

# RESEARCH SUMMARY

## *Academic civic-mindedness and model citizenship in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme*



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### Background

This study examines the development of students' "academic civic-mindedness" and "model citizenship" in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) at four sample schools in California, USA. Despite several national initiatives intended to increase US public schools' emphasis on developing students' civic engagement and citizenship (for example, Campbell, Hess and Levinson 2012; Battistoni 2013), most US schools do not prioritize either objective. IB programmes—currently operating in 1,500 US schools, over 90% of which are public—have a strong stated commitment to developing students' citizenship.

This study defines "academic civic-mindedness" as student knowledge of the US system of government, public policy and effective advocacy techniques.<sup>1</sup> This definition assumes that students need civic knowledge and skills to embrace their civic rights and responsibilities. This paper adopts the term "model citizenship" following the Westheimer and Kahne (2004) citizen typology that includes participatory, personally responsible and social justice citizenship orientations. In the US context, participatory citizens vote and help others to vote, write letters to the editor, peacefully protest and engage in other activities aimed at fostering democracy. Personally responsible citizens may follow laws, perform acts of community service, stay out of debt and generally behave in a way that conforms to the status quo. Finally, justice-oriented citizens seek to reduce inequality and prejudice, promote human rights and represent diverse perspectives (Westheimer and Kahne 2004).

<sup>1</sup> US government in the US context

The purpose of the IB learner profile is to provide schools and teachers with a practical means through which to translate the IB mission into practice. The learner profile consists of 10 attributes to foster in IB students; that they be inquiring, knowledgeable, thinking, communicating, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced and reflective. Each of these attributes could relate to each of the three citizen types as defined in Westheimer and Kahne's typology. The IB explicitly prefaces the 10 attributes with the overarching principle of "educating the whole person for a life of active, responsible citizenship" (IBO 2008: 1), suggesting that the development of students' citizenship is a core purpose of an IB education.

### Research design

Four public schools in the state of California were selected for participation in this research study. Research methods included teacher and student interviews and student surveys. Civic education opportunities tend to be greater at more advantaged schools (Levinson 2012; Kahne and Middaugh 2008); therefore, the primary consideration for selection into the sample was to include schools serving students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The researcher selected schools that serve a range of student body proportions that are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch (FRL).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, across the four schools, over 80% of the sample DP students

<sup>2</sup> California schools participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). According to NSLP regulations, FRL eligibility is determined in one or two ways: i) Families have the opportunity to self-report their eligibility using the Household Eligibility Application and ii) the California State Board of Education reports to school districts all children who are part of families eligible for food stamps and/or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programme, and these children are eligible for the lunch program (US Department of Agriculture 2012).

were minorities, with 44% of students identifying as Asian, 26% as Hispanic and 7% as African American/Black.

In the four case study schools, the researcher interviewed DP coordinators ( $n = 4$ ), teachers ( $n = 15$ ) and students ( $n = 24$ ) to learn their perspectives about how and the extent to which the DP prepares students for citizenship. Most teachers interviewed held multiple roles, including: IB coordinator ( $n = 4$ ), creativity, action, service (CAS) coordinator ( $n = 4$ ), group 1 English teacher ( $n = 4$ ), theory of knowledge (TOK) teacher ( $n = 4$ ), history of the Americas teacher ( $n = 1$ ), extended essay advisor ( $n = 2$ ) and IB chemistry or biology teacher ( $n = 3$ ). IB coordinators were asked to select students who represent a range of levels of success and effort.

To supplement the interview data, the author also surveyed DP students using validated items from other civic education surveys that have been administered to large samples of high school students.

The following table shows the categories included in the survey, descriptions of these categories and the surveys or scales used to measure them.

Category	Description	Measurement
Civic skills	Familiarity with effective advocacy techniques	Researcher used a scale administered as part of the California Survey of Civic Education (Kahne, Middaugh and Croddy 2005). This measure asks students how well they think they would be able to execute a series of eight civic skills in response to a concrete problem in their community.
Civic knowledge	Knowledge of US government and public policy	Items included in the survey are from two sources, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) 2012 youth voting survey and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) 2010 12th grade civics assessment.
Citizenship orientation	Participatory, personally responsible and social justice orientations	The survey uses three scales that Kahne and co-authors have used to measure students' civic orientations in previous studies (Westheimer and Kahne 2004, Kahne, Middaugh and Croddy 2005, Kahne and Spote 2008).
Civic education exposure	Experience with high-quality civic education practices	A 2010 NAEP civics item stem was used to measure the types of high-quality civic education practices that the Civic Mission of Schools recommends (Gould 2011).
Means	Estimation of the means through which students developed the knowledge, skills and attitudes addressed in the survey	The survey asks students to estimate the means through which they developed the knowledge, skills and attitudes they drew from to answer the survey questions.
Background	Demographics and education background	Students are asked to report their age, gender, ethnicity, whether either or both parents were born outside of the US, and mother's and father's educational attainment.

Table 1: Civic education survey categories for DP students

## Findings

### Demographics of sample and differences between IB and non-IB students within schools

According to teachers, students who enroll in the DP in the four sample schools have, on average, similar socio-economic backgrounds compared with their non-IB peers within the same school. These teacher perceptions suggest that, across the sample schools, the DP is accessible to students regardless of socio-economic status (SES).

Student survey responses about their parents' educational attainment indicate that, for the majority, either or both parents have at least some college education. As an imperfect proxy for family, these responses indicate that, on average, IB students in the sample are not from impoverished family backgrounds.

The survey also asks about students' grade point average (GPA) and college intentions. Students included in the survey sample, on average, reported a GPA of over 4.0, indicating strong overall academic performance. The vast majority of students (96%)

intend to attend a four-year college, with just one student unsure. Further, more than two-thirds of the teachers ( $n = 12$ ) indicated that IB students tend to have stronger academic backgrounds than their non-IB counterparts.

## **Development of students' academic civic-mindedness**

### ***Knowledge of US government***

Students' and teachers' interview responses indicate that the DP curriculum does not strongly emphasize the development of students' knowledge specific to the US system of government. A minority of teachers and students were able to articulate the knowledge necessary to understand government functioning; however, they did not provide specific examples of how the DP curriculum develops this knowledge.

Although the DP curriculum may not emphasize knowledge of the US government, the student survey results show that, compared with nationally representative samples of 12th-grade students, the DP sample scored higher on 9 of 10 items that tested their knowledge of US government structure, functioning and history.

### ***Knowledge of US public policy***

All teachers and students ( $n = 39$ ) provided examples of ways in which DP curriculum and pedagogy promotes knowledge of US public policy issues. In total, students and teachers mentioned 28 separate public policy issues. Interview data indicate that the top three DP courses through which students develop knowledge of US public policy are TOK, history of the Americas and group 1 English.

### ***Understanding of effective advocacy techniques***

The interview data suggest that the DP strongly promotes students' understanding of effective advocacy techniques through development of the skills necessary to execute advocacy activities. In response to the interview question on the skills students needed to address social and political issues, the most common responses across students and teachers included: oral communication ( $n = 29$ ); interpersonal skills including listening, patience, flexibility, intercultural sensitivity, diplomacy and ability to compromise and negotiate ( $n = 24$ ); written communication ( $n = 23$ ); collaboration or teamwork ( $n = 10$ ); ability to organize activities, information and time ( $n = 10$ ); leadership ( $n = 8$ ); persuasion ( $n = 8$ ); thinking

skills including critical thinking, creativity, intellectual humility and respectful questioning ( $n = 8$ ); research skills including close reading and source evaluation ( $n = 7$ ); and consideration of alternative perspectives ( $n = 5$ ). A teacher summarized these skills as "the 21st century skills we are struggling to teach all students".

Indeed, the list of skills that students and teachers believe are necessary for civic engagement overlaps to a significant extent with most lists of skills that students need for success in college and careers (for example, AT21CS undated; Saavedra and Opfer 2012; Wagner 2008). These responses indicate that students and teachers believe that successful implementation of civic advocacy activities requires "21st century skills" competence.

### ***DP development of students' advocacy skills***

According to all student and teacher interviews (100%), the DP's heavy pedagogical reliance on discussions, debates, oral presentations, written assignments and teamwork enables students to develop many of the skills necessary for civic engagement.

As one student explained:

*"Through IB I learned to lead group projects, share opinions, consider others' perspectives and express views without offending others."*

Interviewees most frequently mentioned TOK ( $n = 21$ ), IB English ( $n = 17$ ) and CAS ( $n = 18$ ) as contributions to developing students' communication, interpersonal, perspective-taking and thinking skills.

### ***CAS development of students' advocacy skills***

Students can develop the skills necessary for civic engagement through CAS, although the extent to which they do seems to depend on both the way the school organizes the CAS programme and individual students' level of motivation. In the best-case scenario, exemplified at one sample school, students' CAS experience is a mission-based project through which students actively address a social topic about which they are passionate about effecting change. This version of the CAS experience is outcomes focused, not time focused.

At this school, most students seem to find a project they care about and develop valuable project-management skills that will serve them well as citizens and in their careers. For each project, according to student interviews, they started with an issue they

were passionate about, created a detailed work plan including goals and action steps to reach those goals, communicated their ideas to adults and peers from whom they needed support, collaborated with others, persisted through setbacks, reflected on their personal growth, executed a culminating event and earned the satisfaction of reaching their goals.

Except for the school with the well-structured CAS programme, student comments about CAS were mixed and indicated that, as one participant stated: “CAS can be meaningful if you are passionate about the activity and getting something out of the experience. If you are not, it’s about logging hours.” Without a strong CAS structure and self-motivation, students could fail to engage with their CAS project and correspondingly not develop useful skills. That said, even when the CAS structure promotes hour-counting as the chief outcome, some students with strong self-motivation positively harness their experience.

### ***Student experiences with civic education best practice of the DP***

Close to 100% of students reported that they discuss current events at least once a week through the DP, 60% of whom do so daily. The majority (70%) of students also report that they debate in the DP at least weekly and that simulations, though occurring less frequently, take place at least once a month. The respective frequencies of IB students’ discussion of current events, debating and simulations formally through the DP are similar to those that students report they engage in informally with their DP peers.

Students report engaging in discussion of current events, debates and simulations with much less frequency during non-IB courses and extracurricular activities and with their non-DP peers. For example, only 25% of students reported discussing current events at least weekly in their non-IB courses, and the majority rarely or never debate or engage in simulations in their non-IB courses or with their non-IB peers.

### **DP students’ academic civic-mindedness performance**

The student survey measured students’ knowledge of US government and comfort implementing eight advocacy techniques and asked where students believe they developed most of the knowledge, skills and attitudes measured in the survey.

Compared with the nationally representative CIRCLE and NAEP samples, higher proportions of students in the DP sample answered 9 of the 10 questions correctly. At least three-quarters of the DP students reported that they “probably can” or “definitely can” implement each of the eight advocacy activities. Finally, two-thirds of students estimated that they learned most of the knowledge tested in the survey through the DP. Nearly half estimate that they gained the skills necessary to implement the eight advocacy activities through the DP.

### ***Knowledge of US government***

Compared with the CIRCLE national sample of 18 year-olds, the proportion of IB students scoring correctly on each of the four CIRCLE items was greater by approximately 20 percentage points. Across the four items, on average 74% of DP students scored correctly compared with just 51% of CIRCLE students. The proportion of DP students scoring correctly on each of the NAEP items (56%) is also higher than the national population (45%) (see Table 2 opposite page).

### **DP development of students’ model citizenship**

The interview and survey data suggest that individual teachers and students relate to several citizenship types simultaneously. Teachers seem to most frequently identify with participatory, followed by social justice and then personally responsible citizenship. Student survey and interview results indicate that they most strongly relate to the social justice type, followed by personal responsibility and then participatory citizenship.

### ***Teachers’ conceptions of model citizenship***

Two-thirds of the teachers ( $n = 10$ ) said that they frequently and consciously attempt to promote students’ awareness of local, state, national and/or international issues—a critical feature of the participatory citizen—through their curriculum and pedagogy, particularly through discussion of current events. One quarter ( $n = 6$ ) of the teachers’ comments suggested that they relate to the social justice conception of citizenship. A smaller proportion of teachers’ comments reflected a strong orientation to the personally responsible conception of citizenship.

	DP (n = 24) %	NAEP (n = 9,900) %	CIRCLE* (n = 359) %
Does the federal government spend more on Social Security or on foreign aid?	54	--	37
Which US political party is more conservative?***	96	--	73
How much of a majority is required for the US Senate and House to override a presidential veto?	71	--	47
Which of the following best describes who is entitled to vote in federal elections?	75	--	48
In the given speech, Joseph McCarthy seems to ignore constitutional rights granted by the ____ Amendment.	54	38	--
What is one responsibility that modern presidents have that is NOT described in the Constitution?	54	44	--
Under what historical circumstances was the Fourteenth Amendment passed?	83	59	--
People who claim that lobbying is a positive force in American politics often argue that lobbyists play an important role by _____.	46	34	--
Which of the following did critics of the Articles of Confederation consider the document's greatest flaw?	46	42	--
The federal system encourages the growth of organized interest groups by _____.	50	55	--
*CIRCLE responses were from students who were 18 years old and either currently enrolled in high school or had graduated from high school for appropriate comparison with DP students (who have an average age of 17.29).			
***This question was asked slightly differently on the CIRCLE survey, which simply asked if one political party was more conservative than the other			

*Table 2: Comparisons of student knowledge with NAEP and CIRCLE samples (% correct)*

### **Student conceptions of model citizenship**

Student survey responses indicate that they most strongly identify with a social justice citizen orientation, such that 84% of students strongly agree or agree with statements that describe the social justice orientation, 49% of which strongly agree. In comparison, 70% of students strongly agree or agree with the personal responsibility statements (38% strongly) and 65% with the participatory statements (29% strongly). This is not to say that, in the absolute, sample students do not relate to participatory citizenship. On the contrary, in response to the “participation item” that asks students to rate their agreement with the statement, “Being actively involved in state and local issues is my responsibility”, only 8% of the IB sample disagrees, compared with 53% of Californian 12th graders who responded to the California Civic Survey (Kahne, Middaugh and Croddy 2005: 2). Thus, while DP students in this study relate most strongly to the social justice orientation, they also demonstrate strong

agreement with the personally responsible and participatory orientations.

Regarding the participatory orientation, most of the IB students feel that they are more informed about social issues through the IB than they would be otherwise and that being informed makes them want to be involved. As one student explained:

*“Learning about social issues makes me want to try to address them. I didn’t care about what was going on in the world before IB. IB makes you think outside of the book. I wouldn’t be as involved if not for IB.”*

According to student and teacher interviews, the DP develops students’ model citizenship through promoting their awareness of political and social issues and required active engagement with a community issue. Several structural features of the DP may also develop the attitudes students deem necessary for civic engagement, including student choice, non-textbook

learning, motivated teachers and rigorous requirements.

## IB compared with non-IB alternatives

Based on their experiences as students in non-IB high-school level courses, the majority of students feel that DP curriculum, pedagogy and climate develop students' academic civic-mindedness and model citizenship to a greater extent than do the alternative tracks, which are California College Prep and Advanced Placement (AP) in the sample schools.

In specific comparison to AP—a common alternative for DP students, given its rigour—11 respondents (nine students and two teachers) indicated that DP curriculum and instruction develop thinking, transfer of skills and knowledge and love of learning for its own sake, compared with the AP emphasis on test preparation and “regurgitation” through the lecture, book and test instructional model.

## Barriers to emphasis on civic-mindedness and model citizenship

In response to the teacher interview question about barriers to addressing academic civic-mindedness, the top three responses included:

1. teachers' lack of clarity on how to make the content and skills they teach relevant to civic purposes, particularly for mathematics and science teachers ( $n = 7$ )
2. student limitations ( $n = 4$ )
3. DP examination questions' lack of focus on either construct ( $n = 3$ ).

The most widely held concern, expressed by seven teachers across two schools, is that they do not know how to frame the skills, knowledge and attitudes they teach as relevant to development of academic civic-mindedness and model citizenship. One teacher noted that, “it would be clearer to me to know what to do to promote citizenship if there was a specific civic-mindedness goal”. Comments from teachers at one school indicate that connections between the curriculum and citizenship are particularly unclear for mathematics and science teachers.

Four teachers mentioned the second barrier, that IB students are too limited in their time to attempt to also develop their academic civic-mindedness and

model citizenship. Additionally, one teacher from each of three schools explained that the DP examination questions do not address academic civic-mindedness or model citizenship, and this can affect the extent to which they prioritize teaching civic themes.

## Recommendations

The main implications of the findings are as follows. The IB and US IB World Schools could:

- be more intentional in their curricular and pedagogical materials and through professional development (PD) in explaining to teachers the connections between the DP requirements and civic-mindedness and citizenship
- be more explicit to teachers about the overlap between the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for civic engagement and those for college and career preparation
- consider strengthening teachers' accountability for developing students' civic-mindedness and citizenship through greater focus on evaluating students' academic civic-mindedness and model citizenship in DP examinations
- help to improve the CAS component by providing schools with more detailed guidance on the best ways to structure it
- consider offering PD sessions that deepen teachers' understanding of their own civic orientations.

Finally, the survey developed to measure sample DP students' academic civic-mindedness and model citizenship could be used to measure those constructs in other DP students.

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