

CONCISE RESEARCH SUMMARY

Supplemental Survey: Study on Creating Support Structures and Services for Title I High Schools Implementing the International Baccalaureate Programmes

Leslie Siskin and Meryle Weinstein, Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University (2008)

Abstract

A survey of Middle Years Programmes (MYP) and Diploma Programmes (DP) at U.S. schools eligible for federal “Title I” aid was conducted as part of an evaluation of the IB’s attempts to increase access to the DP by providing greater support to these schools. The survey sheds light on the nature of IB student enrollment at Title I schools, with participation in the MYP showing broader access than in the DP, where schools often have selection criteria in place. The profile of IB coordinators and teachers at these schools is also described, as are various supports available to IB students. Challenges to IB implementation at these schools include resources, time, and the difficulty of coordinating professional development between their district and the IB. In addition, motivation, academic preparation, and competing activities all impact students’ participation and success in IB. Schools stress the need for more support that will address their specific concerns as diverse, urban schools. Strengthening the pathway between the MYP and the DP may provide important support, but that pathway is still under construction, and is particularly challenging for Title I schools given their context.

Summary

With the help of a grant from the federal API Initiative, the IB has undertaken an extensive project to increase access to the Diploma Programme (DP) by strengthening pathways through the Middle Years Programme (MYP) and developing new supports to assist schools, particularly Title I schools, in this effort. A team of researchers from NYU's Institute for Education and Social Policy (IESP) have been engaged in evaluating this endeavor, conducting in-depth research at four sites. In order to ascertain whether the patterns found in these "pilot" middle and high schools reflect the larger population of Title I schools, and thus broaden understanding of what Title I IB schools are like, who they serve, and what issues and challenges they face, IESP conducted a survey of 302 DP candidate and authorized high schools serving student population with poverty rates of 30% or higher. One hundred and twenty seven respondents, representing of 37 MYP and 105 DP serving 3,118 Diploma Candidates, completed the survey.

Profile of Title I IB Schools and Student Enrollment

The schools that participated in this survey vary by size and student populations, but their average enrollment is quite large (1,702 students), and they include 7th-12th grade as well as 9th-12th grade configurations. On average, students at these schools are 27.8% Hispanic, 31.4% Black, 32.7% White, and 8% Asian, Native American or Pacific Islander; 55% are eligible for free or reduced lunch, 14% are English Language Learners (ELL) and 14% receive special education services. Slightly more than half of graduating students (55.3%) were accepted to a four-year college.

The schools in this sample report that strengthening critical thinking, preparing students for college, enhancing academic rigor for all students and attracting and retaining academically-oriented students were all "very important" factors in choosing to adopt the DP. Although almost 60% of the responding schools have offered the DP since before 2001, slightly over one-third (37%) of the schools in this sample report that there are no other IB programmes in their district, and only 2% report that they are part of a district-wide effort to offer IB.

IB programmes at these schools enroll a wide range of students, with more than a third (37.6%) of students at schools offering both the MYP and DP participating in these courses. Likewise, slightly less than a third of IB coordinators reported that ELL take IB courses at their schools. On the other hand, on average, only 13.9% of all students at schools offering only the DP participate in this programme, which is for the most part not completely open to all students. Almost two-thirds of Diploma Programmes have selection criteria, which include GPA, test scores, and teacher recommendations. At the same time, a lower proportion of IB coordinators considered a student's strong academic record to be a very important indicator of ability to handle the IB (59.4%), in comparison with those who viewed willingness to work as the most important factor (99%).

Staff participation in IB and support for IB students

IB coordinators have been at their schools for an average of 12.8 years, and many of them have learned about IB on the job, given that slightly fewer than half had previous experience or a background in IB. Many IB coordinators hold multiple positions in their schools: fewer than half (40%) receive a full-time salary for their IB position, but slightly more than a quarter consider the appreciation of their colleagues to be a compensation. On average, more than a third (38.9%) of teaching staff at MYP schools are involved in teaching the programme, but less than a quarter (22.5%) of teachers are involved in DP courses. Among those that teach the DP, 21.3% are teaching IB for the first time. Although the average caseload of guidance counselors at these schools is 339 students, three-quarters of IB coordinators report that counselors are at least somewhat knowledgeable about IB courses and requirements, and that they effectively guide students to IB. Schools in this sample provide a wide variety of supports for IB students; the most common of these are IB orientation for parents and students, tutoring sessions, extended essay support, and a CAS coordinator.

Challenges to successful IB implementation

The Title I schools surveyed face a variety of challenges to successful IB implementation and to higher success rates among students. With regard to professional development, IB coordinators report that finding courses with the appropriate content and level is the biggest hurdle; in addition, almost 60% report that getting timely approval from the district to send teachers to trainings is a challenge, and nearly half (48.6%) consider lack of funds a problem as well. Retaining trained IB teachers at the school and gaining their “buy-in” are also considered challenges by nearly half of IB coordinators. With regard to other areas of support, 80% of coordinators agree or strongly agree that time for collaborative planning is insufficient, and slightly more than one-third believe that the level of support they receive from IB represents a challenge. Nearly a quarter also believe that other district or state-level reforms such as exams, AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) requirements, and school schedules have an impact on IB implementation.

IB coordinators’ responses to this survey indicate that major barriers to student participation in the DP and completion of the programme at these schools include lack of student motivation (90%), as well as lack of persistence and commitment (84.4%). More than three-quarters (77.4%) consider that students’ skill level is also a moderate to great barrier to participation, and slightly less than three-quarters consider the rigor of IB courses and passing IB tests to be moderate or great challenges for DP completion.

The findings from this survey reflect dedicated IB coordinators and teaching staff who have high expectations of their students, and a range of support services available to students. Patterns of growth in the number of Title-I eligible IB schools and the number of students participating in IB and earning the diploma are also visible. Nonetheless, coordinators state that student motivation, academic preparation, and competing activities all impact participation and success in IB. Likewise, schools are concerned about money, time, and the difficulty of coordinating professional development between their district and the IB. They stress the need for more support, particularly in terms of professional development that will address their specific concerns as diverse, urban schools. Strengthening the pathway between the MYP and the DP may provide the greatest support for students, but that pathway is still under construction. It is also particularly challenging where it must be built across two or more schools, as is the case for most Title I schools, due to the configuration of urban schools and district school choice policies.

This summary was developed by the IB Research Department. For more information about IB research, e-mail the IB Research Department at research@ibo.org.

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