

IBMYP at City High-Middle School Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Homework, Academic Opportunities, and Challenges

Q. What is the homework load like? How much homework should a child have outside of school?

A. This is not a program that just loads on a lot of homework. This is a big misconception that many people have of the IB program. Keeping in mind that each child is different, the homework assigned is not overwhelming AND kids still have time for a variety of after school activities. Long-term and large projects are given ample time and warning to complete.

Q. What organizational tools should kids have?

A. Help your child become organized from the beginning by asking them daily if they have homework, which should be written in the planner by the student. Set up a plan for after school (i.e. come home, relax for ½ hour, eat, do homework). Setting up a routine makes it easier for kids to figure out how to organize themselves. Big issue: students DOING their homework but not handing it in! Procrastination will be the downfall of any student, and students who have completed the IB in grade 10 note this issue as the number one piece of advice to those who follow behind them. Kids will need to have a plan to stay on top of things. Plans the child has a hand in creating work the best.

Q. How can parents help students with schoolwork?

A. Follow up daily with your child to see what homework they have. Help reinforce at home the program requirement that the student fills out their School Planner each and every day, in every subject, then use this to check for assignments each evening at home. Help your student schedule time so they don't feel overwhelmed. Realize that you will probably help them with (not do) some of their larger projects. Example: Many parents will make a trip with their child to the Minnesota History Museum for their History Day project, or help them create their display board if it requires building with power tools. Most parents will find pleasure or pride in helping their child grow as they do a larger project.

Q. What about lost or late homework?

A. Teachers in middle school have strict guidelines for lost or late homework. This information will be given out by the teacher at the beginning of the year. Your child needs to understand that they are no longer in elementary school. They must bring their homework to the classroom . . . and turn it in! Policies differ per grade level.

Q. What should the study habits of my child be?

A. This varies by child and family. Parent follow-up and involvement is needed on a daily basis for some children. For other children, very little involvement may be needed. The biggest need seems to be a focus on quality, not minimal, work. Organization skills can sometimes be a challenge also.

Q. What kind of advance notice/explanations do parents receive for long-term projects?

A. Children and parents are given information and guidelines for large projects. This information will either be handed out, posted on the teacher's web site, or be a part of Earth, the district's site for parent/school information about the student. It should also be in the School Planner book!

Q. Is there enough time to be an Application MYP student and to do other activities?

A. Yes! In fact, the vast majority of students participate in all kinds of activities. Most school events, plays, sports and other activities are populated by MYP students. These students also take outside lessons or participate in outside activities.

Q. What languages do you offer?

A. French, Chinese, and Spanish

Q. How are students graded or assessed? What is a rubric or grading criteria?

A. Assessment in IB is "criterion referenced." This means students are scored against standards, not against each other (or at the teacher's whim). Teachers will 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 (in a paper, for instance) and what the score will be for addressing or not addressing each point. Students are able to "buy into" their grades and take ownership of their effort and learning.

Program Expectations and Requirements

Q. What are the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program standards?

A. Application IBMYP students are expected to have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 by the end of each school year. Students that fall below during any quarter are informed of their standing and are offered help if needed. Students are reviewed at the end of the year on a case-by-case basis for continuation in the application program.

Community service, done according to the grade level standards, is also an expectation. 20 hours per year per grade level are required. Outside service

activity is highly encouraged and commended.

Further, adherence to the IBMYP Honor Code is a must. The code addresses personal integrity about issues such as cheating, plagiarism, language and behavior. Neglecting any of these requirements results in removal from this tier of the program. The regular program IBMYP at 7th grade also has a community service requirement, which will be accomplished in school within the curriculum.

Q. How does IB have an international flavor? How is it maintained?

A. We encourage international-mindedness in IB students. To do this, we believe that students must first develop an understanding of their own cultural and national identity. IBMYP students are required to learn a foreign language. In many of their classes they discuss what they have learned and how it relates globally and culturally. Valuing multiple perspectives is a big part of the entire curricular program and is taught through many activities across the subjects. Many school events, classroom speakers and field trips are based in this. Students are also encouraged to participate in community competitions and other activities that promote understanding between and within cultures.

Q. What are the Areas of Interaction?

A. The Areas of Interaction are the most significant aspect of IBMYP. They are five themes that weave all the subjects and disciplines together to make learning relevant and authentic. They are Community and Service, Approaches to Learning, Human Ingenuity, Environments and Health and Social Education. See the IB website for more depth.

Social/Extracurricular Challenges and Opportunities

Q. What about coping skills for school-related stress (peer pressure, performance, competition)?

A. City High-Middle School has a great support network (counselors, teachers, staff) for all students enrolled. Being an IBMYP student does not mean more “competition.” Many of the ideas around the IB philosophy are centered on helping, understanding and tolerance of other people. The IBMYP office also has a number of parent and student-related books that address these issues (and more!) and can be checked out.

Q. How does one incorporate extracurricular activities with schoolwork?

A. Most IBMYP students participate in extracurricular activities. Part of that balance is the responsibility of the parents. An IBMYP student does not necessarily have more homework; it just takes a little planning and organization. Don't underestimate your kids!

Logistical Challenges and Opportunities

Q. What is the best way to track a student's progress during the school year (missing papers, assignments, projects)?

A. See above regarding Earth. Teachers are always open to emails or phone contact, particularly before or after school. Teachers are asked to reply to phone calls or email within 48 hours.

Q. How do students get information or assignments when they miss school (band, sickness, etc.)?

A. Students can request homework ahead of time for planned absences, or when they get back after an unplanned absence. For extended illness, the teachers can be contacted and homework set aside in the office for pick up.

Q. How do we explain the IB program to other parents?

A. It is an approach to learning. Children are taught WHY they should know something and how it connects to other subjects and the world around them so that it makes sense. Interdisciplinary teaching is a fundamental aspect of the program. Students may learn Roman numerals, Mayan calendars and other ancient math systems in math class, study ancient civilizations in humanities, and read about the Romans, Egyptians Mayans and Aztecs in language arts. In physical education, students may use games to reinforce math learning. It also enables kids to step outside their comfort zone and discover other subjects they never knew could be interesting. It is important to stress that this program was originally designed for all students, not just a select few. We have chosen to maintain the application tier while at the same time broadening access to the program so that all students benefit from the strength on interdisciplinary teaching and learning, early-acquisition foreign language, valuing the rights and values of others while appreciating one's own and other cultures, strong communication skills and self-determination through quality education.