

The International  
Baccalaureate  
PYP (Primary Years  
Program) at Scandia  
Elementary School

A Parent Handbook



Everything you ever wanted to know about the  
International Baccalaureate (IB)  
Primary Years Program (PYP)...

But were afraid to ask!

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new  
landscapes, but in having new eyes,"

Marcel Proust



## ? What is the International Baccalaureate Organization?

- It is a non-profit educational and non-governmental organization.
- It was established in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It is governed by a 16 member council and is funded by fees from IB World Schools
- The IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization) offers three programs of international education for students aged 3-19 years old:
  - The Diploma Program (DP) at the high school level (Grades 9-12)
  - The Middle Years Program (MYP) for students 11-16 years old)
  - The Primary Years Program (PYP) for students 3-12 years old)
- There are 651,000 IB students and 2,390 authorized IB schools in 129 countries around the world. (242 schools in the United States)
- There are 23 authorized IB PYP (Primary Years Program) schools in Minnesota. Scandia Elementary is one of those schools.

## ? What's the story behind the IBO?

Marie Therese Maurette created the framework for what would eventually become the IB Diploma Programme, in 1948, when she wrote *Is There a Way of Teaching for Peace?*, a handbook for UNESCO. In the mid-1960's, a group of teachers from the International School of Geneva created the International School Examinations Syndicate, which would later become the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). The IB headquarters were officially established in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1968, for the development and maintenance of the Diploma Programme, which provided an internationally acceptable university admission qualifications for young people whose parents worked as diplomats or with international and multi-national companies.

## What is an IB PYP School?

Regardless of location, size, or make-up, an IB PYP school strives to develop an internationally minded person.

### **The Mission of the IBO:**

- To develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people.
- To create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.
- To work with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment.
- To encourage students worldwide to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

## What does this mean at Scandia Elementary School?

It means our Scandia Elementary school students are taught *WHY* they should know something and how it connects to other subjects and the world around them. It means students often decide the direction of instruction, based on their curiosities and inquiries. It means high quality teaching and learning - challenging instruction and worldwide knowledge. It also means great opportunities to take action after reflecting on the learning at school.

## How does the IB PYP teach students to be internationally minded?

Through teaching and modeling the *Learner Profile*. Regardless of the IB school your child may visit or attend, these same characteristics or *Learner Profile* remain the same - foundationally to the IB PYP learning experience.

## But, really what does it mean to be “internationally minded” and why is it important?

It is a thoughtful, critical perspective that applies to who we are and what we do. It includes how we communicate, our political awareness, cultural understanding, celebrating diversity, global awareness of global issues, and a reflection on how knowledge is constructed and applied. At Scandia Elementary School we focus on moving students toward becoming people who reflect the characteristics of the *Learner Profile*.

## Who is an “international minded ” person?



According to the IB PYP, an internationally minded person is someone who demonstrates the attributes of the *Learner Profile*.

## What is the *Learner Profile*?



These are qualities determined to be the most important in creating positive and productive citizens of the world.

## What are these *Learner Profile* qualities?



- Inquirer - I am curious and know how to discover answers to many of my questions. I love to learn!
- Thinker - I use my thinking skills to make good choices and solve problems.
- Communicator - I understand and share ideas in more than one language.
- Risk Taker - I try new things, love to explore, and confidently share my experiences.
- Knowledgeable - I explore big ideas that are important. I know and can do a lot of important things.
- Principled - I am fair and honest. I can make good decisions about what is right and wrong for me.
- Caring - I am concerned about other people's needs and feelings. I believe it is important to help others.
- Open-Minded - I am comfortable with differences. I welcome and respect other people's points of views and ways of doing things.
- Balanced - I strive to be healthy. It is important for me to balance the needs of my mind and body.
- Reflective - I think about and discuss my learning, skills, and products.

## ? What are the IB *Attitudes*?

The *Attitudes* are the daily expressions of the *Learner Profile* used by teachers in teaching and by students in their learning.

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference."

-Winston Churchill

- *Appreciation* - Seeing and being thankful for the wonder and beauty of our world.
- *Commitment* - Being responsible for my learning, showing self-discipline, and perseverance. Sticking with a difficult task until it is completed.
- *Confidence* - Knowing I can do it! Having courage to take risks, using what I have learned, and making good choices.
- *Cooperation* - Working with others and being willing to lead or follow as needed.
- *Creativity* - Using my imagination while thinking and doing things.
- *Empathy* - Being able to put myself in someone else's place in order to understand her or him.
- *Enthusiasm* - Being excited about learning and life
- *Independence* - Thinking and acting on my own.
- *Integrity* - Being fair and honest.
- *Respect* - Showing that I can show respect for others, our world, and myself.
- *Tolerance* - Understanding, appreciating, and celebrating differences in each other.

## ? What does *Attitude* look like?

Attitude is an outward expression of an inner feeling. Some people try to mask their attitude, but a cover doesn't last long - attitude always find a way to leak out.

## So, what will my child be learning at Scandia Elementary School?

The current Forest Lake Area Schools curriculum, which meets the current Minnesota State Standards, will be used throughout the school. With the IB PYP at Scandia Elementary, we are also committed to structured inquiry as the vehicle for learning. Six Transdisciplinary Themes provide the framework for exploration and construction of knowledge. Teachers and students are guided by these transdisciplinary themes - as they design units of inquiry for exploration and study. Through this process, students develop an understanding of important concepts, acquire essential skills and knowledge, develop particular attitudes and learn to take socially responsible action.

## OK, what does transdisciplinary mean?

Transdisciplinary is the word that IB uses to describe a discipline that applies across all disciplines - it is interconnectedness and can be applied **across all subjects** and applied to real life. A Transdisciplinary concept stretches across math, science, language arts, and social studies and ties it all together; it is not isolated to one subject. For example, the idea of change affects all subject areas - the IB PYP strives to demonstrate this through learning, giving understanding to a real life world.

The IB PYP program incorporates five essential elements:

1. **CONCEPTS** - There are eight fundamental concepts expressed as key questions to propel the process of inquiry. These universal concepts drive the research units - called **UNITS OF INQUIRY**, but they also have relevance within and across all subject areas (transdisciplinary). The eight fundamental concepts are:

- Form: What is it like?
- Function: How does it work?
- Causation: Why is it like it is?
- Change: How is it changing?
- Connection: How is it connected to other things?
- Perspective: What are the points of view?
- Reflection: How do we know?
- Responsibility - What is our responsibility?

2. **SKILLS** - There are five sets of transdisciplinary skills acquired in the process of structured inquiry. These are:

- Thinking Skills
- Communication Skills
- Social Skills
- Research Skills
- Self-Management Skills

3. **ATTITUDES** - the PYP promotes attitudes that we want our Scandia Elementary IB students to feel, value and demonstrate.

4. **ACTION** - Our Scandia IB World School students are encouraged to reflect, to make informed choices and to take action that will help their peers, school staff and the wider community. This is how our students demonstrate a deeper sense of learning, by applying their knowledge to service and positive action.

5. **KNOWLEDGE** - Rather than provide a fixed syllabus or curriculum, the PYP identifies themes, or areas of knowledge, which are used to organize the six Units of Inquiry, taught from kindergarten through grade 6. These Units of Inquiry provide the framework (as opposed to a text book curriculum) for a wide variety of resources to be explored in order to accomplish the objectives within each Unit of Inquiry. These six themes are:

- Who We Are
- Where We are in Place and Time
- How We Express Ourselves
- How the World Works
- How We Organize Ourselves
- Sharing the Planet

### So, what exactly is a **Unit of Inquiry**?

A Unit of Inquiry usually lasts for six weeks and the objective is to cover all six themes throughout the year. For example, during the Unit of Inquiry "Sharing the Planet", students may spend six weeks looking at the resources we have in the world and how various countries use, share and dispose of these resources. Students will answer questions like: How do these resources connect people around the world? Or, how are these resources changing and what does that mean for people? These concepts and questions move across all school subjects and apply to real life and the world around us.

### How does Scandia Elementary as an IB PYP school implement these Units of Inquiry?

These themes or Units of Inquiry, provide a framework on which our teachers build students' knowledge. With the IB PYP, the priority is not on using a set of textbooks, but rather emphasis is on a wide variety of resources from which teachers and students extract knowledge, develop understanding, and explore ways of applying that to real life. All of the Units of Inquiry are a part of the Programme of Inquiry that is posted in the front entry of the school.

## How are students at Scandia Elementary School assessed?

Students are assessed in a variety of ways, including written tests, exams, projects, oral presentations and written reports. Each year the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments are given as well as the MAP (Measures of Academic progress) tests. Assessment in IB PYP is "criterion referenced." This means students are scored against standards and a scoring rubric is used, so students are not scored against each other. Teachers give the students a rubric on larger assignments that explains to the students what is expected of them. The rubric states what the criteria are for the assignment (on a paper, for instance) and what the score will be for addressing or not addressing each point in that criteria. The rubric allows students to take ownership of their effort and learning. A rubric defines what are the standards or requirements that need to be accomplished in order to achieve the overall target or goal.

### Some more information on how my child will be assessed at Scandia Elementary...

At Scandia Elementary, each Unit of Inquiry allows students opportunities to demonstrate that learning is taking place - that there are shifts, if you will, in their understanding. The may look different across all subject areas - however, this shift in understanding is not always best demonstrated through a piece of written work or a traditional exam. Students may be asked to put together a final project, draw, act out a performance, do a presentation, or find some other way to show what they have learned. The goal is for our students to demonstrate that learning has taken place by showing what they understand and how they are applying that understanding to real life and the world around them. Authentic learning cannot always be demonstrated through traditional tests or exams. At Scandia Elementary IB World School, we believe that assessment is the continuation of the learning process. It is NOT assessment of learning, but it is assessment FOR learning.

The IB views assessments as needing to be authentic, essential, rich, engaging, and feasible - it should incorporate students in the process of evaluating their learning. **Formative** assessments are woven into the daily lessons and learning - this ongoing process of "checking in" between teachers and students, helps both teachers and students find out what they already know, in order to plan for the next stage of learning. **Formative** assessment and teaching are directly linked; effective learning cannot take place without one or the other. **Summative** assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process - this is the time that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and application of what has been learned.

## **① How can parents help students with schoolwork?**

Follow up daily with your child to see what homework they have. Help your child schedule time so they don't feel overwhelmed. Realize that you will probably help them with (not do) some of their larger projects. Most parents will find pleasure or pride in helping their child grow in this way, as they work together to do the larger projects.

## **② How can you, as a parent, get involved?**

- Provide communication between yourself and school that is regular, 2-way, and meaningful.
- Participate as a full partner in decisions that impact your child and family.
- Portfolios are a part of documenting student growth and reflections over the course of the student's elementary career. Ask your child to see his/hers often when visiting the school.
- Collaboration with the community, through partnerships, which are mutually beneficial to our school and the community.
- You are always welcome at Scandia Elementary School. We need your support and assistance to make our school the great place that it is!

### **In the end, here is a summary of what the IB PYP is:**

With the PYP, our students in all grades have the opportunity to own their learning. Our teachers do not "cover" a subject or "give" a lesson. At Scandia Elementary, our students take the lesson or learning experience - they do it, make it, and experience it. Our students ask questions and learn how to find the answers to those questions and apply those answers to their lives and the world around them. With the IB PYP, Scandia Elementary World School students see how things are connected in a real way, rather than simply being fragmented into school subjects.

### **So in the end, what makes the IB PYP so effective at Scandia Elementary?**

We are committed to the IB philosophy that students need to be at the center of real life learning by using their natural curiosity. The IB PYP model fits well with our goals at Scandia Elementary School, to guide our students to be internationally minded and have a passion for life-long learning.