

# Fairview Honors Program

## An Information Guide



### **The Honors Program at Fairview**

Fairview High School challenges motivated students with the broadest range of honors courses available in the Boulder Valley School District. With an emphasis on the development of the whole student, the honors program allows students to select among International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and other weighted courses to chart an individual path suited to their own goals and talents. The program's flexibility helps to balance the needs for academic achievement, personal growth, and shared enjoyment. The eight-hour school day at Fairview enables students to take more electives than anywhere else in the district.

The ability to mix IB, AP, and standard courses facilitates student success and maximizes the possibility of earning credit or advanced standing at many American colleges and universities. Fairview's array of honors courses is offered in a stimulating environment of friendly support and a shared interest in learning that engages students in a process of self-discovery and expression that enriches their experience in high school and beyond.

### **Fairview International Baccalaureate (IB) Program**

Fairview is proud to be a member of a distinguished group of schools worldwide that are authorized to offer the International Baccalaureate Program, a rigorous, internationally recognized, college preparatory program that seeks to educate the whole student by means of a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum that emphasizes *critical thinking, creativity, responsibility* and *intercultural understanding*. It is intended for students who have a strong work ethic and seek academic challenge and individual growth. Personal motivation is probably the single most important factor in success. Fairview's first IB class graduated in June 1997.

The IB Program at Fairview is exceptional because it is completely self-selective. Each student decides whether to participate, and if so, to what extent. Unlike other IB Diploma schools worldwide, which screen applicants and offer only the diploma track to those selected, Fairview offers students the option to work toward the Diploma or to pursue Certificates in just those IB courses they choose. More than half the student body is enrolled in one or more IB courses. In 2006, 36 students received the Diploma and 85 received Certificates in one or more subjects. Fifty-seven students are expected to receive the Diploma in 2007.

### **Two Pathways: IB Diploma or IB Certificates**

Although the choice between the IB Diploma and Certificates is actually made in the spring (during the registration process for the following school year) of the sophomore year, students should become familiar with the Program before registering for 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, students take Pre-IB courses to prepare themselves for the standards and concepts of IB courses, which are taken in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Pre-IB courses are strongly recommended, but are not required in order to take the IB courses.

## IB Diploma Pathway

The IB Diploma Program demands the best from both motivated students and teachers. Graduates are ready to debate real-world issues from an international perspective and to provide leadership and support in the local and global community. They demonstrate a capacity for in-depth study while maintaining a broad perspective of the different subject areas. They are able to ask challenging questions but also know how to research a topic and express their opinion. Diploma recipients have a strong sense of their own culture and identity, as well as the ability to communicate in two or more languages with people who have a different perspective of the world.

Students who enter the Diploma program are asked to commit to a two-year plan of study for their junior and senior years. In order to earn the IB Diploma, a student must study six areas in depth and successfully pass an exam in each area:

- English
- World Language (currently Spanish, French, German, Latin; or bilingual language)
- Social Studies (World History, History of the Americas, Philosophy, or Business & Management)
- Science (Biology, Chemistry, or Physics)
- Math (Math SL or Math HL)
- Elective (Visual Arts, Music Performance or Composition, Theatre Arts, 2<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Language, 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Studies, 2<sup>nd</sup> Science or Computer Science)

Most IB subjects can be studied at two levels—Higher Level (HL) and Standard Level (SL). Diploma students are required to pass exams in at least 3 higher level subjects. Since the IB examiners are interested in evaluating students toward the end of their academic development, most of the exams must be taken at the end of the senior year. Students' work is assessed by an international board of examiners, who are themselves rigorously trained and monitored by the International Baccalaureate Organization. Most diploma candidates also take the Advanced Placement exams in specific subjects.

In addition to the six specified areas of study, a student must complete the following unique requirements of the IB Diploma:

- Theory of Knowledge (ToK) Course: This two-semester course challenges students to question the bases of knowledge in the disciplines that they study and to develop the ability to analyze evidence that is expressed in a rational argument.
- Extended Essay (EE) Project: Working with a faculty supervisor, students undertake original research in one of 70 IB fields and present results in a 4,000-word paper. The EE project provides experience in independent research and develops writing skills expected at the college level.
- Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) Activities: The CAS requirement reflects the importance the IB Program gives to life outside the world of academics. IB Diploma candidates receive CAS credit for participating in school, community, or international activities of their choice. Students are required to complete about 50 hours in each of the three areas.

Fairview students who have obtained the IB Diploma believe the program has had a positive impact on their lives:

“We are still at the top of our class [at Stanford] because of the Fairview IB program. There are IB programs and then there are IB programs. Fairview’s is the best. . . .”

## **The IB Certificates Pathway**

Fairview also offers motivated students the opportunity to earn IB Certificates in subjects they select themselves. Students take the same courses and exams as Diploma candidates, but only in the subjects in which they are most interested. The three additional Diploma requirements, ToK, EE and CAS, are not part of the Certificate option. The flexibility of the Certificates Pathway allows students to customize a mix of IB, AP and standard courses that works best for them. Like Diploma candidates, students working toward one or more IB Certificates are strongly urged to take Advanced Placement exams in those subjects as well. Many Fairview students feel this is the best option for them:

“I definitely talk more in my classes as a result of the training I received in IB . . . I think the best thing IB taught me was how to study . . . Overall it was a great experience with great students and teachers.”

## **Fairview Advanced Placement Program**

The Advanced Placement Program (AP) is a challenging honors program designed to provide motivated students with college-level academic courses. Established in 1955 by the College Board, the AP Program is a cooperative educational endeavor between secondary schools and colleges and universities, which allows students to get a taste of college while still in an environment that is more intimate and nurturing than university lecture halls. AP teachers work closely with their students, giving them each the responsibility to reason, analyze, and understand for themselves. Classes allow students to study subjects in depth and to demonstrate their maturity and readiness for college.

The only requirements for taking an AP class are a strong curiosity about the subject and a willingness to work hard. Students are allowed to take AP exams based on personal decisions about their preparedness in each subject matter. At Fairview, the variety of honors courses (IB and AP) that prepare students for AP exams provides flexibility when choosing classes. Those students with qualifying exam grades may earn credit, advanced placement, or both at many American colleges and universities.

Fairview students have taken AP exams in the following subject areas:

Biology	Calculus
Chemistry	Computer Science
English Language and Composition	English Literature and Composition
French	German
Spanish	World History
U.S. History	Music Theory
European History	Studio Art
Physics	Statistics

## **Combining IB with AP**

Fairview's ability to deliver both programs gives students a great opportunity to get the best advanced preparatory college education available. The IB and AP programs do indeed have significant differences in curriculum and the manner in which their respective curriculums are delivered; however, the two programs also share some very important characteristics. Both programs have rigorous standards for students and faculty; both are devoted to educational excellence; both programs involve dedicated and creative teachers committed to their students, their disciplines, and their profession. Both programs attract highly motivated students who wish to excel academically and attend the most selective colleges

and universities, and both programs teach students **how** to learn, promoting quality college experiences.

From a curricular standpoint, both programs have strengths and weaknesses. Over the last decade of simultaneously teaching IB and AP content to a wide range of students, Fairview faculty have identified and capitalized on these strengths and weaknesses, resulting in curricular pathways that maximize the best components of the two programs. For instance, in French language study, the IB curriculum emphasizes speaking ability and does less well in promoting written grammar skills; the AP curriculum is just the opposite (highlighting an important difference between the two in this subject). As a result, Fairview offers a combined IB/AP French course where students are challenged to excel in both speaking **and** writing, meeting the objectives of both programs. This has caused students to perform very well with both exams.

It is difficult to make a broad statement about the fundamental differences between IB and AP, and it is even more difficult to assertively say one program is better than the other. Which program will provide a better education? Answers to such questions are largely dependent on individual student abilities, subjects of interest, and academic goals. To be certain, though, students who take a combination of IB and AP classes or take IB/AP hybrid courses will absolutely have an enriched academic experience beyond what the traditional IB or AP program alone can offer. Students and parents are encouraged to view the two programs as complimentary to promoting academic excellence.

### ***FAQs About the Honors Program***

*What's the main difference between IB and AP courses?*

Both IB and AP courses offer intellectual challenge and the opportunity to learn how to do college level work. The manner in which exams are assessed is one main difference (see question and answer directly below). For IB diploma candidates, IB offers a more holistic and comprehensive academic program. AP courses emphasize students' academic strengths; the IB diploma pathway emphasizes students' academic strengths **and** at the same time challenges students to grow in areas where they are less adept. Aside from this, the differences between IB and AP courses are subject dependent.

*How are the IB and AP programs assessed? Which gives me the best chance for college credit?*

The IB exam contains two components, an internal assessment and an external exam. The internal assessment is done in class and is graded by the student's teacher. This might be a written paper, oral presentation, a research paper or lab. Each student also takes an external exam that requires the student to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving. These exams are graded by trained examiners throughout the world. An external IB Language Arts exam, for example, might be graded in Singapore.

AP exams are objective, consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions. They are given at the end of the school year and they are scored in the United States. Many students choose to take both AP and IB exams and may be prepared for both through a single course.

Both IB and AP exams are recognized by colleges. Each college or university decides if and how to use exam results to assign credit or advanced standing. Some schools recognize an IB diploma in its entirety and automatically start these students at a higher class level. Other schools look at each AP or IB exam result individually and may give advanced standing, college credit or both. American colleges are somewhat more familiar with the AP exam, and this is one reason students who take IB courses are encouraged to take the AP exam as well as the IB exam.

*I've heard the IB program is for geniuses. Is that true?*

The IB program is for students with a strong work ethic who want to challenge themselves. Fairview's flexible honors program allows you to determine your degree of participation.

*Does taking the Diploma pathway allow for any life outside of school?*

Absolutely. The great majority of Diploma candidates at Fairview participate in one or more extracurricular activities. Most IB classes call for no more than 30 minutes of homework per night. The key is knowing how to study, to make that time count.

*Do I have to take two sciences to graduate with an IB Diploma?*

There are several ways to pursue the Diploma. You must take exams in six areas: English, Second Language, Social Studies, Sciences, Mathematics and Electives. The Electives exam may be taken in Music, Theatre Arts, Visual Arts, Computer Science, or in another World Language, Social Studies or Science subject.

### **Making Choices**

Students considering whether and how to participate in the honors program at Fairview can learn more about designing the best academic path for themselves by working with their counselor and teachers, as well as visiting the IB office.

Please contact the IB office with any questions you may have.

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