

Frequently Asked Questions

What Is the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program?

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program is a demanding, two-year program of curriculum and service that meets the needs of highly motivated secondary students. The Diploma Program offers a comprehensive and integrated approach to learning that prepares students for rigorous assessments in six subject areas. Students must also complete Creativity, Activity, and Service activities; a 4,000 word essay of original research; and the Theory of Knowledge seminar. The International Baccalaureate Organization awards its diploma to students who perform successfully on the six external examinations and fulfill all other requirements of the program at an authorized IB world school. The diploma is recognized as the highest secondary school diploma offered anywhere in the world.

International Baccalaureate allows its graduates to fulfill requirements of various national systems of education and is based on the pattern of no single country. The primary objective of an IB program is to provide a world-class education that prepares students of different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds with the intellectual, social, and critical perspectives necessary for college and the rest of their lives. The rigorous curriculum, together with the required Theory of Knowledge course, extended essay, and Creativity, Action, and Service activities are designed to produce well-rounded and well-educated citizens who can think critically, write well, speak articulately, and manage extremely demanding schedules. For three decades, thousands of young adults from all continents have earned the IB diploma and have gained admission to leading institutions of higher education.

How will the International Baccalaureate Program benefit my student?

The IB Program provides a strong writing emphasis, develops critical thinking skills, promotes sound ethical thought, seeks international understanding, and instills commitment to community service. It also provides greater certainty of college admission, higher SAT scores, a more integrated curriculum, and a higher GPA in the freshman year of college than other students earn, including those who have taken AP courses.

Can my child earn college credit with IB exams?

Absolutely. Go to www.ibo.org for IB recognition policies from North American colleges and universities.

Do IB students also earn an Advanced Studies Diploma?

Yes. In the Diploma Program, students earn sufficient credits for the Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma awarded by Oscar F. Smith High School.

How does the IB diploma differ from the Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma?

The IB diploma is awarded by an external agency, is more global in scope, and signifies a more integrated curriculum than the traditional diploma.

How does the IB Program differ from Advanced Placement (AP)?

Both offer college-level courses: AP provides students with the opportunity to select individual courses while IB provides a comprehensive curriculum of college level work. AP courses represent a national standard of excellence; IB represents an international standard. Both programs rely on externally generated and assessed exams; however, the AP exams are

based on in-depth knowledge of specific concepts within a given subject area, while the IB exams are based on a broad, general understanding of concepts and fundamental themes. AP exams place particular emphasis on multiple-choice questions. By comparison, IB courses place more emphasis on critical thinking and analysis: IB assessments involve more writing, investigation, oral work, projects, and labs. Also, final marks in IB reflect combined assessment by the classroom teacher and international examiners.

How much work does a student have to do in the IB Program?

The program is designed to provide a rigorous, broad-based liberal arts curriculum; therefore, the workload will be significant (approximately 2-3 hours of homework per evening). During the junior and senior years, each IB student must complete community service projects and extra-curricular activities. Also required in the IB program is the completion of a 4,000-word extended essay of original thought and research.

What type of student should consider the IB Program?

Highly motivated, college bound students who are serious about acquiring the skills for success in higher education are the best candidates for this rigorous program.

Does my child have to be gifted to succeed in the IB Program?

No, but he or she must be highly motivated and have a pronounced desire to be in the program.

What if my child finishes the program but fails to score the 24-point minimum for earning the IB diploma?

The student will receive an IB certificate for each examination completed, but will not receive the IB diploma; however, an unsuccessful candidate has a maximum of three examination sessions in which to satisfy the requirements for the award of the IB diploma. Hence, a student may retake examinations (at his/her own expense) after graduation from high school in an attempt to earn the diploma.

Can IB students participate in music programs and extra-curricular activities?

Yes. IB students are full-time students in the school and are encouraged to take music electives and to participate in any extra-curricular activities offered, including all Virginia High School League (VHSL) sports and activities. Out-of-zone students in the program are eligible for all VHSL activities only at Oscar Smith High; they will not be eligible to participate in sports and extra-curricular activities at the high school they normally would have attended.

Is IB a four-year program?

Yes, in essence it is. The Chesapeake Public Schools' Pre-IB Academy is a two-year program, and the IB, itself, is a two-year program.

Can my child transfer into the IB Program?

Yes, up to the tenth grade and on a space-available basis; however, no transfers may be made during the 11th and 12th grades unless the student is transferring from another IB program elsewhere and space is available.

How does my child apply for the program?

Students in eighth grade may access the online application on the Chesapeake Public Schools website or the Oscar Smith High School website. Applications will be available by December 1 each year. The deadline for submitting the application for the Chesapeake Public Schools' Pre-IB Academy is January 15. Applicants who submit applications after January 15 will be placed on the official waiting list. Interested students in ninth grade should submit an application before the end of the freshman year for any vacancies that may arise for the next year.

What middle school courses provide preparation for the IB Program?

Honors courses in English, social studies, and science are strongly recommended.

If my child hasn't taken French or Spanish and algebra before ninth grade, can he or she still apply for the program?

Yes. However, students without Spanish or French credit will have to double up in foreign language during the freshman year and students who haven't taken Algebra I will have to take it in summer school before the freshman year.

Is there a minimum grade point average (GPA) required in the IB Program?

The minimum GPA is 3.0 or a B average. Beginning with the sophomore year, after a student spends one term on academic probation, the student will be transferred from the program unless there are highly valid extenuating circumstances. If the student does not reside within the Oscar Smith High School attendance area, he or she will be return to the appropriate Chesapeake high school.