IB Programme. A survey conducted in May 2014 indicated that only 29% of middle school teachers (25 out of 88 respondents) implemented an activity fitting the IB Philosophy "everyday" or "a few times a week."

Approximately how frequently have you done an activity with your students that fits the IB Philosophy?



Teachers were given the same survey in December 2014, and the number of teachers implementing an activity fitting the IB Philosophy "everyday" or "a few times a week" rose from 29% to 58% of middle school teachers (56 out of 97 respondents), in seven months:

Approximately how frequently have you done an activity with your students that fits the IB Philosophy?



One teacher commented:

"The IB Programme on the other hand [compared to other previous programs] very easily infuses itself in all curriculum areas. I really like the continuity of teaching it in advisory in such a way that I can refer to it in science. Teaching integrated studies where the focus again is IB and global contexts ties nicely into the whole concept. As science standards have changed to NGSS and we have the CCS for literary skills it is a natural fit to use with the IB Learner profile that I want my students to aspire to as well as have them realize the global contexts that they fit into. Our students' futures must have this broader outreach as they realize they are going to be called upon to be Global Citizens not just kids from Oak Park."

While our goal is to have 100% implementation of IB activities fitting the IB Philosophy every day of the week, frequent teacher implementation of IB-focused lessons has risen. To ensure further growth in teacher engagement and implementation, we will continue to send teachers to IB workshops, work with

departmentalized teacher teams in IB Unit Planning, and provide district and school-wide workshops and support.

In the effort to further engage and connect teachers, in December 2014, the inaugural issue of *IB in Action*, D97's IB Teacher Newsletter was published. This newsletter highlights how our teachers are implementing IB principles and practices in their planning and classroom instruction.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is another important factor in the implementation of the IB Programme, in order to build a cohesive effort of supporting the IB philosophy and policies, such as the learner profile and global context. As a way to involve our community members and parents, our schools have hosted family nights to support IB ideals, such as the IB MYP 5th Grade Parent Information Nights taking place at Brooks on January 12 and Julian on January 15. On these nights, D97 5th grade parents were or will be introduced to the IB Programme, and what to expect for their children in the transition from 5th grade to middle school. Two middle school students plan to participate in these sessions, so that parents will be able to hear first-hand experiences of students.

In addition, our IB Coordinators also attend middle school parent/family events, such as Forms and Fees Night and Parent-Teacher Conferences. They are available at these events to provide information and answer parent questions and/or concerns about the IB Programme.

Our IB Coordinators also work closely with the PTOs to create opportunities for parental engagement. On December 13, the Brooks and Julian PTOs sponsored a screening of "I Am Eleven," a documentary about eleven-year-olds from around the world, at the Lake Street Theater in downtown Oak Park. The event was open to sixth grade students, parents, and community members, and represented well the emphasis on international-mindedness of the IB Programme. Additionally, our IB Coordinators have attended PTO meetings to present and discuss elements of the IB Programme and to answer questions or concerns.

Conclusion

In the third year of implementation, the IB Programme at D97's middle schools has gained ground in student, teacher, and community engagement. We will continue our engagement efforts, as well as find new ways to involve our stakeholders in the implementation of the IB Programme. In addition, we will continue to provide support to teachers in deepening their understanding and implementation of the IB Programme, to provide opportunities for department-level unit planning, and to prepare for the April authorization visits. On January 27, our presentation to the Board will provide various voices and perspectives on the IB Programme. We also hope to further update the Board, following the April authorization visits.

References

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- Selby, D., & Murphy, S. (1992). Graded or degraded: Perceptions of letter-grading for mainstreamed learning-disabled students. *British Columbia Journal of Special Education*, 16(1), 92-104.