

# International Baccalaureate Organization

NORTH AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

## IBO: Myths vs. Facts

**MYTH:** IBO is funded by UNESCO.

**FACT:** The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) was funded by the United Nations Education Service and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the 20th Century Fund, and the Ford Foundation until 1976. From 1977 the Heads Standing Conference (HSC) of Diploma Programme (DP) schools was formed and they began to pay the IBO an annual subscription fee. In countries where state schools offered the DP, the governments made financial contributions, and some continue to do so on a reduced basis. In return for these fees, the IBO helped schools implement the Diploma Programme, offered training workshops and teaching materials to IB teachers, and managed a system of external examinations for IB diploma candidates.

**MYTH:** IB programs are pilot programs for UNESCO and the UN, developed for the purpose of creating an “international education system.”<sup>1</sup>

**FACT:** The IBO was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 as a non-profit educational foundation. Its original purpose was to facilitate the international mobility of students preparing for university by providing schools with a curriculum and diploma recognized by universities around the world. Since then its mission has expanded, and it now seeks to make an IB education available to students of all ages. The IBO, along with approximately 400 other organizations, is part of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). This relationship with the United Nations and its agencies does not extend to curriculum development or assessments.

**MYTH:** The IBO “promotes socialism, disarmament, radical environmentalism, and moral relativism, while attempting to undermine Christian religious values and national sovereignty.”<sup>11</sup>

**FACT:** The IBO aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. IB programs do not advocate a single religion, or a political or economic system. Not only do many private schools with religious affiliations offer IB programs to their students, but also many denominational universities offer college credit for IB coursework. Also, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), dedicated to addressing the needs of children of US military personnel, has singled out the IBO as a worthwhile and rigorous academic program for the children of US service members.

**MYTH:** IBO has a left-wing agenda.

**FACT:** The agenda of the IBO is to provide students with the critical thinking skills to reach their own conclusions based on their own research and experiences. While the IBO offers a framework for program curriculum, the strength of IB programs is the flexibility in terms of content selec-

<sup>1</sup> All quotations are actual accusations leveled at IBO in newspaper articles and on websites.

tion, classroom resources, pedagogy, and assessment. In this way, IB programs accommodate a diversity of thought, backgrounds, opinions, and worldviews.

**MYTH:** All tests and papers of American [IB] students are sent to Europe/Geneva for grading and evaluation.

**FACT:** Assessment of student achievement happens in a variety of ways throughout the course of the IB Diploma Programme. It includes assessment of student work both by outside examiners as well as the students' own teachers. The assessment itself undergoes careful review and moderation to ensure that a common standard is applied equally to the work of all students internationally. Additionally, educators nation- and worldwide have realized the benefit of international standards of academic evaluation. Programs such as the College Board AP Program also send their exams to faculty around the world for scoring.

**MYTH:** The IB endorses the Earth Charter, promotes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "which views rights the same way Communist countries view human rights," and endorses multiculturalism, "which is based on the ideology of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci."

**FACT:** Over 15,000 groups, organizations and individuals around the world have endorsed the Earth Charter. The IBO was asked, and agreed in 2001, to endorse the Earth Charter, which was deemed to be in keeping with the organization's mission of creating "a better and more peaceful world". However, the Earth Charter has no formal position or role in the design of the curriculum and assessment, nor does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or any other ideology. Furthermore, the IBO is extremely careful not to promote any particular viewpoint in the curriculum and assessment of the three IB programs.

**MYTH:** IB Programmes are non-academic "fad" programs and many colleges and universities will not accept IB courses as fulfilling undergraduate requirements for admissions.

**FACT:** The IBO has been offering academic programs to schools for over 30 years. Presently, IB programs are offered by over 1,500 schools in over 120 countries worldwide.

Over 800 universities in the United States alone recognize the IB Diploma as a mark of academic excellence. Such universities include Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, MIT, Princeton University, Stanford University, the US Air Force Academy, and the US Naval Academy, among others.

**MYTH:** America's foundational principles of national sovereignty, natural law and inalienable rights are at odds with the IB curriculum and are not taught.

**FACT:** The IBO believes that relevant education begins with an understanding and appreciation of one's own culture. From that perspective comes an understanding and appreciation of differing cultures and histories.