IB creates leaders

Alesa Lightbourne, Ph.D. Assistant Dean and Associate Professor of Communications at S P Jain School of Global Management, Singapore

When new students turn in their first English essays, I can immediately tell who came from IB programmes. Their essays have a cohesive structure, well-constructed paragraphs and grammatical integrity. But how do these IB star writers measure up after the initial plunge into college-level academics?

I teach at a small business school in Singapore, with students from 22 countries. About 20 per cent come from IB World Schools, with the rest graduating from elite international schools and public schools. Our small class sizes allow faculty to interact individually with students, making it possible to detect trends that might otherwise go unnoticed.

IB students start out with a blast in English composition. In fact, I can separate freshmen’s first essays into two piles: IB and others. This is because IB students are so well trained in writing skills, including how to organize an essay, do research and use literary devices. Even better, they understand the need for creative thinking, and do not plagiarize. This distinguishes them immediately, and gives them an early reputation for being the best.

Secondly, multi-disciplinary courses, like Theory of Knowledge, provide excellent training for college-level liberal arts. IB students understand how to integrate history, literature and social-science concepts for a broad analytical perspective, and they can conduct research. This is the mindset we are trying to inculcate, and so we rely on IB students to enliven discussions.

Another way IB students distinguish themselves is in their willingness to relate to adults as peers. Many of our students are unaccustomed even to speaking in class, much less challenging a professor’s opinion. The IBers, on the other hand, exemplify a discovery-driven mindset and ask a lot of questions. They are the students most frequently selected for academic leadership roles.

My advice to IB World Schools? Keep up the good work. Keep emphasizing intellectual courage and keep sending us your amazing young scholars!

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