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Introduction

Based on the reading of the IBO Mission Statement and the IB Learner Profile Booklet, it is completely apparent that one of the primary goals of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is the development of internationally minded people. Towards this end, the creation of the IB learner profile is the vehicle that the IBO is using to fulfill that goal through the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP).

According to the IB Learner Profile Booklet, the IB Learner Profile, “is the IBO mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes for the 21st century.” (IBO Learner Profile, 1) The list of words contained in the learner profile is in direct alignment with the IBO mission statement with three of the words from the mission statement being repeated in the learner profile verbatim. The profile should be considered a map for students, parents, faculty, and administrators in IB programs to follow when trying to foster internationally-minded students.

Vocabulary of the Mission Statement and the Learner Profile

In the IB mission statement, the IBO wants to develop “inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people” (IB Mission Statement). In the learner profile, IB learners first strive to be “Inquirers” and second “Knowledgeable.” The word “Caring” is a little further down in the learner profile.

In the teaching of writing, educators often tell students to put the most important points at the beginning of their papers. Are Inquirers and Knowledgeable at the beginning of the mission statement and the learner profile because the IBO considers these things to be the most important for the student? Fostering a student’s natural curiosity leads to self-esteem and this will often make students want to continue in the pursuit of learning, perhaps continuing this pursuit for the rest of their lives. The phrase “lifelong learners” is in yet another section of the mission statement. Knowledge involves exploring concepts, ideas, and issues, some of which are not always in a textbook but are often in the world at large. The IB learner profile specifically uses diction saying, “ideas and issues that have local and global significance” (IBO Learner Profile, 5). This word choice feeds into the IBO mission of developing international-mindedness. Continuing with the profile ideas of IB students being Inquirers and Knowledgeable, their completion of tasks such as the extended essay in the Diploma Programme (DP), gives students the opportunity to complete more extensive research-based learning that may fuel their own personal and perhaps, lifelong interests.

The word “Caring”, although occurring further down the list than the other two words, is the other word that is repeated between the mission statement and the learner profile. In the learner profile, caring learners “show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others” (IB Learner Profile, 5). The words “respect” and “compassionate” also show up in other places in the mission statement, reinforcing the ideas in the learner profile. The IBO is building character education into their programs, as well as international-mindedness, as students are taught to look at what they study with an eye towards understanding that not everyone is the same and that all people may not be as fortunate as they are. The learner profile also addresses service and students in the Diploma Programme complete 150 Community/Action/Service (CAS) hours as part of their requirements. The documentation part of CAS requires students to reflect on that service and process the meaning of the impact of their respect and compassion on others around them as well as complete records as part of a requirement. Students have the ability to make a positive difference to the local community as well as to the world around them through their CAS efforts.

In addition to these three words, many of the words in the IB learner profile are connected to words or sentiments in the IBO mission statement. A word that is not specifically listed in the mission statement but that is listed in the learner profile and that is connected to Inquirers and Knowledgeable is the word “Thinkers”. In the learner profile, IB learners should approach problems complex critically and creatively and make informed and moral decisions. This is connected to the other two because one needs to have knowledge in order to solve most complex problems and/or be creative. The moral component to this part of the learner profile is also connected to another part of the mission statement and overlaps as many of the parts of the mission statement overlap with parts of the learner profile.

At the very end of the mission statement, there is a phrase that reads, “learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right” (Mission Statement). This phrasing feeds directly into two other parts of the IB learner profile, listing that IB learners strive to be “Principled” and “Open-minded” and continuing the IBO mission of character education. In a world where character education sometimes seems to be politically unpopular, the IBO seems to have embraced it, making it front and center in an educational philosophy in developing internationally-minded students. Principled students have respect for individuals, groups, and communities, showing respect and dignity. Open-minded learners understand and appreciate diversity as well as their own cultural history. In addition, they are used to looking for other points of view. An example of this in action is in my school’s history topics course, where students study single party states – specifically Joseph Stalin, Chairman Mao, and Fidel Castro. They study the personal histories, as well as the effects these men had and still have in Castro’s case, on their citizens. The lessons that these students take away concerning honesty, fairness, justice, and humanity, as well as about the regimes of the given leaders, makes them take a look at the international community with a eye towards recognizing that human beings are not always treated humanely and fairly. Also, students learn that unless we study and analyze the past we may

be destined and dare I say, doomed to repeat it. Another example of teaching the learner profile goals of Principled and Open-minded comes from my own classroom, where I teach two plays, *Death and the Maiden* and *Incident at Vichy*. One play, *Death and the Maiden* by Ariel Dorman, deals with a woman who had been brutalized in a fictional society modeled after 1973 Chile after the Pinochet revolution while *Incident at Vichy*, by the late Arthur Miller, is about a Nazi identification check in Vichy, France. Both plays have as one of their themes the loss of humanity and what happens when people forget that human beings all react to violence, torture, brutality, and depravity in the same way. Reading and analyzing these two texts through this part of the English curriculum asks the students to consider what makes us human – what makes us alike and what makes us different and how some people can be driven to want to eliminate another group of people from the planet. Studying these texts breeds compassion, and allows students to be open to multiple perspectives. These two texts in particular allow students to explore the ideas of dignity and respect, when it exists and when it is absent.

Also in the learner profile, is the idea of IB students being “Risk-takers.” This is in alignment with the mission statement as the statement has the idea of IBO working with various organizations to create various and challenging programs of international education. By using the word “challenging” in the mission statement, the IBO is signaling to students, teachers, and parents that their programs may not be completely familiar. Some things that students will encounter in IB classes will be different from traditional learning environments, probably because of the focus on producing an internationally-minded student. In addition, in my mind, because of the IBO desire for students to be educated in various subject areas within the PYP, MYP, and DP, completing these programs in their entirety requires students to take risks and leave their comfort zones. Situations will be unfamiliar as all students generally do not naturally excel in every subject and some students will be forced to try disciplines that they have not been exposed to before. Risk-takers, “have the independence to explore new roles, ideas, and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.” (Learner Profile, 5)

IB students should also be “Communicators” according to the learner profile. To be a strong communicator is connected to the IBO mission statement goal of being inquiring and fostering students who are internationally-minded. “Young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through international understanding and respect” (Mission Statement) would need to be good communicators and in this day and age have a need to speak more than one language. The DP requirement for students to study a second language under Group 2 reinforces this wish of the IBO.

Although not specifically mentioned in the mission statement, I believe the IB learner profile student goals of “Reflective” and “Balanced” are implied by the writers. Reflective students give thoughtful consideration to their own learning. IB programs allow students to take an active role in their education, through classroom experiences, research, collaboration, community service, and assessment. Balanced students understand the importance of “intellectual, physical, and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being

for themselves and others”. (Learner Profile, 5) Through the myriad requirements of the DP, students learn to balance tasks as well as manage their time, preparing them for life after secondary school.

Conclusion

As most mission statements are vague and broad statements of philosophy, the IBO mission statement does not deviate from this format. The goals outlined are wide-ranging enough in that they can be expanded upon or collapsed as much as the national climate or educational current trends might call for. Without the learner profile, the mission statement may seem hard to implement or may look like lofty goals to some. What the learner profile does for the IBO is to define the type of learner that eventually becomes an internationally-minded person – the person who in the future will help to create a more peaceful world.

Works Cited

IB Learner Profile Booklet. Cardiff: International Baccalaureate Organization, 2006. 7 Feb. 2007 <http://occ.ibo.org/ibis/documents/general/g_0_iboxx_amo_0603_1_e.pdf>.