

PREPARED FOR ALL CHALLENGES

To help achieve the school's motto and goal for students, the Indus International School in Pune is growing its Diploma Programme.

In August 2011, the Indus International School in Pune began to offer the Diploma Programme (DP). The first cohort was 21 students. This year, 65 students at the school in Pune, Maharashtra, India, completed the DP—an increase of more than 200%—and there are 135 DP students in grade 11.

Several strategies and accomplishments contributed to the enrollment surge, says Naaz Kirmani, the head of school – Diploma Programme, including:

- individualized academic support
- ensuring the implementation of IB practices
- achieving outstanding university placements
- involving all the key stakeholders—parents, students and the school community—in student development
- building in the approachability of teachers
- involving students in many activities, including field trips, participation in Model United Nations, a student leadership retreat, inter-school competitions and a leadership curriculum.

“Students have been provided a voice and free access to all stakeholders, building an environment of trust and support,” Naaz says. “We encourage inquiry. We encourage students to give their viewpoints.”

“Indus believes in instilling modern-day competencies and skills through the IB curriculum,” says Principal Sandeep Chhabra. With some 70% of Indus students coming from schools that use the national curriculum of India—which is typically teacher-led—many of them want to learn new skills to prepare for the DP core’s extended essay, creativity, activity, service (CAS) and theory of knowledge (TOK). This past year, Indus began offering a pre-IB curriculum in an 8-week module to grade 10 and to prospective grade 11 students to help them get ready. Students practice critical thinking, do a CAS-type project, receive Scholastic Aptitude Test training and learn information literacy, persuasive communication and presentation skills.

The school designed the module to keep students interested and prevent them from becoming discouraged. For example, a 1,000-word essay might sound daunting until students hear that the topic is the future of Apple or the potential role of teleportation in 21st-century life. During visits to libraries, they learn how to research and formulate questions. In classes on critical thinking, they learn that in TOK nobody is right or wrong, and they see the importance of having a viewpoint and being able to stand by it.

Indus International School, Pune (private) K-12

First offered the Diploma Programme:
2011

Total number of students:
650

**Head of school—
Diploma Programme:**
Naaz Kirmani

Principal:
Sandeep Chhabra

“
The Diploma Programme at Indus International School, Pune, prepares students to embark upon a path unknown yet familiar, a road untaken yet well-rehearsed.

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—NAAZ KIRMANI,
HEAD OF SCHOOL,
IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME, INDUS
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, PUNE

Naaz has been a TOK teacher at Indus, and she describes the experience as “absolutely amazing.” For the first few classes, students are quiet, she says, but as the course progresses they start to participate and become more vocal about their viewpoint.

The school’s individualized academic support also helps DP students thrive. During the two-week orientation and immediately afterward, teachers assess where students stand in their subject areas. Students who appear to need extra support may take an extra class after school, where teachers work with them one-on-one.

Student inquiry and viewpoints are essential elements of the DP, built into approaches to teaching and learning; CAS; and TOK. At Indus, those elements are also reflected in its leadership curriculum.

“Leadership is the ability to lead yourself, and is a key skill for the 21st-century learner,” Naaz says. The curriculum, offered as a one-hour lesson every week, emphasizes goal-setting and persuasive communication. Students set one academic and one personal goal, and learn how goals move them in a direction. At the end of the year, students present talks, modelled on TED talks, which can be in the form of speeches, drama, dance, music and other forms of communication.

“For both preparing for life and unlocking potential, especially life competencies like innovation and critical-thinking, schools must go beyond the mandate of the academic curriculum and ready our students for all challenges. This is the primary role of the leadership curriculum,” says the school’s CEO, Arjun Ray.

The leadership curriculum and the TOK curriculum overlap, and some activities are shared. Students do lots of reflection during their leadership journeys, Naaz says.

Another journey that Indus DP students take is the one that leads to university and a career. “Internships help students identify the right roadmap,” Naaz says. “We have seen a marked difference in students who had internships.” For example, one student who had planned on going for an engineering degree came back from an internship newly focused on management. To provide students with as many internship opportunities as possible, the school recently created a database of options.

In addition, career guidance counsellors meet regularly with students to discuss both internships and summer school. The school believes that going to summer school after grade 10 at places such as Oxford University, Cambridge University, New York University and the University of California, Los Angeles—and experiencing university life through those experiences— motivates DP students to work hard towards getting into a good university.

The school aims to teach students that no goal is unattainable, Naaz says. “The DP prepares students to embark upon a path unknown yet familiar, a road untaken yet well-rehearsed.”

Community projects bring DP students at Indus International School, Pune, closer to local issues and let them develop problem-solving skills, says Naaz Kirmani, head of school – Diploma Programme. At the beginning of their CAS experience, students learn that they will be leading community projects and getting to analyze local issues. During the 2015–2016 school year, students chose to work on raising money to help build a much-needed drinking water facility in a nearby village. A nationwide severe water crisis was worsening the village’s local water crisis.

Students worked with both the village and the state government to raise money through events such as bake sales and a race. Moreover, parents got involved and provided technical support.

At Indus, community service is not just for students, however. Teachers provide a course on Saturdays to teach the village’s schoolteachers English. And the school has “adopted” two formerly destitute children, who are being taken care of by a charitable organization. They will go to school at Indus at no cost, and the school will pay for all their needs. “Anything we believe in should be translated into action,” Naaz says.

