

TODAY'S STUDENTS for Tomorrow's World

Local high schoolers earn international accolades

June 2004 marked the fifth anniversary of the offering of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at Hilton Head High School. In the over 30 years since its founding, the IB program has become a symbol of academic integrity and intellectual promise. The student who satisfies the program's demands demonstrates a strong commitment to learning, both in the mastery of subject content and in the development of the skills and discipline necessary for success in a competitive world. Only schools that are officially approved by the International Baccalaureate Organization, based in Geneva, Switzerland, are authorized to offer the curriculum and present candidates for examinations leading to a diploma, and until fairly recently most of the schools offering the program were costly, private schools.

On January 3, Dr. Karen Ryan, Hilton Head High's principal, awarded the IB diploma and certificates to graduates of the class of 2004. Superintendent of Schools Herman Gaither and Deputy Superintendent Edna Crews addressed the recent graduates, IB juniors and seniors, and pre-IB freshmen and sophomores. Over 100 students are currently registered in the IB program.

The Diploma Program requires a comprehensive and integrated study in six subject areas, an extended essay (4,000-word thesis of original research), the Theory of Knowledge course, and CAS (Creativity, Action and Service to the community). The last three components link the academic studies to broader learning experiences, educating the whole person.

All diploma students must complete the core program, studying six academic subjects: language A1, usually the student's native language; a second or foreign language; a history or social studies course; an experimental science; and a mathematics course. The IBO stipulates that at least three and no more than four subjects must be taken at Higher Level (HL), comprising 240 teacher-student contact hours, and the rest at Standard Level (SL), 150 contact hours.

IB courses are college-level courses taught within high schools and include the performance and course-load expectation of increased reading and oral and written reports. Because of this, study skills are sharpened. The final exams are written and evaluated by a panel of professors around the world who are experts in their respective fields. These examinations are culturally sensitive to differences and similarities of people in the world and emphasize excellence among scholars internationally. Final grades are based on more than the results of the final exams, as with advanced placement courses. The grading scale is from 1-7; 1 is very poor and 7 is excellent.

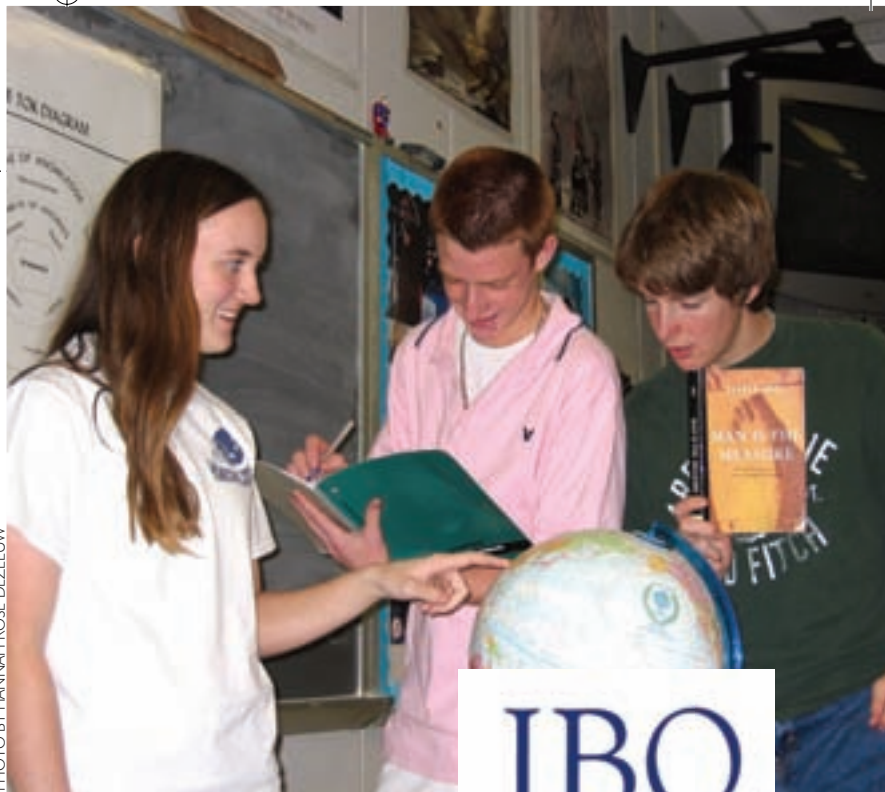


PHOTO BY HANNAH ROSE DEZEEUW

IB students study six academic subjects including language, history, social studies, science and mathematics.

Under the IB program, American high school students are receiving more realistic feedback as to how they place in a world-wide scheme in relation to their efforts and natural ability. Courses involve an internal assessment factor requiring teachers to submit essays and student tapes for grading to external examiners and/or requiring visiting examiners to perform an oral evaluation as part of the assessment procedure. These estimations are factored into an evaluation scheme that incorporates the final exam score.

International Baccalaureate Diploma candidates have an edge over non-IB students when it comes to college acceptance: highly selective schools are much more willing to accept a student who has challenged him or herself with the most rigorous and demanding program of study. For example, the College of William and Mary accepts approximately 37% of all applicants, but the percentage rises to an acceptance rate of 66.4% for IB diploma candidates who apply. Similar advantages can be found at Cornell (28.5% of all applicants; 51% of IB diploma candidates) and Emory (42% and 82.7%), among others.

Joanne Oliver, a 2004 graduate, is currently a student at Clemson University. Her International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses earned her 44 college credits. Joanne is close to achieving junior standing, despite the fact that she has only been at school since August. When Sarah Replogle and Meghan Shoemaker, also at Clemson, return to school after the holiday break, they will be considered sophomores because of credits earned while in high school.

Perhaps the best kept secret at Hilton Head High School is the IB program, but the faculty and staff don't want to keep it that way. It's a private school education available at your neighborhood public school – a good value for your tax dollars.

For more information, please contact Hilton Head High School at 689-4800, or visit www.ibo.org.

– Patricia Whyte