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International Baccalaureate program gains speed

By John Martin (Contact)
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Cross-country runner Hannah Fox likened her experience in Signature School's International Baccalaureate program to a grueling race.

The early stages were painful. Fox admitted she nearly quit a few times and would ask herself, "What am I doing here?"

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Now a freshman at Washington University in St. Louis, Fox is happy she persevered and made it to the International Baccalaureate finish line.

As with a long race, "You look back at it and are proud of what you accomplished."

Both Bosse High School and Signature School began offering International Baccalaureate curricula three years ago, and they awarded their first IB diplomas in May.

Only 18 Indiana high schools have the two-year program. It also is offered by Apollo High School in Owensboro, Ky.

IB's "core" components consist of extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action and service.

Students study six subjects — language; second language; individuals and societies; experimental science; the arts; and math and computer science — but choose three to study at extended hours.

IB coordinators at Bosse and Signature said the program's goal is to help craft a well-rounded student. Fox, who is considering a pre-med study program at Washington University, said that was her experience.

She said European history, for example, wasn't a strong subject for her. But the program forced her to challenge herself.

"It took me to another level in my high school experience," Fox said.

Bryce Buente, a 2008 Bosse graduate, completed the IB curriculum and led his graduating class with a 4.0 grade-point average. He's now a pre-med student at IUPUI in Indianapolis.

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Like other IB graduates, Buente earned 16 college credits through the IB program and learned about the rigors of college work, said his mother, Charlene Buente.

"They do a lot of class discussion and a tremendous amount of writing," Charlene Buente said.

More American high schools, including some that serve high numbers of impoverished students, are being drawn to IB because of its international focus and emphasis on critical thinking.

When Bosse and Signature were approved as IB schools three years ago, they became only the eighth and ninth Indiana schools to offer the program. The number since has doubled.

Bosse awarded seven IB diplomas in May. It currently has 12 IB candidates. A few students are commuting to Bosse from other districts because of the program's availability, coordinator Amy Bonenberger said. Forty-five more students are in an IB preparatory academy at Bosse.

The program is affecting all Bosse students who sign up for an IB course, and not only those who are on IB diploma paths, Bonenberger said.

She noted that the state, in a reflection of IB's growing popularity, is covering the cost of IB testing fees in a financial assistance grant that used to include only Advanced Placement fee assistance.

"That helps keep IB from being an elitist program," Bonenberger said.

Signature IB coordinator Shannon Hughes said it's impossible for a school to inflate student IB scores because much of the grading is done externally.

"On the math portfolio, I grade them, but I have to send off a sample (to the world IB organization). So my grading is graded."

At Signature, a charter high school that seeks high academic achievers, 10 IB diplomas were awarded at May's commencement.

The school has 12 IB candidates for graduation in the spring.

"We're so proud of all of them for having attempted the diploma at all and having stuck with it," Hughes said. "(Graduates have) credentials which are respected by universities around the world."

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Posted by ew_chapman on December 29, 2008 at 12:35 a.m. (Suggest removal)

Finally a positive light is shed on Bosse High, and this thread is silent. Nice.

Posted by vam85 on January 1, 2009 at 5:49 p.m. (Suggest removal)

Yes, too bad more aren't interested in this positive accomplishment for Bosse. My son is in the pre IB program and he plans to use all of the advantages it has to offer.

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