The road to ‘IB World School’ designation

What is IB?
As described on its website, the International Baccalaureate program is “a challenging framework that encourages students to make practical connections between their studies and the real world.” Simply put, IB gives member schools a structure to provide a rigorous education that helps students to connect what they’re learning to the world they live in.

Isn’t IB just for high school?
The IB program has three levels: primary (K-5), middle years (6-10) and diploma (11-12). Our district has applied for the Middle Years Program for grades 6-8 to lay the foundation for students as they move into the high school. IB allows school districts to utilize a model that fits its grade level distribution, so our middle school can implement a grade 6-8 model as a standalone program.

Is IB an optional program for middle school students?
Whereas students in grades 11 and 12 can opt in to the IB diploma program with its prescribed curriculum and mandatory assessments, the Middle Years Program is a whole-school inclusive model. Every student will benefit from the program.

What are the steps to becoming an IB school?
The first step is to inform IB of the intent to apply for consideration. Once that has been done, but before a district can apply for candidacy, it must show that it has taken the proper steps to be in compliance with the tenets and educational structure of IB (for instance, an IB candidate school must show that it begins world languages in 6th grade).

The next step is to apply for consideration. Once accepted for consideration, districts have 18 to 30 months to complete the application. An IB consultant is assigned work with districts to support them through the application phase.

Has Mount Pleasant started the application process?
The district sent its application for the Middle Years Program on April 1. During the application phase, the district will be looking closely at curriculum and instructional practices to ensure that they align to both IB and New York State Common Core Learning Standards.

How are we preparing the students?
The Middle Years Program has at its core, 10 attributes of a successful learner. Each of the attributes will be introduced to students next year and discussed, one attribute each month, during their advisory periods.

What will an IB designation do for our district?
IB is associated with high-quality rigorous programs that encourage knowledge and inquiry. An IB world school designation shows a district’s commitment to educating the whole child for life in a 21st century, global community.

How can I learn more about IB at WMS?
There will be a Curriculum Coffee held on Tuesday, April 28 from 7 to 8 p.m. in the middle school LGI. Ms. Ellis, Principal Robert Hendrickson and Assistant Principal Christine Parrottino will be on hand to discuss what it means to be an IB middle school and to answer any questions. The community — especially all preschool, elementary and middle school parents — are encouraged to attend.

For more on IB, visit ibo.org.

Q&A

What does an IB learner look like?
At the core of the IB Middle Years Program is the IB Learner Profile, which describes the 10 attributes that the program seeks to develop in students.

IB students are:
• Inquirers
• Knowledgeable
• Thinkers
• Communicators
• Principled
• Open-Minded
• Caring
• Risk-Takers
• Balanced
• Reflective

Aligning the curriculum with IB means identifying the real world contexts for what students learn in school.

The district has already been providing professional development for all of its teachers to shift classroom learning from teacher centered to student centered as part of its established strategic goals. This will continue regardless of whether our schools receive IB designation or not. However, using the IB framework will help the district to accelerate the process.

What is IB?
Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mary Ellis, explains the International Baccalaureate (IB) program and the District’s application for consideration to initiate the Middle Years Program.

What does the Middle Years Program look like?
IB places a strong focus on the idea that students need to feel connected to what they’re learning. They need to believe that how you learn and why you learn is as important as what you learn. There is an emphasis on students’ understanding and managing their own learning through inquiry, action and reflection. In the Middle Years Program students are also required to demonstrate their learning through action and service in the form of a community project in eighth grade.

How is the district preparing for the IB program at the middle school?
The middle school has convened an IB committee made up of administrators, teachers and parents that is responsible for completing the application process.

The committee is looking at the middle school curriculum as well as its internal assessments of student learning and is analyzing to what degree the assessments are real world, authentic and allow students to demonstrate their knowledge as it pertains to the world around them.

What are the steps to becoming an IB school?