

# School change: How does the IB Middle Years Programme implementation impact school climate?

## Research summary

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## Purpose

This study examined the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) and its relation to school climate in California public schools. School climate refers to the ways a school fosters safety; promotes a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encourages and maintains respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community (National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments 2019). In this study, researchers explored whether school climate outcomes, as assessed by the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), change after schools have been authorized as IB World Schools offering the MYP.

## Research design

The study involved student-level data from grades 7 and 9 from 43 MYP and 673 non-MYP schools, spanning the school years 2003–2004 through to 2019–2020, to examine whether school climate outcomes, as measured by the CHKS, changed after MYP authorization. Additionally, researchers conducted sensitivity analyses to demonstrate whether findings were sensitive to different analytic approaches. The analyses focused on eight school climate outcomes: perceived safety, physical violence, verbal harassment, schoolwork, caring relationships, meaningful participation, school connectedness, and fairness.



## Findings

Findings from the primary research question revealed no changes on the eight school climate outcomes at the study schools after they had been authorized to offer the MYP, suggesting that the MYP did not have a measurable impact on the school climate of these schools. All changes in school climate were close to zero, so they were not statistically significant. Effect sizes ranging from  $-0.04$  to  $0.03$  across school climate outcomes indicated very little change following authorization. Findings from the sensitivity analyses were generally consistent with findings from the primary analyses.

## Discussion and further research

Though findings from this study did not identify changes in school climate associated with schools' MYP implementation, another MYP sample or an

alternative research design could result in a different pattern of findings. Additional understanding of the MYP and its relation to, or impact on, school climate could also be found through qualitative study. Qualitative case studies could identify other potential dimensions of school climate that were not examined in this study, such as respect for diversity or professional relationships (among staff), that might associate positively with the MYP.

A potential limitation of using data from students in grades 7 and 9 was that many of these students may have had limited exposure to the MYP. Depending on what time of year the students in grade 7 completed the CHKS, they generally would have participated in the MYP for 1–2 years. Additionally, students in grade 9 who began the MYP at the start of high school would have participated in the MYP for less than one year at the time they completed the CHKS. It is possible that positive changes in school climate could have been observed if the MYP students had completed the CHKS at the end of grades 8 and 10, after they had more exposure to the programme.

Additionally, given that not all MYP schools in California—especially high schools—were wall-to-wall (meaning all students in a given school participate in the MYP), future research projects would benefit from having access to information on MYP wall-to-wall status. Lastly, because the MYP was not developed as a school climate intervention, the IB may need to shift attention toward specific school climate indicators if it intends to see noticeable improvements that result from introducing the programme. The unique needs of middle school students may require a more targeted intervention to produce changes in school climate outcomes.

## References

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. (2019). *School climate improvement*. <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/school-climate-improvement>

This summary was developed by the IB Research department. A copy of the full report is available at: [www.ibo.org/research](http://www.ibo.org/research). For more information on this study or other IB research, please email [research@ibo.org](mailto:research@ibo.org).

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