

Valley Preparatory School

IB-PYP HANDBOOK

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WHAT IS IB-PYP?

The IB-PYP is a holistic, inquiry-based, cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning that promotes cultural sensitivity and international-mindedness. The program uses six transdisciplinary themes to organize traditional curricular content. At Valley Prep, two of these themes are **STEAM**-related, encouraging students to work collaboratively to complete units of study that emphasize math, science, and technology, while still appreciating the importance of the Arts.

WHY THE IB-PYP & STEAM @ VPS?

Valley Preparatory School was founded in 1957 with the philosophy of **Holistic education**. The International Baccalaureate Program was established in the late 1960s using this same philosophy, whereby the content of the curriculum is presented to students **thematically**. Accordingly, this program does not change “what” our students learn, but instead changes aspects of “how” they learn. Valley Prep takes this approach a step farther and integrate STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) into the IB-PYP framework, whereby two of the six PYP themes are STEAM-related. This approach gives greater purpose to our **1:1 laptop program**.

ELEMENTS OF THE IB-PYP

The Primary Years Program (PYP) presents schools with a comprehensive plan for high quality education. It provides schools with a curriculum framework of essential elements — the knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and action that young students need to equip them for successful lives, both now and in the future. Schools work with the five elements to construct a rigorous and challenging primary curriculum for international education. The PYP aims to create a curriculum that is engaging, relevant, challenging and significant for learners in the 3–12 age range. The curriculum is transdisciplinary, meaning that it focuses on issues that go across subject areas.

The PYP is organized according to:

- **The written curriculum**, which explains what PYP students will learn
- **The taught curriculum**, which sets out how educators teach the PYP
- **The assessed curriculum**, which details the principles and practice of effective assessment in the PYP

THE WRITTEN CURRICULUM

The PYP balances the acquisition of significant and relevant knowledge and skills, the development of conceptual understanding, the formation of personal, positive attitudes and the capacity to take responsible actions.

The PYP:

- addresses students’ academic needs and their social and emotional well-being
- encourages students to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning
- supports students’ effort to gain understanding of the world and to function effectively within it
- helps students to establish personal values as a foundation on which international-mindedness will flourish.

The written curriculum is made up of five essential elements and details what students will learn.

1. **knowledge**, which is both disciplinary - represented by traditional subject areas (language, math, science, social studies, art, music, library, pe) - and transdisciplinary – represented by six thematic units: How the World Works; Sharing the Planet; How We Express Ourselves; Where We Are In Place & Time; Who We Are; How We Organize Ourselves.

2. **concepts**, which students explore through structured inquiry in order to develop coherent, in-depth understanding, and which have relevance both within and beyond subject areas.
3. **skills**, which are the broad capabilities students develop and apply during learning and in life beyond the classroom.
4. **attitudes**, which contribute to international-mindedness and the wellbeing of individuals and learning communities, and connect directly to the **IB learner profile**.
5. **action**, which is an expectation in the PYP that successful inquiry leads to responsible, thoughtful and appropriate action.

THE TAUGHT CURRICULUM

The taught curriculum is the part of the PYP that sets out its pedagogical approach. It identifies how schools should teach the PYP written curriculum. The PYP is committed to structured, purposeful inquiry that engages students actively in their own learning. The program supports students' efforts to construct meaning from the world around them by:

- drawing on their prior knowledge
- providing provocation through new experiences
- providing opportunities for reflection and consolidation.

This approach respects students' developing ideas about how the world works. It encourages them to question, consider and refine their understanding of the social and natural world.

Collaboration is a key part of planning for schools implementing the PYP. All teachers are engaged in the planning process, defining the curriculum's central ideas, discussing how best to bring inquiry into those ideas in the classroom, and finding ways to meet the needs and interests of every student.

Teachers must attend training in order to implement the PYP. The IB offers a wide range of professional development to support educators in gaining a deeper understanding of the program.

THE ASSESSED CURRICULUM

The assessed curriculum explains how teachers go about gathering and analyzing information about student performance. The IB does not set examinations or moderate grades in the PYP.

The purposes of assessment are to:

- promote student learning
- provide information about student learning
- contribute to the successful implementation of the program

Through assessment, the IB helps schools teaching the PYP to identify what students know, understand, can do and value at different stages in the teaching and learning process. In the PYP, learning is viewed as a continuous journey, where teachers identify students' needs and use assessment data to plan the next stage of their learning. Teachers use a wide range of assessment strategies to collect information on each of the elements represented in the written curriculum: the understanding of concepts, the acquisition of knowledge, the mastering of skills, the development of positive attitudes and the ability to take responsible action.

In the final year of the PYP, students carry-out an extended, in-depth, collaborative project known as the **PYP exhibition**. This involves students working collaboratively to conduct an in-depth inquiry into real life issues or problems. Students collectively synthesize all of the essential elements of the PYP in ways that can be shared with the whole school community. It also provides teachers with a powerful and authentic process for assessing student understanding. The exhibition represents a unique and significant opportunity for students to exhibit the attributes of the IB learner profile developed throughout their engagement with the PYP. It also provides schools and students with a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the transition of learners to the next phase of their education.

THE IB LEARNER PROFILE

Outlined below are the qualities we believe students should have, listed in a set of **ten student-learning outcomes** called the ‘learner profile’.

1. **Inquirers** - Their natural curiosity has been nurtured. They have acquired the skills necessary to conduct purposeful, constructive research. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives
2. **Thinkers** - They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to make sound decisions and solve complex problems.
3. **Communicators** - They receive and express ideas and information confidently in more than one language, including the language of mathematical symbols.
4. **Risk-Takers** - They approach unfamiliar situations without anxiety and have the confidence and independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are courageous and articulate in defending those things in which they believe.
5. **Knowledgeable** – They have spent time in our schools exploring themes which have global relevance and importance. In so doing, they have acquired a critical mass of significant knowledge.
6. **Principled** – They have a sound grasp of the principles of moral reasoning. They have integrity, honesty and a sense of fairness and justice.
7. **Caring** - They show sensitivity towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a sense of personal commitment to action and service.
8. **Open-minded** – They respect the views, values and traditions of other individuals and cultures and are accustomed to seeking and considering a range of points of view.
9. **Balanced** – They understand the importance of physical and mental balance and personal well-being.
10. **Reflective** – They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and analyze their personal strengths and weaknesses in a constructive manner.

PYP ASSESSMENT POLICY

Philosophy or Assessment Beliefs

Assessment is integral to all teaching and learning. The prime objective of assessment in the PYP is to provide feedback on the learning process. Assessment involves the gathering and analysis of information about student performance and is designed to inform practice. It identifies what students know, understand, can do, and feel at different stages in the learning process. Students and teachers should be actively engaged in assessing the students’ progress as part of the development of their wider critical-thinking and self-assessment skills. The PYP approach to assessment recognizes the importance of assessing the process of inquiry as well as the product(s) of inquiry, and aims to integrate and support both.

At Valley Prep, we believe that assessment provides information through its diagnostic, formative and summative components. Assessment is ongoing, authentic, varied and purposeful. It is a collaborative and informative process that involves students, families, teachers and community. Instructional and curricular decision making is driven by our assessments.

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of assessment is to inform and involve students, parents, teachers and administrators. Effective assessments allow:

1. Students to be an active part of the learning process through reflection and demonstration of their understanding.
2. Teachers to guide their instruction and to communicate progress with students and families.
3. Parents to see evidence of their child’s learning and development, while supporting and celebrating their child’s learning.

4. Administrators to build a sense of community within the school and communicate the school's progress.

Types of Assessment used at Valley Prep

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is interwoven with daily instruction and assists the teacher in planning for the next stage of learning. It provides regular and frequent feedback to the teacher and the student. It also gives students an opportunity to improve their understanding and to cultivate enthusiasm for learning. Teachers use various assessment tools to keep a record of student progress.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment takes place at the end of the teaching and learning process and provides students with an opportunity to show what they have learned. It also shows how effectively students understand the central idea of the unit. Summative assessment results are the primary factor in determining final course-grades.

Diagnostic/pre-assessment

Diagnostic assessment prior to teaching helps teachers and students find out what the students already know and can do.

The 5th Grade Exhibition

The 5th grade students are expected to develop and present their own collaborative unit of inquiry that showcases the five essential elements of the PYP (knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes and action). This is an opportunity for the students to exhibit the attributes of the learner profile which they have been developing throughout the Primary Years Program.

Practice (Strategies for recording and reporting)

1. **Observation**: Students are observed regularly with teachers noting the growth and progress of individuals, groups and the whole class.
2. **Performance assessment**: Students apply what they have learned by completing authentic tasks that have more than one acceptable solution.
3. **Process-focused assessment**: Teachers observe students with a particular skill in mind, noting students who are meeting, exceeding or struggling to meet the expectations.
4. **Open-ended tasks**: Students are asked to complete or communicate an original response. This can be a drawing, written response, diagram or a solution.
5. **Test/quiz**: These assessments provide a snapshot of students' subject-specific knowledge.
6. **Student reflections**: Students may be asked to reflect on what they have learned at the end of a lesson/unit.

Reporting

The Written Report

1. Teachers will complete the report card at the completion of each trimester. The report card includes grades for all curricular areas. The school follows a standards-based grading approach (see later section for more details).
2. Families of students who are struggling academically or behaviorally will receive a mid-trimester report.
3. Staff will administer the ERB standardized exam to students in grades 2-8 in the spring of each year. ERB provides highly regarded admission assessments for students applying to independent schools and/or specialized public schools requiring entrance exams in the United States and Internationally for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Parent/Teacher/Student Conferences

The eventual goal at VPS is to establish the following format:

1. Fall: Goal setting. This is a relationship-building conference with the parent, teacher, and sometimes the student. The purpose of this conference is to discuss and identify social, emotional and academic strengths or areas for improvement.
2. Spring: This is a conference between the parent, teacher, and sometimes the student that reviews the student's progress, in addition to sharing academic information and work samples.

Portfolios (currently optional for teachers to maintain)

1. Portfolios are a purposeful collection of a student's work that is designed to demonstrate successes, growth, higher-order thinking, creativity and reflection.
2. Portfolios are a cumulative collection of student work that travels with the student from Kindergarten through Fifth grade. They are housed in the student's classroom and are accessible to the student and his or her family at any time during the school year. The portfolio is the property of the student and goes with the child upon leaving or graduation from the program.

PYP LANGUAGE POLICY

Statement of Belief

At Valley Preparatory School, we believe that language is fundamental to the success of all student learning. This includes the ability to express oneself through speaking, reading, writing, drawing, acting, etc. This also includes communication through different languages, including the languages of science, math, and the arts. Language is essential to the construction of meaning and connects all of our curriculum elements and ultimately supports the mission of our school. We believe that literacy instruction should connect to our units of inquiry, instilling an intrinsic love of literacy by using balanced literacy, authentic assessment, and instruction that is differentiated to the needs of each learner thus building life-long readers and writers. Through inquiry, teachers provide students with opportunities to use language in many different formats, including debate, role-play, and art, as well as the traditional teaching of language both embedded in the units of inquiry and as stand-alone subjects. Valley Prep accepts the responsibility to recognize and support language development of all students through the expectation and understanding that all of our teachers work together to make sure that language is through integrated learning and meaningful contexts.

Identification of Language Needs

During the application phase, students/families indicate the language most often spoken in the home, as well as additional languages spoken. For any student who is not from a home in which English is the listed primary language, testing may occur to determine level of ability in English to ensure proper support.

Support for Language Learners

Our teachers are constantly working to create a caring language community to enhance the language learning of all students. Valley Prep strives to promote a language-rich campus for all students through the implementation of technology, multimedia and library resources. We ask that teachers be well informed of their students who have language needs and other language abilities. Valley Prep encourages families to continue mother tongue development at home, and support is given to these students whose mother tongue is a language other than English.

Parent Support for Language

Parents are encouraged to support language development at home through homework assignments and grade level newsletter suggestions. Parents may be asked to read with students on a regular basis, discuss concepts to check for understanding/comprehension, assist with inquiry-guided research, complete writing prompts, and encourage oral communication.

Language in the Classroom

In the classroom, language is supported through various literacy activities such as: reading A-Z, guided reading, writer's workshop, writing in content, classroom libraries, visuals, instructional vocabulary, individual word lists, daily read-alouds and opportunities for students to use language during presentations and collaboration. Learning is differentiated in the classroom in a variety of ways. Students are individually assessed in their reading ability using STAR testing, and often organized into leveled-groups.

Language and the Program of Inquiry

Language is integrated throughout the Program of Inquiry. Higher level thinking, key concept questions, and extended research all lend themselves to having a strong vocabulary and language presence within the planners. Oral, visual, and written language are all present within planner activities. Literature selections both in read-alouds and guided reading are chosen to build an understanding of the concepts within the planners.

Additional Language

Spanish and French are the second languages taught to students in PS-8th grade. In PS-1st grade, students take both languages. Beginning in 2nd grade, students select one language of focus which meets multiple days per week for 45 minutes. The size of each class is "capped" in order to ensure an equal distribution of students between each program. Additionally, students cannot change their language-selection after the first week of school.

Language Resources

Our goal is always to increase language resources. We continue to add to an extensive literacy library of leveled books that support our IB planners. The Valley Prep library has an array of fiction and nonfiction books, and we are continuing to grow our collection of books in other languages. In addition, we have a variety of online resources to support student learning and research. Valley Prep has also purchased online programs to support students who are struggling with reading.

Valley Prep offers professional development in the realm of language arts in a variety of ways. A professional library of resources is available for teachers to learn additional best practice methods and the teaching staff comes with a wide variety of abilities and experience and can provide professional development internally as well. We regularly utilize time during our staff development and team planning time to further our language knowledge, and we are working toward a vertically aligned campus in the area of Lang Arts.

PYP ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Our Philosophy

This policy on Academic Honesty addresses the implementation of our values and beliefs which are in line with the IB philosophy. Academic honesty must be seen as a set of values and skills that promote good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The concepts of intellectual property and authenticity of work and proper conduct during testing procedures are related to academic honesty.

Teachers encourage honest creative, critical PYP work by:

- creating inquiry-based assessment tasks where creativity is encouraged and where the use of information helps to solve a problem;
- designing assessment criteria that value and reward the work required, rather than only the result;
- teaching ways to acknowledge others: PYP students can learn to use quotation marks to mark other's words or describe what help was useful and why;
- teaching reflection on the learning process: reflective writing about source values students' hard work rather than stressing formal citation or demonizing copying;
- Students from all grade levels are made aware of academic honesty by teachers when doing research on their Macbooks or in the STEAM-lab

As part of the process of educating students about the importance of academic honesty the following definitions will be used:

Definition of cheating

- The intentional giving or receiving of an unfair or dishonest advantage over other students; any such advantage that is not authorized by a teacher and/or other staff member.
- This may be done by any means whatsoever including but not limited to fraud, threat or force, theft, unacceptable talking, signs, gestures, copying from another students, unauthorized use of any materials, books, software programs, computer/ equipment or other information.
- Attempted cheating

Definition of plagiarism

- Presenting as one's own words and work (including images, photos, art, etc.), ideas, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.
- Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without permission.

Consequences

Although we expect our students to choose, act and reflect in an ethical manner, students must also understand that there are consequences for unethical behavior. Any cases of cheating and plagiarism will be treated seriously and will be appropriately sanctioned. Although each case will be evaluated on an individual basis according to relevant circumstances, it should be noted that if a student cheats or plagiarizes he or she may receive zero for the assignment.

PYP DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION POLICY

Valley Preparatory School is a private, non-denominational PS-8th grade school located in Redlands, California. We accept all students regardless of their race, sex, gender, or exceptionality in an inclusive environment. This policy is designed to address the needs of students with exceptionalities within the IB Mission for ALL students to be internationally minded and successful learners.

DIVERSITY

Philosophy

We believe that schools must actively welcome and equally support students, families, faculty, and staff of varied backgrounds and encourage them to share their unique gifts, thereby cultivating a rich educational experience for all community members.

Practice

The VPS faculty and staff strive to create a learning environment that exposes students to the value and breadth of differences, informs their perspectives, and prepares them to shape their communities and the wider world.

Definition

We define diversity in education as the understanding that each student is unique and must be provided with opportunities to explore differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.

Program Structure

We aim to provide an overall program that ...

- Uses resources that reflect many voices, nationalities, and perspectives.
- Understands the importance of strong student:teacher relations.
- Is not afraid to address inequality in any form
- Aims to maintain strong home:school relations, leveraging the backgrounds of the parents to enrich the students' learning experiences
- Aims to hire and retain a diverse faculty and staff
- Provides professional development opportunities for teachers in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion

EQUITY

Philosophy

We believe that all learners must be provided with equal and fair treatment and opportunities.

Practice

The VPS faculty and staff endeavor to ensure equity by recognizing, respecting, and attending to the diverse strengths and challenges of the students we serve, with the aim of ensuring that *all* students are able to learn and thrive.

Definition

We define equity in education as how each child receives *all* of what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.

Program Structure

We aim to provide an overall program that ...

- Ensures equally high outcomes for all participants

- Removes the predictability of success or failures correlating with any social or cultural factor
- Discovers and cultivates the unique gifts, talents and interests that every student possesses.

INCLUSION

Philosophy:

We believe that all learners have unique needs to consider when helping them to meet and exceed their academic and non-academic potential. We apply approaches and support systems that address the individual needs and varied learning styles of students. By recognizing the diversity of our collective learning community, we support the development of internationally minded people.

Practice:

Students with varying degrees of needs are educated primarily in a general education environment with appropriate support and services, including a Resource Specialist. We build positive learning communities in which a culture of collaboration encourages and supports problem solving for all students.

Differentiation:

Students receive instruction that enables them to succeed within the range of their approaches to learning, abilities, and interests. Differentiation is seen as the process of identifying, with each learner, the most effective strategies for achieving agreed upon goals. Small groups within classrooms, use of pre -assessments and formative assessments to discover students' strengths and areas to focus targeted instruction on, and provision of materials (such as leveled reading materials and enrichment activities) designed to address students' level of readiness are some examples.

Definition:

We define inclusion as the practice of educating all students in their least restrictive environment where peers are together as much as possible. For most students, the least restrictive environment begins and ends in the general classroom setting for all academic subjects. However, students may receive instruction or be tested in a pull-out manner in an individual or small-group setting according to their individual needs.

Program Structure

As a student's learning needs are identified (using assessment data and teacher feedback), the school's admin-team, Resource Specialist, and classroom teacher(s) develop an individualized learning plan that addresses these needs, either by modifying classroom instruction or providing push-in or pull-out support.