

Making Core 24 Work For All Students: Building Policy Flexibility

GROUP: _____

Worksheet 7. International Baccalaureate Diploma and Cambridge Diploma Alternative Pathways. The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a two-year (junior/senior) educational program designed to provide “an internationally accepted qualification for entry into higher education.” Sixteen Washington high schools have IB Diploma Programs, and in 2008, 339 Washington students graduated with an IB diploma. Washington also has one school that just initiated the Advanced International Certificate of Education, known as the Cambridge Diploma. At least one state, Florida, allows the IB Diploma and the Cambridge Diploma to serve as separate routes to earn a “standard” Florida diploma.

The attached paper, written by IB stakeholders, provides background on IB and outlines some of the conflicts IB students might have in meeting both IB and state-mandated requirements.

Should students pursuing an International Baccalaureate Diploma (“full IB” students) or Cambridge Diploma be required to meet all state-mandated graduation requirements? Take a position and describe the advantages/disadvantages to your perspective.

____ No, we would not recommend that state policy authorize local administrators to waive state-mandated graduation requirements for students pursuing an IB Diploma or Cambridge Diploma.

____ Yes, we would recommend that state policy authorize local administrators to waive state-mandated graduation requirements for students pursuing an IB Diploma or Cambridge Diploma, under these conditions:

Rationale: We would see the following to be the advantages and disadvantages of our position:

Advantages	Disadvantages



IB Diploma Program Overview:

The IB Diploma Program offers an academically challenging and balanced education that prepares juniors and seniors for success at university and life beyond. During the final two years of high school, IB diploma candidates study six subjects that include a first language, a second language, social science, natural science, mathematics and the arts or a second course in one of the previous subjects. Two hallmarks of the IB program are the emphasis on the concurrency of learning and the mixture of breadth and depth. Concurrency and breadth are achieved by the simultaneous study of six subjects drawn from different disciplines. This is balanced with the requirement to study at least three subjects in considerably more depth and detail. Consequently, students can pursue areas of interests and strengths while still experiencing a challenging, college prep education in the spirit of a collegiate liberal arts program. Assessment of student work is through the application of set standards and evaluation is carried out by both school based instructors who know students well and by IBO trained experts who look at student work through an objective lens.

In addition, the program has three core elements that broaden the educational experience and challenge students to apply their knowledge and understanding. The *extended essay*, engages students in independent research through an in-depth study of a question relating to one of the subjects they are studying. *Theory of knowledge* is a required seventh course for all diploma candidates that encourages each student to reflect on the nature of knowledge by critically examining different ways of knowing and different kinds of knowledge. Finally, *creativity, action, service* requires that students actively learn from the experience of doing real tasks beyond the classroom.

Current Obstacles to Students Seeking and IB Diploma:

While the IB Diploma Program happens in the last two years of high school, it represents the culmination of a student's entire high school career since most diploma courses require two years of study prior to the diploma program. Consequently meeting the requirements of the IB diploma along with state and district requirements is at best difficult and often impossible within a variety of schedule models . For example:

1. Music students are required (and preferred by parents) to maintain their place in Band/Choir/Orchestra for the majority of the 4 years in high school. The technical and academic skills required by the IB for the music exam also make this option important. This choice/necessity causes a shortage of class slots for students to complete State Graduation Requirements in one or more of the following: PE, Health, CTE.
2. Students who are NOT in a 4 year music track still cannot complete all State/District Graduation requirements without spending sometimes significant additional funds out of pocket to address credit shortfalls in PE, Health, CTE, or Fine Arts (depending on their course selections). Of further concern is the fact that these credits are often undertaken in addition to carrying a full academic load during the school year and/or during the entirety of at least 2 summers to complete the work. This is not in the best psychological interest of students.
3. Family income is sometimes a barrier to the IB Diploma. The State of Washington via OSPI helps qualifying low-income students waive up to 90% of the IBO directed costs of seeking the Diploma but no current system is in place to help these same families pay for the additional outside credits required to meet current State/District requirements.

College Access and Success:

IB Courses in general and the IB Diploma in specific are highly correlated to college access and college success. Students who are able to garner college credit prior to going to college reduce their overall out-of-pocket expenditure and are less likely to drop out for financial reasons, (<http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/theirwholelivesaheadofthem.pdf>).

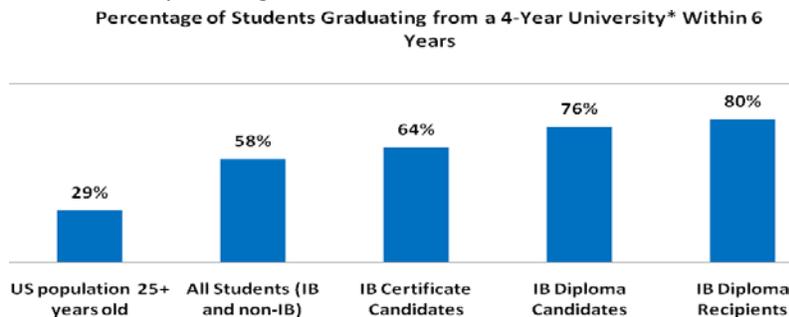
Students involved in IB, especially those working toward the IB Diploma, are often given preferential admittance or advanced standing by public and private colleges and universities.

FALL 2002 UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE RATES*

<i>University</i>	<i>All Applicants</i>	<i>IB Applicants</i>
United States Naval Academy	11.67%	42.9%
Columbia University	12%	18.3%
Stanford University	12.6%	16.9%
Dartmouth College	20.7%	35.1%
California Institute of Technology	21%	40.7%
University of California at Berkeley	24%	47.6%
University of Virginia	38.1%	63.3%
University of Michigan at Ann Arbor	49%	73.4%
University of Washington	68%	90.8%

*excerpt from SUPERTEST: How the International Baccalaureate Can Strengthen Our Schools, by Jay Mathews and Ian Hill. Open Court Publishing Company. Chicago, Illinois, 2005. (p.217)

Most all colleges and universities grant credit or advanced standing based on exam scores. When considered along with the skills IB diploma candidates acquire through the program, it is not surprising that IB diploma candidates graduate from university at a higher rate than non-IB students.



*Source: US Census, the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of NCES, and the National Student Clearinghouse

Conclusion:

The IB Diploma Program offers a trusted and reliable alternative path towards earning a Washington high school diploma whose value is widely recognized both by IB program participants and universities. Students returning from college more often than not comment about their self-confidence and high level of college readiness reflected in the following sentiment of one IB Diploma graduate, "While the experience was difficult and often frustrating, the personal challenge is an excellent springboard into higher education by teaching students to take responsibility for their own learning." (MRHS c/o 2009)

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