

# Bow looks at adopting IB program

**T**he International Baccalaureate (IB) offers high quality programmes of international education to a worldwide community of schools. There are more than 593,000 IB students at 2,207 schools in 125 countries. When you visit the Web site, [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org), this is the first sentence you see on the home page. But what does this mean?

The IB program was originally established to offer American students who were growing up overseas a standardized evaluation of their readiness to enter American colleges and universities. Children of the U.S. military, diplomats, businessmen, etc. were being raised in American schools in many nations around the world.

Without a way to measure their academic achievement in a uniform way, entrance into U.S. colleges and universities was difficult. IB was created to provide these students, and others, an opportunity to have a uniform standard diploma that represented a rigorous level of achievement.

Since its beginnings in 1968, the IB program has continued to grow until it is now internationally recognized as a measure of high achievement. Credits earned through the IB program continue to enjoy acceptance at most U.S. universities and colleges even as the acceptance of AP credits wanes. A student enrolled in the IB diploma program commands higher levels of

acceptance, and more scholarships are awarded to IB diploma recipients upon application at U.S. schools. The IB diploma program is for grades 11 and 12.

The reasons noted above were enough to lead Bow High School staff to investigate what the IB program could do for Bow's high school program. The more we learned, the more we were impressed with how the IB program could dovetail with the way we already do business in the Bow schools.

IB does not provide a curriculum so much as a way of teaching, and outside validation of student achievement. At the core of the IB approach is something called "theory of knowledge."

This class examines the question "how do we know what we know?" IB guides the student to go beyond the nuts and bolts of the course they are studying to understand the history of the subject, and to explore the cultural roots of the belief systems that led to the conclusions and knowledge being studied.

This translates to, for example, physics classes with students studying the same material, but achieving different levels of accomplishment according to their abilities. Some students will complete a "high school" level of the course, some will be able to score well on a college level Advanced Placement exam, some will write an essay demonstrating their understanding of physics that goes beyond the "nuts and bolts" to earn IB credit.

All of these students will be exposed to the same instruction, but their own levels of response and effort will determine how far they will go in the final assessment. All students may have access to

IB instruction. Whether any one student chooses to apply for an IB diploma will be a personal choice, just as taking an AP exam is currently a personal choice. While a student focusing on taking an AP exam may not accomplish the IB assessment, one who is writing the IB assessment would likely be able to also sit for the AP exam if it should be desired. However, this is redundant as most schools grant credit for both AP and IB courses.

Just as scoring of an AP exam goes outside of the boundaries of BHS (the AP exams are scored by the College Board - ensuring standardized evaluation), a part of the final evaluation of IB is scored by others worldwide, again ensuring standardized expectations internationally.

Our local curriculum will not change significantly. We will still need to make local decisions as to what we want our students to learn, and we will still need to adhere to the state requirements.

One of the tenets of IB is that one must understand one's own history and culture implicitly in order to understand others. There will be a "trickle down" effect in instruction for all students. Preparation and "ramping up" for IB achievement, especially in the way students approach the study of any subject, may begin earlier than 11th grade, and our staff will need to be trained to teach in this manner.

The application process for IB takes three years. We must demonstrate the ability to incorporate IB methodology into our program before we will be accepted as an IB school.

Bow is one of two schools in New Hampshire currently in the application process

- the other is Bedford. Bow is currently in Year 1 of the process, and is preparing the initial application. If accepted, we will be the second IB school in New Hampshire.

As the staff sees the implementation of IB as described above, we will require a minimum of new teachers, as existing staff will be trained to teach the IB level within their classrooms.

However, depending on the number of students participating in the program, there may be a need for additional administrative personnel (for example, an IB coordinator to oversee the students in the program). As more students participate, more hours will be needed for administrative tasks. Currently, we are using the estimate that 100 students enrolled in the diploma program will require one and a half additional personnel at a total cost of \$130,000 per year.

However, these personnel will only be added as the enrollment dictates. There is also a membership fee and student registration fees proposed to be paid by the district, and exam fees proposed to be paid by the student similar to the AP fees. We would expect a lower number in the first years, and expect that student success will lead to a steady increase in interested students.

This article only begins to touch on the value of the IB diploma and what it may mean for Bow students.

Informational sessions are scheduled on Feb. 6 at 4 p.m. and on Feb. 12 at 7 p.m. at the BHS library. If you would like to gather your friends or neighbors for a private information session coffee chat, contact SAU 67 at 224-4728.

For further research, please visit [www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org).

## Bow School Board News and Views

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