

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA PROGRAM
AND
ADVANCED PLACEMENT COMPARISON
BY

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Both the IB and AP are excellent programs for expanding the level of opportunity in US high schools. They offer increased challenge and seek to set a standard that is more collegiate than high school based. As a result they can both lead to either advanced standing or credit offered by the student's college. Schools determine the level of standing or credit awarded by a student's score on an IB or AP exam. AP and IB courses follow a syllabus provided by each respective organization and provide an examination to assess student learning.

In the basic essentials of an external curriculum and collegiate level assessments the programs are similar. It is when you look deeper into teacher training, the nature of assessments, the curricular content, and the corresponding instruction that the distinction between the programs becomes obvious. There is much that has been said and much that can be said on this topic. There is merit in both programs, they share common characteristics but the experience of students in each is **distinctly** different. From a parental and student perspective it is a matter of what experience best meets your needs, matches your educational expectations and fits into your current and future plans. In the case of making the WIHI choice you have the additional issue that WIHI's experience is full IB diploma for all students, includes other related IB Plus components and includes a school culture that is uniquely its own.

The following discussion highlights the differences between the programs that **dramatically** impact the student experience. In the end it is a choice of distinct experiences rather than relative merit that should drive a family's choice.

1. The IB Diploma is an organized, coherent, interconnected two-year course of study leading to an internationally recognized high school diploma. The curricular and program design is self-consciously intended to be experienced as a whole. Each program component adds value to each other. Each component enriches the student's experience and adds to the student's intrinsic satisfaction. The courses share a common set of goals, assessment methodologies and instructional strategies complemented by the core components of Theory of Knowledge, Creativity, Action and Service and a genuine research requirement. Students see the connections and enjoy the creation of meaning that the experience provides. The whole, if you will, is greater than the sum of its parts. IB courses taken independently as IB Certificates have value in of themselves but the greater benefit of the full diploma is lost. AP course are just that: independent content based courses. They are not a diploma. They are not interconnected, and they are not directed toward a common mission or curricular goal. The AP experience is course taking. **The IB experience is life changing.**
2. The IB curriculum focuses on depth of understanding, interconnections between disciplines and process over content. This is consistent across courses and imbedded in the assessments. **Successful IB examination results are dependent on not just what is taught but how it is taught.** Students must be given first hand experiences that match those of a practitioner of each academic discipline. The IB is about being a biologist not just knowing biology, about being a historian not just knowing history and being a mathematician not just doing math. This is built into the course design, assessments and core components. AP courses are focused on knowledge acquisition, assessed primarily through multiple choice and emphasizes a breach of

coverage over a depth of understanding. The AP experience fills the brain. The IB experience develops the brain.

3. IB assessments span the two years of the program. They include a mix of teacher graded, but externally moderated, assessments and externally graded requirements that take place prior to sitting for your final exam. Although it varies by individual subject area, approximately 25% of your examination score is determined by these requirements scheduled throughout the two-year experience. These internal and external assessments are carefully crafted to provide the student with an academic experience that mirrors the activity of each subject area's practitioner. You create laboratory experiments not just do experiments. You write history not just read history you write literary critiques not just remember them. In all of education, assessment drives instruction. In the IB experience assessment drives instruction that is inquiry and real world based.
4. **The IB Diploma is international education by design, by content, by process, and by recognition.** The IB Diploma is an internationally recognized, admired and accepted educational credential that provides a matching educational experience. Seeing the world through a variety of lenses and experiencing an academic discipline that is based on world standards is inherent in the curriculum. Developing international mindedness is a requirement of IB courses and IB schools. A specialized course, Theory of Knowledge, the IB's Learner Profile and a comprehensively demanding foreign language requirement are all required. All IB Diploma students must master a second language at a high level of fluency across multiple communication methods. They must confront the questions of how we know what we know; how knowledge is created and how perspective impacts our understandings. All IB assessments are designed by international educators, marked by examiners from around the world and evaluated by international standards. IB prepares students for the only playing field that really matters today, the world. AP courses are US based classes, designed, assessed and evaluated by US standards. AP is fundamentally a US experience

while the IB Diploma is fundamentally an international experience.

5. The components of an IB educational experience are inherent in the program itself. Diploma students must take courses in each subject area, including a foreign language, meet the requirements of three core components and produce academic products over a two year time period. To take an IB exam students must be enrolled in an IB school and be taking the course in which they are examined. AP course are taken independently of each other, there are no core components and anyone can take the exam whether they are in an AP class or not. The IB Diploma is an educational experience. The AP is an exam.

6. The IB Diploma includes a character based educational experience based on its **Learner Profile**. The Learner Profile is a set of ten personal attributes that embody positive citizenship, community service and international skills. The Learner Profile is integrated into a school's curriculum, utilized as part of its school policies, sets expectations for both and students and be a core component of an IB school's personal development curriculum. The AP has no character education component.

7. The IB Diploma consistently and self-consciously prepares students to be skilled consumers of knowledge. Each subject area emphasizes knowledge acquisition within that discipline. The Theory of Knowledge course addresses the method(s) of knowledge growth within each discipline and IB assessments require students to demonstrate source evaluation, research skills and academic communication. The AP requires knowledge acquisition.

8. IB assesses a broad range of skills from knowledge acquisition, to critical thinking, source evaluation, academic writing, oral communication and metacognition. **The IB asks students to learn how to learn.** The IB assesses 21st Century skills as identified in a variety of research and industry sources. The AP

- assesses mostly knowledge acquisition with some essay writing and some oral communication in the foreign language course.
9. The IB seeks and meets the needs of a diverse set of learners including independent thinkers, highly motivated and intellectually curious students from a broad array of academic backgrounds. The AP tends to attract highly proficient, traditional learners or students with academic strengths concentrated in one or two subject areas.
 10. The IB requires teachers to be IB trained by attending IB prepared and evaluated professional development in three day, Teacher Training Workshops. IB workshops prepare teachers to teach the IB program, understand IB teaching standards and practices and share good practice. IB also offers university-based masters programs in Teaching and Learning as well as Educational Leadership. AP offers but does not require one day introductions to AP courses.
 11. The IB Diploma is designed from its inception to prepare students for success at the university level at institutions around the world. Studies have shown the direct link between the IB Diploma and the skills, knowledge and academic habits of mind required at the collegiate level. The direct link between IB Diploma acquisition and academic success in latter education has been supported by numerous independently conducted research studies. The IB is intended as preparation for university success and life after formal education. The AP is intended as a demonstration of college level knowledge acquisition.
 12. In order to offer the IB program schools must undergo a two year authorization process that includes a self-study, demonstration of knowledge of IB Philosophy and Practices, two separate applications, course designs, a verification visit, the assistance and critique of an assigned authorization consultant, a plan of implementation and a clear demonstration of the capacity to successfully implement the program. Schools are authorized based on the input from the verification team, the IB Diploma Program manager, the assigned consultant and academic experts

in each subject area. Every five years they must undergo a re-evaluation process. Schools that are failing to follow IB policies or to implement the program requirements are de-authorized. AP schools sign up for AP exams in each subject area they intend to offer exams. Schools are not assessed or evaluated.

Summary: Although both programs share common characteristics, they are fundamentally different in intent, design, implementation, governance and efficacy. The IB experience is **uniquely IB** and **WIHI's full diploma and IB plus experience is uniquely its own**. The IB has a 48-year history of curriculum development and world-class educational achievement. WIHI's curriculum design, policies, course offerings, calendar, schedule, school culture and IB Plus components have a 12-year history of exceptional success right here in our state. The IB offers a two-year, life-changing experience. The AP is an exam. Both the IB and AP programs have merit. It is up to you to select the one that matches your needs, your wants and your post-secondary plans.