

## **Former PPS Students' Comments Regarding the IB Experience**

### **General comments:**

I graduated with the IB Diploma. Looking back on my experiences with hindsight, I have no regrets; I would do it all over again without hesitation. I feel that the program prepared me for the workload that I would receive in college. I could talk for hours about the extended knowledge that I acquired from IB classes, but I feel that the program offered more than rigorous classes. One of the greatest skills that taking IB classes taught me was time management, and as any college graduate will testify, time management is a very important component of success. I was also able to gain confidence in myself to achieve a seemingly daunting task, such as the Extended Essay, or any Internal Assessment, for that matter. I now understand that with hard work and time management any task can be accomplished.

An important aspect of the IB program, one that I feel is often overlooked is the 'International' part of the program. If my memory serves me correctly, Portage Public Schools is one of the 3 school districts in the state of Michigan to offer the program. I find that that is a characteristic that makes Portage Public Schools a much more appealing school system. I have met people here from around the state and country that graduated from their respective high schools with the IB Diploma, or who took IB classes, and I found that to be a great experience. I found it amazing that I had received the same type of education in Portage as some people had received from other states and countries. My Resident Adviser for my hall here at the University of Michigan is from Turkey. One of the first things we found out about each other is that we both went through the IB program, and we share our experiences with it from time to time. I now have a great relationship with my RA. I have had similar experiences with kids from Detroit Country Day School, a private school that offers the IB program. We often have Theory of Knowledge type discussions late at night, with students that went to very different schools, but who all took the class.

I have had no regrets about doing the IB Diploma. It has given me a sense of pride and confidence, and I am strongly against the removal of the IB program. Actually, I feel it should be extended through all four years of High School at the very least.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2006

The IB program was extremely beneficial in preparing me for college coursework. The IB English classes in particular strengthened my writing skills and gave me an advantage because while other incoming students struggled with introductory English courses at the University, I was exceptionally prepared to start in higher-level English classes. The IB French program also provided a strong base for the high-level French classes that I began taking right away at the University of Michigan.

My IB classes gave me equivalent if not more college credits than AP courses that I took. After taking the HL IB French exam, I was able to walk onto my college campus

with half of a minor already completed, and I could skip more introductory classes than people that performed equally but instead took the AP French exam.

In retrospect, I wish I had taken more IB classes in high school. I went to KAMSC for half the day where I took AP classes, but the IB program was more personalized and unique. IB teaches students to think globally, and these skills are pertinent in every college course, especially in the social sciences. Whereas AP courses tend to be taught to the exam material, IB courses are more focused on practical knowledge, and the exams are suited to the material. More than anything, IB classes are fun and engaging. They allow students to demonstrate their strengths not only through written tests or oral exams, but also through creative means via papers and projects. AP programs are not nearly as comprehensive as they try to capture a student's performance and capabilities merely through one exam, and this is unrealistic.

I would definitely recommend IB classes to any student because the skills that you gain from IB are universally applicable in all facets of one's life. IB classes teach students to be polished writers, confident speakers, and critical thinkers. These skills are valuable not only in college, but also in the work force.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2004

By taking IB courses, my options for choosing a post-secondary institution were pretty open. Transitioning into my first choice university, I felt that the IB classes I took were similar to a lot of the material I encountered within my lecture halls and discussion courses. Even though I did not decide to do the full IB Diploma, I felt that the classes I took were beneficial. The majority of the students that attend this school took advanced courses, but for many of them IB was not an option. I had an advantage because I challenged myself with the IB courses in high school, and it helped me cope with the rigorous curriculum I encounter now on a daily basis. If I could go back, I would have taken many more IB courses in high school.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2006

I am currently a Junior at the University of Michigan with a dual major of Political Science (focusing on International Relations) and Spanish. I have been studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina for the past 8 months at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) completely independent from my studies at the University of Michigan. By not going abroad through a specific program, I hoped to gain more of a cultural immersion in the country, which has turned out to be exactly the case. (Because of the IB credit I received, I have been able to take a year off from my studies at U of M while still being able to graduate on time in May 2008.) It has also given me the opportunity to study a different subject from my concentrations at U of M. So I chose to study film and cinematography! In addition, I have been traveling around all of South America in my

break from classes. The experience has been incredible, and I plan to return to Michigan in the fall to continue my studies there.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2004

Being a part of the IB for me was an unforgettable experience. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenging courses and being able to take my education to another level. I think that it's necessary for each person to find the importance of the IB in their education and for me, the best way to show my support is to tell my story, as it would never have existed without the IB at my Portage high school

I believe that each person who takes part in the IB begins with different reasons, and for me I believe in the international aspect of education and the importance of understand other cultures and with that, other languages, which is an essential part of the IB. While I had many difficulties with learning the French language (and I still do), I never lost the interest in their culture, and that interest only blossomed with the IB French program. My senior year in IB French IV brought my French to the level that I was able to take a placement test at Western Michigan University and place into a third-year class. With that advanced placement and being an IB diploma candidate, I was accepted into a study-abroad program my freshman year of college. I'm currently spending my second semester at the internationally known language university, *le Centre de Linguistique Appliquée* in Besançon, France. I am with a group of students from literally all over the world and the only common interest, and way of communication, we have is to study and speak French. While the classes are of course necessary to progress with my understanding and comprehension of the language, the most influential parts of my journey have been just speaking with the students in my class.

Realizing first-hand the lives of people the same age as me in different parts of the world is the true experience of knowing I'm not alone in the world. I've found the hopes and dreams of the girl from Japan, the guy from Turkey, and the boy from Kalamazoo, Michigan are more similar than I ever knew before. I've learned probably more out of the classroom than in it, and I wouldn't have it any other way. However, the best moments for me are when people ask me about my education in the USA, and when I say I went to an IB school, they immediately look at me differently. I'm an IB student, and when I tell French people that, they understand, without me explaining it, that I had an excellent education, that I worked hard in school, and that I take my future seriously.

I want close by again saying that while much of what I talked about was only my personal experience, it is an example of how the IB can change education for students and hopefully, as time passes, more students will realize the world is full of possibilities. While the IB idea may seem small in Portage, the IB is expanding all over the world and more and more universities, employers, and people are taking notice. I am in full support of IB program for what it gave me and right now, the best I can give back is to encourage others to discover what the IB can do for them. Who knows -- maybe they'll end up in France less than a year out of high school!

Western Michigan University  
PPS Class of 2006

To all those wanting to know more about the IB program, I would like to share my experiences with IB classes and how they have benefited me as a student at the university level. I attended John Carroll University as a freshman and have since transferred to the University of Central Florida, and therefore have experienced both private and state college academic programs.

As I did not complete the IB diploma, I can only attest to the benefits of certain IB certificates. I completed IB Spanish, English and History classes and am now majoring in Spanish and Education. At John Carroll University, I tested into high levels of Spanish and English courses and completed my first year with a 3.9 GPA average. This year, I am continuing my studies here in Orlando. I have enjoyed my college experience so far and have been able to balance academics, my job, my family and friends.

There is no question that the IB program helped to prepare me for college level academics. By taking IB classes, I was able to study college level subject matter and experience how college courses are taught while still having the added support and guidance of my high school teachers. I developed the ability to study for a test effectively, write a college-level essay, conduct research, and take notes efficiently. I also adapted to the heavy and fast-paced reading curriculum of a college-level course.

John Carroll University and  
The University of Central Florida  
PPS Class of 2005

My former History of the Americas teacher told me you are seeking feedback on the IB program at PPS. I am an '03 grad and am about to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. I loved PPS and I am still best friends with my friends from high school. I am so glad I had a chance to go there. The staff, faculty, and opportunities offered change and influenced me, and I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything.

In regards to the IB program, I did not find it to be a valuable preparation for the military academy. I took English I & II, Physics I & II, and I don't remember if I took any other courses. In terms of college credit, I received nothing, but I did not actually take the IB tests, knowing that USMA would not give me credit either way unless I passed their tests. I was required to take English, Physics, and Calculus as a cadet. That is not to say the IB program doesn't have value; I just did not see a direct correlation between those of us that had IB, AP, or anything advanced prior to coming to college. I think having background knowledge in the subject was what made the difference, not the source.

My personal opinions on IB - I really did not like the global approach. Yes, we are operating in a global economy, and as someone who will likely be deployed in the next year or two, I understand the importance of other cultures. We read literature but did not focus enough on any one culture to make it worthwhile. Learning culture is important (and obviously lit is part of culture), but we did discuss that enough in IB to make it worth the effort to read and study foreign lit. In my English class at West Point, we read Iranian literature for an entire semester, but we spent a semester discussing cultural

background and why the authors would talk about something in a book. So now, for example, I understand the Iranian concept of its being okay to have a public life and then having a completely contradicting private life. Just reading the literature as a western cultured person, I would find that concept asinine and think the character in the book was just a hypocrite; however, in that culture it is the norm to have a public life and a private life. I didn't feel IB delved into that cultural understanding. So, if I am going to just read a book and discuss the literary value and analogies, style, etc. I would rather read books from a culture I can relate to. Also, while global understanding is good, we still need to take pride in our literary history and have a focus on our American literary greats. American culture frequently references American literature and I didn't feel IB taught enough of that to equip graduates to recognize and understand those references.

Please do not get me wrong, though - the teachers of my IB courses were some of the best teachers I have ever had. None of my criticisms are aimed at them because they were teaching the material and they taught it very well.

My grammar will forever be better because of my IB English II teacher. My understanding of physics is much better now because of that teacher's teaching style and methods.

I'm sure this feedback is not of the nature you were looking for, but I thought you might appreciate an alternate view.

U.S. Military Academy at West Point  
PPS Class of 2003

The International Baccalaureate Art class made a profound impact on my college career. I not only was the first student at Western Michigan University to receive college credit for such an art class, it also put me above the rest of my colleagues, as few were accustomed to research for art projects. As many sketches were required by the IB Art class, I also was better equipped than my peers to put in the time and practice toward making a fine, well balanced composition. The research also made my pieces much more inspiring and personal than all other works around my classes. I have learned that the more work one puts into a piece, the better the outcome will be. The program is just as rigorous as a college course is, and I believed it prepared me to do well in such courses. It has also been my experience that many of the foreign exchange students in college are the only ones that know of the IB program. Unfortunately, there are only a few schools here in the United States.

Western Michigan University  
PPS Class of 2005

I am happy to write to you about my feelings toward the IB program in Portage. Although I did not receive a lot of credit from the IB classes I took, this was as a result of Georgetown University's high demands (6 or 7 on HL tests) and the fact that medical schools frown on receiving credit for classes taken prior to college. However, I want to emphasize that despite my inability to obtain credits, I found my IB education to be

invaluable in preparing me to succeed at one of the top universities in the country, Georgetown University, and for my major in Science, Technology, and International Affairs. In addition, I will demonstrate fluency in Spanish this year, a requirement of the school, thanks to my participation in IB Spanish. Now that I am in my second semester of my sophomore year of school, I have to say that in retrospect, the IB program was the best preparation for college. Given the "cookie-cutter" houses and pristine community of Portage, Michigan, I believe IB comes closest to delivering an education that challenges its students to look beyond our traditional perceptions and understandings. Through the rigorous academic curriculum, extended essay, and theory of knowledge class, the IB student is more prepared and equipped to deal with the demands of college. Although at times I felt the curriculum difficult, I cannot imagine the difficulty I would've otherwise faced in transitioning to college had I foregone such an experience. Furthermore, I find it a tragedy that more students fail to participate in the program. Although my word choice may strike one as excessive--tragedy--I find it accurate.

If we, as students, hope to remain competitive in college admissions, it is invaluable that we have the IB program. We must acknowledge the fact, as Thomas Friedman outlined in his work "The Lexus and the Olive Tree", that the world continues to shrink given the power of globalization and its ability to spread education throughout the world. Given this new context in which students must compete, IB now, more than ever, acts as an instrument to make us more culturally aware and academically equipped to address the dynamic and changing face of our world. As a benefactor and recipient of the IB Diploma, I implore you to convey to the community the necessity of the IB program in Portage.

Additionally, please thank the Board of Education for me, and I thank you, too, for providing me with the past experience of benefiting from such a program.

Georgetown University  
PPS Class of 2005

The IB Art program was a positive and important period in my development as an artist. I entered the program my junior year of high school after only one full year of art courses, and found the intellectual and conceptual requirements of the course to be very stimulating. My IB art portfolio earned a 6 in grading and helped me to get into the schools that I wanted to attend. When I started at the University of Michigan's School of Art & Design, I found that I was more prepared and well-versed in various media and concepts of art than my peers. The IB course requires students to choose a theme of study, which is very similar to how artists today work. The Research Work Book (RWB) requirement of the IB program has become an important part of my process, and I still use one every day! The RWB's that I have accumulated over the past six years carefully document my growth as an artistic thinker. I would recommend the class for anyone seriously interested in exploring art as an important discipline, especially if they are considering studying art in college. I am planning on pursuing graphic design as a career, after four years of studying art & design at Michigan.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2003

I must admit that I have mixed feelings about my IB experience. I've been trying to think of how to respond to the questions you asked, and haven't been able to come up with very clear answers, so I apologize for that. I really don't feel that high school prepared me very well for college at all to be honest with you. I took everything very seriously in high school and expected that to make a difference in college. When, in fact, high school and college are conducted very differently. I was only placed in higher level Spanish and Latin classes. Although, I did receive credit for English I and II.

I do not think that the IB program itself is meaningless, but rather the set-up of high school education in general. It simply taught students how to do homework assignments and study for an exam that covered one chapter. In college, you cover a chapter a day in lecture, have an exam every other week that covers not only the last 5 chapters, but the previous ones as well. Homework is non-existent, but reading material is over-whelming. I will say that the final exams in the IB program were the most equivalent to college examinations.

Marquette University  
PPS Class of 2006

Although it was less than two years ago, I feel like I've been gone from PPS and IB for so long. I just got back from a trip to Nicaragua, visiting NGOs and studying the relationship between micro-credit/micro-loan programs and health there. I entered Beloit with a year of French credit! I have ended up only taking a semester of French, and I'd really like to start taking Spanish next year. IB helped me so much (my first year was unusually easy) and I'm really glad I did it.

After graduating with the International Baccalaureate diploma, I entered my first year at Beloit College with three courses, one for each higher level exam on which I had scored proficiently. With these credits, I was able to reach sophomore status a semester before most students in my class. Essentially, my IB credit is equivalent to almost one semester credit at Beloit. This paper recognition was probably the least significant benefit I have received from the program.

My feelings toward the IB program have only improved since graduating. I have noticed the benefits of my IB learning experience in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, the IB program equipped me with skills in research, critical academic inquiry, discussion, academic writing, time management, and international and interdisciplinary study. These values parallel many of the core requirements of the college I now attend. My acquired skills and knowledge from the IB experience were exemplified in my first days of class, from being the only person in my class who knew what "epistemology" meant (thanks to TOK) to now being able to build upon my experiences with literature reviews, content analysis, statistics, and surveys in large-scale research projects. The time management skills that I developed in high school have been essential in my ability to explore a wide variety of challenging courses.

Out of the classroom, the program has assisted me in my pursuit of scholarships, research programs, and study-abroad participation. My early exposure to research with the IB's extended essay contributed greatly to my acceptance as a McNair scholar, a pre-

graduate school research program. In addition, the program's commitment to international and interdisciplinary perspectives played a significant factor in my acceptance into a selective interdisciplinary course on Health and Micro-credit in Nicaragua (including a trip to Nicaragua) and the School for International Training Kenya: Development, Health and Society study-abroad program for the spring 2008 session.

Socially, the rigorous nature of the IB program has led to an alumni community. I have met many IB Diploma graduates at my school and we can share with humor and fondness stories of crazy TOK instructors, CAS hours, and past exams. We have our unique "IB language" that distinguishes us as IB grads: CAS, EE, TOK, HL's and SL's.

Beloit College  
PPS Class of 2004

I recently found out that I will be studying in Fremantle Australia next fall. Thanks to your IB credits I can still double major and study abroad which is pretty amazing. You should tell your students this if they complain about studying for the tests.

Notre Dame  
PPS Class of 2005

I am a graduate of the class of 2006. I am currently a student at the University of Michigan majoring in Aerospace Engineering. While I was in high school I took IB classes my junior and senior year including English, Spanish, Calculus, Physics, and TOK. I did not try for the diploma only because I knew I wanted to be an engineer and took two years of Drafting instead. Overall I feel the IB program greatly benefited me for my college career. Without a doubt IB English is the reason I am able to write as well as I do. I have found while being in the College of Engineering that many engineering students do not know how to write. Most of the students I talk to have never heard of the IB program and feel that they have never been taught the correct way to write. My professors tell me that they see a tremendous difference between students coming from the IB program compared to other programs. The professors teach writing, including technical writing, in very much the same way that it is taught at Portage in the IB program. The few students that I have met that went through the IB program completely agree with me. I believe that if I hadn't taken the IB course I would have not learned how to write and would have been far behind entering college. As it is now I feel that college is not harder than high school, just far more time consuming. The IB Calculus class is a definite must take class for all students interested in any math field. After completing calculus 2 in college I felt that I would have been lost if I had been introduced to calculus in college. The way that it is taught in the IB class is much easier to comprehend and apply and covers topics from calculus 1 through calculus 2 in college. TOK was by far my favorite IB class that made me think in ways that I've never thought before. More than once this has helped me in college to view a problem I'm stuck on in a different way.

I have met a few people who have taken TOK at other schools and they feel the same way. We are able to connect on topics in TOK and discuss the different ways each school covered them. Overall I believe the IB program prepared me for college much better than other students I have met as a freshman. The diploma is not necessarily the only way a student can benefit from an IB course. Whether they get college credit for the class or not, I believe the students benefit most from the knowledge taken out of the course. It would be a huge loss to the school system to remove the IB program and I believe students would not be as prepared for college. The IB program is what sets Portage Central and Portage Northern apart from all other school systems in the area and in Michigan. It is obvious that those students are far more prepared for college and do better when they get there.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2006

IB prepared me more for college than can be summed up in any response here. Not only did I receive the academic benefits of being in a highly rigorous and challenging program, but the IB program forced me to grow as a citizen of whatever community I am a member of. The IB program gave me the desire to constantly be involved in my community and encouraged me to be dedicated to political and social activism, a dedication that definitely continued with me onto college. I was recently elected to Student Body President (my term begins in mid-March) of my college at the University of Michigan. This position I feel is truly thankless, and it is my job to fight for students' rights and to make campus a better place for everyone. Part of my fight has been increasing/revising the current system that U of M uses to award credits to IB students. Some progress has been made, but I hope to see major progress and changes for next year's incoming freshman. I am one of two (out of approximately 100) students on the college's student government who is not going into politics when they graduate. The IB program has taught me that no matter what your profession or your future goals, politics and fighting to make your community a stronger place can be (and should be) done by everyone. IB also introduced me to a variety of academic subjects I would have never before considered, especially philosophy. Through TOK, I gained a great appreciation of philosophy and am now a Moral and Political Philosophy minor at U of M.

The teachers at PPS along with the IB program have given me so much inspiration and a drive that is absolutely indescribable. Before I head off to medical school, I will be taking two years off to teach, hopefully in an IB-affiliated high school, because, as cliché as this sounds, I want to have the opportunity to change the lives of students, like the IB program and my teachers changed mine.

University of Michigan  
PPS Class of 2005

From the mother of a Diploma graduate in a phone conversation about her son:

- Received 22 credits at Michigan Tech; had junior standing by his sophomore year
- Earned the “highest score ever” in the university’s German placement test

- His friend Samantha, from another school system, was jealous of the science experience the candidate had had in high school – “far more” than she had had. [She had to start at beginning physics, while the candidate had been able to start at higher-level science courses because of his IB work.]
- Tested out of physics completely; can take a 400-level course if he wishes to do so.

Michigan Technological University  
PPS Class of 2005

### **Question 1: How well did the IB prepare you for college?**

\*Earning the IB diploma prepared me very well for college. The first three or four semesters of college were challenging in their way, however, I was much better off than most other students of my semester standing. The IB program prepared me very adequately to handle the amount of work and depth of study presented to me as a freshman and a sophomore at the University of Connecticut. As a junior, my course work has been entirely major specific with a few courses toward my minor. I am majoring in English and have had absolutely no trouble standing out in my department. The writing instruction that the IB program provides is excellent. When I took the freshman English course required of all students at the University of Connecticut, the professor often used me as an assistant during writing workshops and lectures. I am also working towards a minor in philosophy and have found that the Theory of Knowledge course has given me a solid background from which to approach my University level philosophy courses that other students have not had. It has allowed me to participate a great deal more in class discussions than other students who are less well prepared.

I began writing for the student newspaper, *The Daily Campus*, this past fall. In the few months that I have been working there I have been chosen for promotion several times over writers who have been there for several years and have reached the highest position a writer can have, Senior Staff Writer. Additionally, I have been asked to apply for an executive editorial position for next fall. I credit this fast paced success to a certain flexibility of thought and innovative way of approaching problems that the IB program, when most effective, imparts to its students. Of everything I learned as an IB student, by far the most valuable has been the thought process that it promotes. As an IB student I learned to approach problems from a variety of angles and academic disciplines. At *The Daily Campus* it has allowed me to earn notoriety as an able and flexible writer that can be trusted to cover any assignment and do so very well. This thought process has benefited me in all areas of my academic endeavors as well, especially in my writing.

\*IB prepared me most in writing long papers. Unlike my classmates, our first long papers never daunted me. Also, it, especially IB History and IB Psychology II prepared me for the types of books I use in college.

\*The study habits I acquired through the IB program were very helpful. I think it helped me to stay focused and organized throughout high school.

\*I think that the IB program was helpful in preparing for college in a few ways. Probably most significant was that it taught me how to study and plan my time. There were times (senior year) that were a little overwhelming having 6 IB classes plus TOK everyday, that when I went to college it actually seemed easier. Also, I think that preparing for and taking the IB exams prepared me for my university exams.

\*The IB program gave me the preparation and expectation to excel far beyond the typical writing abilities of a freshman in college. Fellow classmates possessed inferior knowledge of grammatical consistency, research capabilities, and literary familiarity.

\*It prepared me very well for college. I was able to take challenging English classes and succeed easily because of the abilities I learned in IB English. The same is true for my IB history classes.

\*IB provided invaluable preparation for college, particularly in writing. My IB History and English courses gave me ample experience with researching, writing, and editing essays. During my first year of college, many of my classmates hadn't written anything more extensive than a three page paper. Because of IB, I was unfazed by my first few essay assignments.

\*Especially IB English, those classes helped me to learn how to write well. I was more prepared than most of my peers in my freshman English course because I had such a good background in grammar and writing technique. IB Spanish also provided me with a superb background to move on from once at college. I would say however, that IB bio, while a good course, wasn't structured in a way that I could really apply to my college courses. I'm glad I took it because it certainly helped me in the long run but a different structure would be better.

\*IB Spanish has prepared me very well for Spanish (I started college in 300-level classes), and IB English has helped, but I find that I now do a lot more different kinds of writing assignments than I had experience with in IB English.

\*Whether or not you even put forth any effort in the IB program, at the very least you are accustomed to seeing many of the types of assignments you will get in college. If

however, you put in the work required for IB, you are much better prepared to do the assignments.

\*I was really prepared for college because of the IB program, especially because of English. I feel like I'm a lot more advanced than the students in my English class, and this was after I was able to waive the Gen Ed requirement for English. I did a lot better in my Calculus class after taking IB/AP Calc in high school and the same goes for IB/AP Psychology (I'm taking that this semester too). Also, because the IB program was so rigorous, it really helped establish a work ethic and a sense of responsibility and time management. I can't even imagine why the community would want to get rid of the IB curriculum. It sets Portage apart from a lot of other communities, especially since most others don't even have the IB program.

\*The IB program prepared me for classes at U of M extremely well. The work load is comparable and it allows people to think more critically, essential here. However, I do hear often from people at Western or State that IB over prepared them and that classes are easier than in high school. It depends then on where you are going how necessary the program is.

\*The IB program did a great job preparing me for college. The classes that I was not able to get credit for and had to repeat, Physics and Calculus, I was extremely well prepared for. Both have been pretty much a review for me of what I already covered in IB.

\*I feel the IB program prepared me incredibly well for college. IB taught me how to think analytically, it set a standard for my work ethic, and most importantly, it taught me how to write well. I continue to be shocked at how well IB prepared my writing skills compared to other students at IU.

\*IB has prepared me extremely well for college. It I know far more than most people about quite a variety in subjects and I was well prepped for college writing. I just wrote a 3000 word paper in 3 days, something that the extended essay helped facilitate with organization experience.

**Question 2: What sort of recognition did your IB class work get you at college (admission points - class credit - etc.)?**

\*I received 17 credits for all of my work with the IB program (which is equivalent to one semester with a heavy course load at U of M).

\*I did earn class credit for most of my classes. I took AP tests to supplement the SLs which did help. The best thing that IB did for me, as far as recognition comes, was that it allowed me to study abroad. Though I didn't have the language requirements fully filled for my program, the French department decided that since I took IB French 5, that was sufficient preparation.

\*I did not do the diploma, and I ended up just missing scoring high enough in history and English by one point, so I only got credit for Spanish. A six on the IB Spanish HL exam got me 6 credits at Michigan - which is equivalent to two Spanish classes.

\*I came to the University of Michigan with 16 credits which is very nice. Michigan also looks at the IB program very strongly and awards admission points to it.

\*Unfortunately the University of Connecticut does not give the IB diploma any sort of special recognition at this time. When I entered the University as a freshman, there was, to my knowledge, only one school in the entire state of Connecticut that offered the IB program and it was in its very first year of the program. As a result the diploma was relatively unheard of. Despite this lack of recognition, I would, given the choice again, choose to earn the IB diploma again. The IB program is not just a program to prepare students for higher education; it is also a program that helps students become better human beings. IB courses promote a broader and more understanding worldview, which is an invaluable quality for a person to have in today's world with a quickly growing world economy and global community. When IB students leave Portage high schools and arrive at their particular college or university campus, they will find this most helpful as they begin encountering international students. Additionally, should the student choose to study abroad during college, this aspect of their IB education will better enable them to get the most out of the experience. While these benefits are not the sort that this question was looking for, I think it is a little shortsighted to only consider "selling" the IB program to students based on how many courses they'll be exempted from or how many credits they will enter college with. These are all wonderful things and shouldn't be forgotten, but in the glamour of entering college a semester ahead or even as a sophomore, I think there are many benefits of the IB program that are overlooked. I have found the IB program has not only had academic benefits but has helped to shape who I am as a person and how I interact with the world around me. I hope that the public realizes that while students leaving their school system may not all be receiving great academic recognition at whatever college they chose to attend, the program will have shaped them into the sort of individual that cannot help but reflect well on the high school that they came from. While I am only a junior at the University of Connecticut I have already begun publishing in national magazines, including the

nation's leading independent environmental magazine, *E / The Environmental Magazine*, which has a wide readership not only in the United States but also in Canada. Additionally, a great deal of my writing is available on the Internet.

These personal successes of mine reflect well on Portage's IB Diploma program, and I credit a great deal of this to how the program helped to shape the individual that I have become. I am not alone in such accomplishments, either. One of my fellow IB diploma graduates from my class is currently attending medical school in Europe while most of the people we graduated with have at least one full year of their undergraduate education left. This, too, reflects well on our high schools.

\*At the University of Michigan I received 19 credits, 6 English, 4 History, and 9 Spanish. Because I took the French exam as a Standard Level, I did not receive credit, although I did test into 4th semester French. As for admission to the University of Michigan, I believe that in my case the IB diploma helped. I did not apply until just before the closing date, and just over a week after that I received my acceptance letter.

\*As WMU did not accept class credit for IB at the time I graduated, I wasn't able to use it for that purpose (They accept it now) (PPS Class of 2000)

\*I received the equivalent of a two college classes for each of my IB HL classes.

\*From getting a 6 on the IB Spanish exam, I received 8 general credits

\*I received nine total credits, including testing out of Spanish entirely. I did however choose to continue with it, and what I learned in high school prepared me just as much as college prepared the other students in my class. Also, even if you don't end up receiving credit, the information you absorbed will definitely help you out in college classes.

\*I went into college with 12 credits, 8 from English (from getting a 6 on the test) and 4 from Psychology (from getting a 4 on the test). These scores let me waive my Gen Ed requirement for a very basic writing class, and it let me advance in Psychology; I didn't have to take Psych 101, I got to take a 200 level course right off the bat. Additionally, since I took IB/AP Calculus, I got to fulfill my math requirement with just one class (Calculus again), instead of the two that most students have to take, even though I did not get credit for Calculus from the test.

\*I got a 5 in English, 6 in Spanish - I think giving me 4 and 5 credits respectively. Also, the Spanish gave me humanities distribution credits. IB is far more accepted than AP credit because it is a 2 year program.

\*IB classes gave me 17 credit hours, which is more than one semester of classes.

\*I'm not sure how many credits are attributed to IB exactly, but with my IB English exam score, my IB Spanish exam score, my AP Psych exam score, and the intro Spanish exam to Indiana University, I received 23 credits before my first semester.

At my second semester, I am now technically a sophomore and have been admitted to the school of Arts and Sciences with 35 credits. My IB English score exempted me from the English requirement here at IU, and my IB Spanish score took care of the 4 semester foreign language requirement (I don't have to take any more foreign language, ever).

\*I got 14 credit hours from the tests, something that is allowing me to triple major and still graduate in 4 years.

*\*From the IB Latin teacher, an anecdote about one of her recent IB grads:*

I write to you regarding Student X and her experience at GVSU. She completed only three years of Latin with us and was placed in a beginning level (200ish, I think) of Latin. During the first day of class, the professor excused her to his office (scaring her to death) and met with her after class. He told her that she had to move up and placed her in a 400-level class. She is the only freshman in a class with juniors and seniors and is leading the class. ..with her eye on being a Latin teacher when she grows up.

A true Portage IB success story!

Grand Valley State University  
PPS Class of 2005

### **Question 3: What are your feelings about your IB experience?**

\*IB was really helpful; it definitely prepared me for writing extensive papers, thinking critically, and practicing taking written exams, as opposed to short answer or multiple-choice.

\*I would repeat the diploma program if I got a second chance.

\*I have a very positive feeling about the IB program. Not only did it prepare me for university, but it also got me to think globally. I also really liked the fact that you can tailor the program to meet your interests. I enjoyed studying History and Languages and both have given me a base for my university career.

\*The IB program is only as rewarding as the student allows it to be. Personally, I feel more confident in regards to writing, reading, and analyzing literature on a college level because of my experience in high school.

\*I loved it. I was challenged, and my mind was engaged. I actually looked forward to coming to my IB classes and discussing the subject matter. Specifically, my experience with IB English has made me want to get a teaching degree in English as well as history. IB also gave me a global outlook in each of my subjects, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

\*During my junior and senior years, I was quite dramatic about the amount of work required for the IB classes and especially for the diploma. In hindsight, it was very similar to a year of college courses.

\*I feel more prepared for college than I would have been without it, but I do not like the way the IB English curriculum is set up, with the World Lit papers one year and the oral/written exams the second year...I think I would've felt more prepared if one of those papers had to be written senior year. I believe AP can prepare a student for college just as much as IB can, and it is more mainstream and accepted in colleges.

\*The IB experience was significantly easier than what everyone makes it seem; granted I didn't ace every class, but I think I ended up just fine. I would therefore recommend it to all high school students because it better prepares you for college, and doesn't ruin your high school social life as some students have been known to make it sound.

\*Although the program was very time-consuming and at times, very frustrating, speaking to the English program specifically, which seemed much more difficult than any other IB class I took (World Lit. papers, IB orals, commentaries, etc.), I found the program very rewarding. It set me apart from other students in high school and I believe that colleges appreciate the fact that I took these difficult, college-level classes. The

program is good for students that like to challenge themselves. I am very proud to have taken many of these higher level classes, and it's very rewarding to have done well enough in them to have received college credit.

\*I hated it while doing it as it felt like unnecessarily difficult work and a lot of it, but in the end I thoroughly enjoyed it.

\*Overall I think I had a pretty good experience with IB. I know at the time there were things, mainly the oral presentation type things that I was not really happy about doing, but in the end it is all worth it. I think that one of the best parts about the diploma is that the school reimburses you for the cost of taking the tests, so not only is it great that you are getting college credit, but that you get it for free. One of the things that I think was key to my overall experience was the freedom that it allows you with the Extended Essay to choose something that interests you. I don't know how motivated I would have been to do all that work in the last couple of weeks before it was due, when I switched areas from science to history, had it not been a topic I was extremely interested in.

\*Although the IB program in high school was tough, I'm glad I took IB classes. They gave me an advantage over other student in acquiring credits as well as the skills I learned.

\*The classes are great and cover a wide subject in good detail—an example being that I've seen references to most of the books we read in IB English and I knew what they were referencing.

#### **Question 4: Would you recommend an IB class to a high school student and why?**

\*I would recommend IB to EVERYONE! It is not a program for the gifted or extremely intelligent. Yes, it does require an individual to be a good student and be willing to put in all the effort required, but the program can and does change the lives of everyone involved (both teachers and students), and if I had any say, it would be the ONLY curriculum allowed to be taught in high schools across the globe. Its life lessons, especially in diversity and in forcing people to reflect on non-native perspectives, are lessons that every citizen of our global community should possess.

\*I encourage any student considering the IB diploma to pursue it and any student not considering it to consider it. Even if a student doesn't wish to pursue the entire

diploma, even just taking a few IB courses, especially the higher-level ones and in particular the higher-level history courses, will be very helpful in college. I have often been surprised how unprepared for college-level science and history courses many of my fellow students at the University of Connecticut are. Many of these students have come through the AP program at their high schools. It is my opinion that the IB courses are more valuable in the long run than AP courses and I would tell that to any student considering taking an IB course. The IB program provides a quality education that will help prepare the student for college no matter to what degree they are involved in the program, whether they just take a few courses, pursue certificates, or the whole diploma.

\*I'd recommend IB to younger students because it does over prepare you with important basic skills of reading, writing, and analytic thinking.

\*I especially enjoyed my IB Spanish V class because we read some amazing literature pieces. It was so helpful because many of the stories we read senior year, I had to read in my Spanish classes here. It helps to have a solid background and a previous understanding. Also, I really liked both IB English classes I took because it really helped in learning how to write an academic essay.

\*IB Psychology. It is an extremely interesting class and allows students to finally break away from the mandatory curriculum they have always been accustomed to.

\*High school students should seriously consider taking IB courses if they have a real interest in any specific subject because of the in depth nature of IB. College credit and acceptance consideration are not as important as the preparation and experience that the IB classes offer.

\*IB English is an asset in college. It will improve your writing skills and allow you to be able to more effectively critique your own work and the work of your classmates.

\*I would emphatically recommend an IB class in whatever strength the given student has. You will be challenged and engaged, and you may be surprised at what your potential can bring you to.

\*I recommend IB classes, especially for students to have a strong interest in a particular area of study. The depth of learning is fantastic and the teachers have a knack for making the process interesting.

\*It prepares you for college better than a "regular level" class would--it is especially helpful in the foreign languages because you can often start college taking sophomore or junior level foreign language classes.

\*I would strongly recommend an IB class to a high school student. These classes are in a completely different league than your basic college classes and, while they are challenging, they are completely worth it. They let you work and think in different ways and you are presented with material you wouldn't normally see in a high school class, specifically because the curriculum is a world-wide program. I got to read very interesting articles in my IB German classes that wouldn't be open to me in a standard level class. I read some amazing books in my English classes that I wouldn't have picked up off the shelf (*Wuthering Heights*, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, *Things Fall Apart*, etc.). I really can't say enough positive things about this program and I think it would be a shame if Portage schools decided to get rid of the program. It distinguishes our community from other communities in Michigan.

\*I would definitely recommend IB classes.

\*I would most definitely recommend an IB class to a high school student. Although they may be a lot of work in high school, the skills I learned from IB have made many of my college courses much easier.

\*I definitely would recommend that high schoolers take the IB classes and if possible do the extended essay.