Myth and Facts about the International Baccalaureate

There are a range of claims that are occasionally leveled at IB. Often, the claims represent a legitimate difference of opinion on funding, student needs, or community teaching requirements. Other claims may be based on a political agenda and rest on unfounded myths that have been perpetuated. Ideally, you’ll be prepared to open a dialog with those who voice legitimate differences of opinion to find common ground, and you’ll have cogent, logical responses to even the most outlandish claims. To help, we have listed a selection of claims made in the past few years, along with the facts to help counter misinformation.

The IB

- Is a high-caliber academic program that independent research has shown improves college-readiness.
- Is a *local choice made by local school districts* to implement.
- Develops students with a strong sense of their own identity and nationality. They understand the importance of participation in their local community through a service component. This sense of identity provides the basis to help students understand other cultures, and readies them to participate in a global economy.

CLAIMS ABOUT THE IB

- RELATIONSHIP WITH UN/UNESCO

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

FACT: The IB is an independent, apolitical, nonprofit organization. The IB is not under the control of any ministry or government, including the UN, nor does it own or operate any schools.

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; not only the children of diplomats, but also the children of missionaries, and children whose parents worked for multinational corporations like Coca-Cola or Colgate. The idea was to prepare these mobile students for university by providing schools with a curriculum and a diploma universally recognized by universities.
Since then, the IB’s programs have expanded to include the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), Diploma Programme (DP) and the IB Career-Related Certificate (IBCC). Today there is no “typical” IB school. IB schools in America encompass public, private, parochial, magnet and charter schools. They are found in urban, suburban, and rural America, and include the U.S. Department of Defense schools. The International Baccalaureate seeks to make an IB education available to any school which chooses it for students in any country and of any economic means.

CLAIM: IB promotes 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.

FINANCE

CLAIM: Taxpayer money is being spent on an NGO of UNESCO.

FACT: IB receives a small on-going grant from UNESCO to fund a teacher training program in Cambodia that trains desperately needed teachers in the impoverished country.

To date the project has accomplished:

- 400 participants have received training, including 240 pre-service teachers, 37 mentor teachers from the four local primary schools, 83 lead teachers, and 40 teacher-trainers from the Kandal Provincial TTC.
- Nearly 3,000 primary school children have been taught using a more interactive and child-friendly pedagogy.
- 25 IB teachers have facilitated workshops and conducted demonstration lessons in the four Khmer primary schools.
- Approximately 200 IB students, alumni and parents from the Partner Schools have visited the Khmer schools and volunteered to work on renovations and improvements in the schools.
- 55 classrooms have been renovated and 5 new sanitary toilet blocks have been built.
- A professional network of teachers has been built within and between local schools, and IB partner schools from Cambodia, Hong Kong, Australia, and Canada.

CLAIM: The IB is funded by the UN/UNESCO

FACT: The IB was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation. It was funded by Ford Foudation, the 20th Century Fund, and UNESCO until 1976. From 1977 schools began to pay the IB an annual subscription fee. In return for these fees, the IB helped schools implement the IB Diploma Programme, offered training workshops for teachers, and managed a system of external examinations for IB Diploma candidates.
CLAIM: IB’s fees are exorbitant

FACT: IB’s fee structure is publically available on its website http://www.ibo.org/become/fees/. Authorized IB schools currently pay an annual fee of $10,400 for the DP, $8700 for the MYP, and $7600 for the PYP.

IB IS UN-AMERICAN

CLAIM: 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 programme for the children of US service members.

CLAIM: IB indoctrinates children to be world citizens not citizens of the United States.

RESPONSE: IB students develop a strong sense of their own identity as Americans and understand the importance of local community, especially through the Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS) component of the IB. This sense of identity helps them to understand other cultures, and readies them to participate in a global economy. The Diploma Programme challenges students to move beyond memorizing facts and figures to question and think critically. The mission of the IB is to provide students with the critical thinking skills to reach their

LOCAL CONTROL

CLAIM: A State has the right to require that its public schools are controlled by local and state authorities, not foreign entities. IB is a foreign entity, therefore any school that adopts the IB cedes local control to it.

FACT: The decision how to implement the program is 100 percent up to the school to decide. The schools choose the textbooks, design the curriculum within the IB framework, and make modifications to accommodate local standards. Schools maintain full control over the IB curriculum including when and if to adopt it. Local schools or districts choose whether IB is a good fit for their communities. Local school boards vote on whether to adopt the program and local school boards have the power to withdraw from the program. Once a school decides to adopt an IB Programme, the IB advises the school throughout the authorization process. It is up to schools to align their local education requirements with IB’s framework. It’s been our experience that in almost every case, IB meets or exceeds the local standard.
CLAIM: High School students who want to challenge their International Baccalaureate diploma, have to report to a board in Switzerland, not the local school board or principal.

FACT: Similar to other externally graded exams like the AP, a student who wishes to challenge his score would not appeal to his principal, but rather would go through an appeals process handled by the IB’s office in the U.K., which could be done remotely.

CURRICULUM

CLAIM: IB is a foreign owned entity and it controls the curriculum, therefore, foreigners are determining our students’ curriculum.

FACT: The decision how to implement the IB Diploma Programme in a school is 100 percent up to the school to decide. The schools choose the textbooks, design the curriculum in accordance with IB standards, and maintain full control including when and if to adopt it. It is up to schools to align their local education requirements with IB’s framework. It’s been our experience that in almost every case, IB meets or exceeds the local standard.

While the IB offers a framework for 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.

CLAIM: Every subject taught within the IB program must be framed within the UN’s internationalist, global government agenda.

FACT: The decision how to implement the program is 100 percent up to the school to decide. The schools choose the textbooks, design the curriculum in accordance with IB standards and maintain full control.

IB students develop a strong sense of their own identity and understand the importance of their local community through a service component. This sense of identity helps them to understand other cultures, and readies them to participate in a global economy.

QUALITY

CLAIM: There in no proof that IB, especially at the PYP and MYP, represents excellent education. The fact is there is not a single scholarly report or study that demonstrates significant improvement in student academic achievement by either program.

FACT: A study by the State of Texas Education Research Center at Texas A&M University found positive outcomes from the PYP program including teacher’s instructional practice, increased teacher collaboration, authentic assessment, increased student motivation for learning, the development of critical thinking skills, and increased student global and cultural awareness.
• A recent study by the University of Chicago showed that Diploma Programme (DP) students are 40 percent more likely to attend a four-year college, 50 percent more likely to attend a more selective college and significantly more likely to persist in four-year colleges for at least two years, compared to similar students who did not enroll in the IB Diploma Programme.

CLAIM: AP comes from the College Board and is superior to IB. You can easily see that by the amount of college credits awarded to AP grads vs. IB grads.

FACT: The IB Diploma is highly regarded credential widely recognized by over 1100 colleges and universities in North America. Similar to the College Board AP exam scores, the level of recognition and college credit varies between institutions. Examples of universities recognizing the IB Diploma include Harvard, 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.

➤ PRIVACY

CLAIM: Student privacy is threatened by IBO because IBO absolves itself of any liability for non-secure transmission of student information.

RESPONSE: The IB exercises great care in the handling of student data in order to provide secure transmission of information. The disclaimer on our website is similar to other disclaimers found on websites that handle any form of data transmission. Unfortunately, no data transmission over the Internet can be guaranteed to be 100% secure.

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

RESPONSE: Similar to programs such as the College Board AP exams, the IB Diploma Programme relies on trained examiners for external validation for a portion of its coursework. IB examiners work and live in cities around the world from Pasadena to Sicily. Student work is not collected, graded, or passed through Geneva during any portion of the process unless an examiner coincidentally happens to reside there.

The IB is in the process of switching to an on-line centralized system where IB examiners, no matter where they are in the world, can view student materials for assessment. This new system which is currently in use for several subjects, contains no student information and is a “blind” process.

Statistics about IB in the Americas
• More than 2,000 schools offer the IB in the Americas
• IB programs are offered in 1,429 primary and secondary schools in the U.S.
• The first IB World School in the Americas was founded in 1971
• Growth is doubling approximately every 5 years in the Americas
• 11 IB World Schools were listed in the Top 25 Best High Schools in America according to the 2012 U.S. News & World Report Ranking
• 24 IB World Schools were listed in the Top 100 Best High Schools in America according to the 2012 U.S. News & World Report Ranking
• According to a recent U. of Chicago study, Diploma Programme (DP) students are 40 percent more likely to attend a four-year college, 50 percent more likely to attend a more selective college and significantly more likely to persist in four-year colleges for at least two years, compared to similar students who did not enroll in the IB Diploma Programme.

Quotes from supporters
“IB is well known to us as excellent preparation. Success in an IB programme correlates well with success at Harvard. We are pleased to the see the credential of the IB Diploma Programme on the transcript.” Marilyn McGrath Lewis, Former Director of Admissions, Harvard University

“As a citizen soldier and former educator, I believe our country needs more, not less, education about the rest of the world, its governments, religions, cultures and peoples. If we are going to do business, fight wars and otherwise interact with other parts of the world, our children need to know and value this kind of knowledge. Our own Army promotes the International Baccalaureate Program to its service people and their families for reasons that should be obvious.” The Reverend William S. Gannon, Bedford

"I was one of the teachers who thought, 'Why do we need to pay to bring in a program?'' But now she says, "I've learned so much. I've learned how to help kids to get answers, which is more rewarding than teaching kids how to memorize." Sarah Gornicki Pancos, Midland Daily News, Texas

“This year it is the International Baccalaureate program. Next year maybe it is the Advanced Placement programs. Then it may be whatever program your local community volunteers, school board, administration and voters have studied and chosen to adopt. Apparently our elected representatives, most of whom have no background in education or school administration, believe they know best.” Samantha Tirrell, Penacook, Senior at Merrimack Valley, an IB World School