

Designing optimal learning arrangements for all students



In all IB programmes, teaching is ... designed to remove barriers to learning. Teaching is inclusive and values diversity. It affirms students' identities and aims to create learning opportunities that enable every student to develop and pursue appropriate personal goals.”

- What is an IB education? (2013)

A framework to facilitate inclusion

In many traditional school settings, learning experiences that cater to the majority of students need to be modified, accommodated, or differentiated to ensure optimal arrangements have been made for diverse learners. Often materials require significant adaption to make them accessible. The IB framework is design with the learner in mind, therefore creating contexts where approaches to teaching and learning are easily crafted by teachers to suit a vast range of learning styles.

Why wouldn't we use a learner focused framework to optimize learning experiences for student with diverse learning needs?

The IB supports the following principles of an inclusive education where:

- **education for all** is considered a human right
- all learners belong and experience **equal opportunities** to participate and engage in quality learning
- every educator is an educator of *all* students
- learning is considered from a **strength-based perspective**
- assessment provides all learners with opportunities to demonstrate their learning, which is **rewarded and celebrated**
- all students experience **success** as a key component of learning

read further in [Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB programmes](#) (2020)

[The IB's] focus on approaches to learning is grounded in the belief that learning how to learn is fundamental to a student's education ... The development of these skills plays a crucial role in supporting the IB's mission to develop active, compassionate and lifelong learners.

The approaches to teaching are deliberately broad, designed to give teachers the flexibility to choose specific strategies to employ that best reflect their own particular contexts and the needs of their students ... Teaching is inclusive and values diversity. It affirms students' identities and aims to create learning opportunities that enable every student to develop and pursue appropriate goals.

INCLUSIVE HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION

Optimal activation of inclusive learning strategies

In education systems that are established to provide for all citizens, public policy ensure provisions are made that include all students. In the United States, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans ensure students have equal and equitable access to schooling. Below are some examples of how common IEP and 504 modifications, accommodations, and differentiations align to IB approaches to learning and teaching.

IEP or 504 arrangements

Extra time for assignments

Presentation of information and setting expectations

IB approaches to learning and teaching

Ensure adequate time and support for students to plan, draft, practice, and deliver.

Break down timed assessment into smaller increments. If they have to deliver a 10 minute prepared oral, start them with 3 minutes, then 5, then 7, before 10 (scaffolding time)

Make revision and resubmission part of the learning process. Take time to reflect and guide students to improve their work.

Ensure the project centered assessments are comprised of tasks, skills, and modes students have already. Integrate these into non-grade baring activities in instruction. This is instruction informed by assessment.

Use visuals, organizers, and a range of different ways to present materials. Enlarge stanzas of a poem or paragraphs from a novel and use color to annotate in groups. Depart from the read everything at home, by yourself, without support approach. Gradually release responsibility to students and set reasonable expectations

IEP or 504 arrangements*Frequent breaks***IB approaches to learning and teaching**

Ensure 90 minute blocks are not pushing any student to sustain concentration for all of this time. Break up the time intentionally using a range of teaching strategies to engage students in their learning. Independent time. Group time. Discussion time. Get up and move to do something rather than sit at the desk. Take a half-time break every student knows is going to be a brain break they can look forward to.

Testing in small groups

For students that cannot manage the anxiety of performing in front of large groups, devise a plan where they get to experience performing just as everyone else would, but in front of a small group they trust. Use technology for assessment (video, Flip Grid...) occasionally to build confidence and capacity.

Alternate assignments

The IB has defined assessment in the DP, but the alternate assignments should be part of the preparation for every student. Any student would be boarded if they just prepared for exams, using practice papers. Think about using things like TED Talk as a way to engage students in oral assignments. Etc.

Prepare all students for the DP assessments in a well planned out, process driven way. Then, ensure students whose wellbeing may be threatened, are able to modify their assessment. In the IB, if you don't write 12 pages or speak for the entire time, you can still earn marks. Its not all or nothing.

Use of graphic organizers

Help students organize their thoughts. Use the portfolio (part of the Lang and Lit course design) as a tool for reflection on skill development and the development of ideas, not just as a repository for the work completed over time. Integrate organizers that teachers provide. Explain why the organizer is designed in such a way... think of opportunities when time is allowed for students to think about creating a graphic organizer for themselves, using the examples their teachers have shared.