

IB learner profile booklet



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Introduction to the IB learner profile



Nature of the IB learner profile

The IB learner profile is the IB mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes for the 21st century. The attributes of the profile express the values inherent to the IB continuum of international education: these are values that should infuse all elements of the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme and, therefore, the culture and ethos of all IB World Schools. The learner profile provides a long-term vision of education. It is a set of ideals that can inspire, motivate and focus the work of schools and teachers, uniting them in a common purpose.

The IB's concept of an educational continuum, and of a coherent, broad-based international curriculum, was fully realized in 1997 with the introduction of the PYP. The IB is now able to offer three programmes of international education and, with them, the prospect of a continuous international educational experience from early childhood to pre-university age. While the IB now offers a sequence of three programmes—the PYP, the MYP (introduced in 1994) and the Diploma Programme (introduced in 1969)—each programme must continue to be self-contained, since the IB has no requirement for schools to offer more than one programme. However, they must also form an articulated sequence for those schools that teach all three programmes or any sequence of two.

With the development of a continuum of international education, it is intended that teachers, students and parents will be able to draw confidently on a recognizable common educational framework, a consistent structure of aims and values and an overarching concept of how to develop international-mindedness. The IB learner profile will be at the heart of this common framework, as a clear and concise statement of the aims and values of the IB, and an embodiment of what the IB means by “international-mindedness”.

Aims of the IB learner profile

The attributes and descriptors of the learner profile define the type of learner the IB hopes to develop through its programmes. It originated in the PYP where it was called the “PYP student profile”, but practitioners from all three programmes identified it as a set of qualities that could also enhance learning in the MYP and the Diploma Programme—learning that should not come to a stop at the age of 11, but should carry through to the completion of the Diploma Programme. It is now called the “IB learner profile” to make it applicable to all students and adults involved in the implementation of IB programmes, that is, to the IB community of learners.

The IB has incorporated the learner profile into all three programmes so that it is the common ground on which all IB World Schools stand, and contains the essence of what they, and the three programmes, are about.

IB programmes promote the education of the whole person, emphasizing intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth through all domains of knowledge. By focusing on the dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, independent critical and creative thought and international-mindedness, the IB espouses the principle of educating the whole person for a life of active, responsible citizenship. Underlying the three programmes is the concept of education of the whole person as a lifelong process. The learner profile is a profile of the whole person as a lifelong learner.

As a key cross-programme component, the learner profile will become the central tenet of the IB programmes and central to the definition of what it means to be internationally minded. Thus, the IB is placing the focus for schools where it belongs: on learning. It is not intended to be a profile of the perfect student; rather, it can be considered as a map of a lifelong journey in pursuit of international-mindedness. It places the learner firmly at the heart of IB programmes and focuses attention on the processes and the outcomes of learning.

It is the IB's intention that the learner profile will help develop coherence within and across the three programmes. It provides a clear and explicit statement of what is expected of students, teachers and school administrators in terms of learning, and what is expected of parents in terms of support for that learning.

The IB learner profile in schools

Implementing the IB learner profile

A school's curriculum includes all those student activities—academic and non-academic—for which the school takes responsibility, since they all have an impact on student learning. The development of the written curriculum, the expression of ideas on paper, is necessary, but alone is not sufficient. The curriculum can be defined as what is to be learned (the written curriculum), how it is to be learned (the taught curriculum) and how it is to be assessed (the learned curriculum). This gives equal focus to content, teaching methodologies and assessment practices. The IB prescribes, to varying degrees in each of its three programmes, the written, taught and learned curriculum, but relies on schools for its implementation.

The successful implementation of these three dimensions of the curriculum in each IB programme depends on the culture and ethos of the school. The values and attitudes of the school community that underpin the culture and ethos of a school are significant in shaping the future of its young people. In a school that has a commitment to the values inherent in the IB learner profile, these values will be readily apparent in classroom and assessment practices, the daily life, management and leadership of the school. The IB believes that the learner profile will provide a shared vision that will encourage dialogue and collaboration among teachers and administrators about how to create the best environment for learning.

The IB recognizes that the introduction of the IB learner profile may present a challenge for schools. It invites schools to evaluate critically their learning environment and make the changes necessary to enable all its students and teachers to work towards developing the values of the profile. Such changes should lead to a truly collaborative learning environment, the strengthening of professionalism among the teaching staff and a commitment by the school to invest in professional development. For most schools this will not mean starting from the beginning, but may involve a refocusing of attention, creative thought and resources. For some schools the introduction of the learner profile will necessitate a major shift in direction.

The IB learner profile as a tool for school development

For the IB learner profile to become the central tenet of each IB programme, schools will need to adopt a holistic view of school as well as student development. The learner profile provides a tool for whole-school reflection and analysis. Individual teachers, faculty groups, school administrators and school governors should ask themselves "To what extent do our philosophy, our school structures and systems, our curriculum and units of work enable students, and the adults who implement the programmes, to develop into the learner described in the profile?"

In addition, teachers, IB programme coordinators and school administrators are encouraged to ask themselves questions like the ones presented here.

Classroom practices

- Is it possible to create more experiences and opportunities in the classroom that allow students to be genuine inquirers?
- How much attention do we pay to how students interact with other students in group-work activities? Could we give more time to helping them work effectively as part of a team?
- Could we create more opportunities to discuss the ethical issues that arise in the subject(s) we teach?
- How well do we model empathy, compassion and respect for others in our classrooms and around the school?

Assessment and reporting practices

- In formative assessment tasks, do we provide students with enough opportunities to take intellectual risks, and then support them in taking such risks?
- To what extent does the range of assessment strategies we use meet the diverse needs of students and encourage creative and critical thinking?
- Can we provide time for students to reflect on an assessment task and what they have learnt from it?
- What aspects of student development do we report on?

Daily life, management and leadership

- Do all our teachers see themselves as responsible for the nurturing of lifelong learners?
- What is the quality of interaction between students and teachers around the school?
- Does the structure of the school day and the schedule facilitate the development of the learner as a whole person?
- Are support structures in place to oversee the personal, social and emotional welfare of students, as well as their academic development?
- Are students empowered to take responsibility for their own learning?
- Are we investing appropriately in ongoing professional development for our teachers?

The learner profile provides a common language for teachers and administrators across the IB programmes to discuss student progress, the articulation of the curriculum and the issues of transition between programmes and school divisions. The profile does not provide ready answers to these areas, but it focuses attention on what aims and values underlie the programmes and, therefore, provides a basis on which important decisions can be made. The same applies to a school that implements only one IB programme: the profile provides a focus and reference point for teacher collaboration and the development of truly concurrent learning.

Monitoring the IB learner profile

In PYP schools teachers are required, on behalf of all students, to assess and report on progress in the development of the attributes of the learner profile. This is done by using the learner profile for self and peer assessment, as the basis for teacher/student/parent conferences and through reporting to parents.

MYP and Diploma Programme schools are expected to focus on monitoring student development in light of the profile in as many ways as possible, by engaging students and teachers in reflection, self-assessment and conferencing. Each IB World School, as a whole, is also encouraged to reflect on the success of the implementation of the learner profile.

The IB has developed programme standards and practices that are common to all its programmes. The implementation of the IB learner profile is specified in these practices, and schools will be expected to address them as part of the self-study in the programme evaluation process. The *IB Programme standards and practices* document can be found on the IB public website and the online curriculum centre (OCC).

Sharing practice

One of the great advantages that the IB has recognized and benefited from since its inception is the “creative professionalism” (a term created by Hargreaves in 1998) of its IB World School teachers, and their willingness to explore and share ideas and practices. Innovative and creative teachers of IB programmes from many different cultures have played a very significant role in the development of each programme. Their role continues with the introduction of the IB learner profile and ensures that the implementation of the profile in the three programmes benefits from the extensive practical, diverse and up-to-date experience that only they are able to provide. Such a role is pivotal in the IB’s model for the development and implementation of each programme, and it will be the same for the successful introduction of this key cross-programme component.

To facilitate the sharing of practices and experiences in the implementation of the IB learner profile, a page of the OCC is dedicated to the continuum of international education. On this page there is a section containing the IB learner profile, as well as discussion forums and areas where teachers can exchange resources. In addition, workshop leaders for all three programmes will be asked to provide participants with opportunities to discuss the profile, to share practices and experiences, and to facilitate reflection on the degree to which the values of the profile are developed in a particular subject or programme component.

The IB learner profile is inserted into all major IB publications. It also strongly informs the process of curriculum development in the IB as a basis for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a subject or programme component against the aims and values of the whole programme.

Successful implementation of the IB learner profile in a school will result in a learning environment in which the aims and values of the IB programmes are strongly evident and embraced by all members of the community. This is the challenge for both IB World Schools and the IB. We all must strive to put into practice what we believe.

The IB learner profile



The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers	They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.
Knowledgeable	They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
Thinkers	They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
Communicators	They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
Principled	They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
Open-minded	They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.
Caring	They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.
Risk-takers	They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.
Balanced	They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.
Reflective	They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.