



IB explainer:

HOW THE PYP AND MYP BUILD SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS.

Building blocks to learning

AS AN IB CONTINUUM SCHOOL we take a long-term approach to learning, focusing on the social and emotional competencies that are critical to becoming effective and successful learners ... for life.

We believe in the transformative power of education to prepare our students to live informed and worthwhile, emotionally textured, fulfilled lives. Our approach to learning considers the development of character and the wellbeing of our students. Wellbeing is intrinsically linked to being an active, successful learner—we want our students to love the pursuit of knowledge and to leave our school with a lifelong love of learning. Through the development of these softer skills, our students develop their character,

and generate the confidence in themselves to take risks. They learn not to fear failure but to see this as the best sort of 'risk-taking': central to the development of confidence and crucial when it comes to innovation.

At the heart of the IB programme are the Learner Profile attributes that represent a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond intellectual development and academic success. In addition, the IB's Approaches to Learning (ATL) define a set of skills, essential for the innate wellbeing of our students. Importantly these include self-management, social skills and communication skills which take into account the vital need to consider and evaluate emotions when learning, paramount in achieving personal wellbeing.

The start of the educational journey: the Primary Years Programme (PYP)

GENET ERICKSON-ADAM,
DEPUTY HEAD - CURRICULUM
(PRE-SCHOOL - YEAR 6)



ONE OF THE KEY FOCUSES OF THE PYP is the development of soft skills as it recognises that these skills are not only important for personal growth from a very young age, but also ultimately for the development of a global citizen who can contribute positively to society. Therefore, the PYP curriculum framework intentionally fosters the development of

soft skills through a range of learning experiences.

We place a strong emphasis on student self-reflection and self-assessment as a means of promoting deeper learning and understanding. By encouraging regular self-reflection and self-assessment, students become more aware of their own learning processes, strengths, and areas for improvement. This, in turn, helps them take ownership of their learning and develop the skills needed for lifelong learning. For example, students are often asked to reflect after completing a task or unit of inquiry. This may include prompts such as 'What did I learn?' or 'What strategies did I use to complete this task?' A perfect example of when parents

can really see this come to fruition is through the student-led conferences we hold in Term 3. During these conferences, students share their work and learning with their parents, reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses, and setting goals for the future.

The PYP promotes time-management skills in students by incorporating various strategies and practices throughout the curriculum. Teachers encourage students to set realistic goals and prioritise tasks by providing them with clear learning objectives and timelines. Students learn to manage their time by planning and organising their work, breaking down tasks into smaller, manageable steps, and using tools such as diaries and checklists to keep track of deadlines. The programme also emphasises the importance of self-reflection and evaluation, allowing students to identify areas for improvement and adjust their time-management strategies accordingly. These processes are scaffolded by teachers, so that students learn about the importance of time-management, they learn strategies to assist with time-management, and they also work to develop positive habits for the future.

The PYP encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and development by fostering a culture of inquiry and student agency. Students are empowered to take ownership of their learning by setting personal goals, developing action plans, and reflecting on their progress towards those goals. Additionally, the PYP emphasises the importance of student voice and choice, allowing students to select learning experiences that are personally meaningful

and relevant to their lives. Students are encouraged to ask questions, explore their interests, and take risks in their learning.

One key approach is using groupwork and collaborative tasks, which provide opportunities for students to work together towards a common goal. Students learn to listen to and respect each other's ideas, communicate effectively, and allocate tasks based on each other's strengths and interests. Additionally, the PYP promotes the development of social skills such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution, which are essential for successful collaboration. Students are encouraged to take turns, share resources, and support each other in achieving their goals. The PYP also provides opportunities for students to engage with people and resources that represent different backgrounds and perspectives, helping to develop their understanding and appreciation of diversity.

Teachers plan units of inquiry that explore different cultures and perspectives, allowing students to learn about the beliefs, values, and perspectives of others. Through these units, students are exposed to a range of cultural experiences and are encouraged to ask questions and share their own ideas. For example: students in Year 1 will explore the central idea 'Understanding the people of our land helps us to live together respectfully,' in their *How we express ourselves* unit. Through a visit from Wandana, an Indigenous education programme, students experience some of the different ways that First Nations peoples express their values and beliefs. They learn to recognise Indigenous signs, symbols, and language around them in their everyday world. This makes it tangible for the students to understand how local land is shared with the Australian Indigenous culture, both past and present. By engaging with these resources, students develop their understanding of diversity and learn to appreciate different ways of thinking. Finally, the PYP encourages students to reflect on their own backgrounds and identities, helping to develop their self-awareness and understanding of their place in the global community.

The PYP emphasises the development of language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Through these skills, students learn to express themselves clearly and understand the perspectives of others. Additionally, the PYP promotes the development of social skills such as empathy, respect, and cooperation, which are essential for successful communication. Students are encouraged to actively listen to others, ask questions, and provide feedback in a constructive and respectful manner. Units of inquiry provide opportunities for students to communicate with a variety of audiences, such as through presentations, debates, and group discussions. Teachers support students in developing the skills and confidence to communicate effectively with others, both within and beyond the classroom.

Moving up: The Middle Years Programme

KATE ALLEN, MYP COORDINATOR

As our students move from the Junior School through to Senior School, our teachers continue to look to develop internationally minded young people with agency, purpose, and a sense of community. Our students are explicitly taught sets of skills to support their development as balanced learners in the classroom, in the pastoral system and beyond. The development of these skills helps students to identify that there are many ways to be successful, and that being a principled, balanced, reflective and open-minded human is as important a lesson as the academic curriculum.

Organisational skills, affective skills and reflective skills are explicitly taught as students engage with content. In Years 7 – 8 orientation days for example, students are taught how to establish routines around the use of their computers and the student diary. In our Student Wellbeing Programme our students engage in the development of their affective skills, focusing on self-motivation and resilience. In our continuous reporting system, students are invited to develop their skills in reflection. In any given classroom, MYP students may be asked to reflect on their perceived strengths as a learner and to identify an area of focus that will inform their approach to learning for that unit.

Teaching and modelling empathy and taking responsibility for one's actions help our students to develop their social skills. MYP students are explicitly taught how to listen to other perspectives and ideas, as well as give and receive meaningful feedback. In Houses and in the classroom, students are asked to exercise leadership and take on a variety of roles within groups, helping them to practice the important social skills of managing conflict, building consensus, and negotiating. Each of these skills assists our students in the development of the social skills required for a sense of purposeful community. In engaging students in robust discussion regarding AI for example, students are practicing and developing their ability to engage with ideas that exist outside of their online echo chamber.



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Kate Allen



From Pre-School to Year 12

LEO HARA (OC 2022) is one of Cranbrook's first students to have studied under the IB curriculum from his earliest days as a Cranbrook pre-schooler through to completing the IB Diploma Programme in its inaugural year at Cranbrook. He received the accolade of IB Proxime Accessit for 2022. Leo is now studying Aeronautical and Space Engineering at the University of Sydney.

How has the IB approach to self-management helped you during your studies?

I remember that the 'big thing' in Year 6 was the PYP Exhibition. This was an independent project where we were given a whole term to research a problem, prepare an exhibition board and present our findings, among other things. In Year 6 this was of course a very daunting task, but it allowed me to develop key self-management skills and take my learning into my own hands. We were given responsibilities we had to fulfill, like having to organise meetings with our supervisor to discuss our progress. For several weeks, there were no scheduled lessons, and we were given time to independently work on our exhibition. This allowed me to learn self-management skills to independently keep myself in check and work towards a goal over a long period of time. We were required to keep applying and developing on these skills as long term projects like this continued throughout the IB with the Year 3 and Year 6 Exhibition, the MYP Personal Project in Year 9 and ultimately the Extended Essay in Year 12. I believe this approach requiring you to take responsibility for your own learning really benefited me in my studies. Whilst teachers are here to guide us, it is us as students who need to do the learning. Acknowledging this and being able to take responsibility for my own learning ensured that I would go back over the things I didn't understand, make notes, and do practice papers, constantly seek more information, and ask questions.

In what ways did the IB approach to learning encourage the development of social skills?

Looking back on the PYP and MYP, we were given a lot of group assessments, presentations, and activities. There really was a strong focus on learning in groups and developing teamworking skills such as communication and open mindedness. Being constantly exposed to these group environments allows you to become more comfortable learning and engaging with other people and able to effectively express your ideas and listen to others. This naturally encouraged the development of social skills and friendships through interaction with peers.

How has the IB approach to self-reflection helped you identify your strengths and weaknesses?

I remember having to write reflections in Year 1 or 2, and this continues all the way until Year 12. The IB certainly puts a strong emphasis on reflection as a means of improving personal understanding and performance. I was told at university recently that employers look for reflective learners. Students who do not reflect can only improve slowly through trial and error, whereas students who reflect on their performance can understand and improve to learn things much faster and more efficiently.

Can you describe how the IB programme helped you develop time-management skills?

Having plenty of experience with large, long-term projects such as the MYP Personal Project and the Extended Essay are invaluable for developing time management skills. My *Theory of Knowledge* teacher would constantly remind us that "the only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time!" Being able to organise, plan out, and effectively complete the many small 'bites' of a project on time is an important skill that I was well versed in by the completion of the Extended Essay. I learnt how to prioritise things, keep track of my work, and effectively balance my time between multiple tasks so they could all be completed on time.

How has the IB approach to teamwork and collaboration helped you in your studies and in your personal life?

I'm currently studying Engineering, so working in a team with many other people on a project is a core aspect of the profession. The IB has prepared me well for this by exposing me to group environments throughout my schooling career both academically and in co-curricular such as debating, bands and sport. This has allowed me to develop my collaboration and communication skills to become well versed in how to work productively with a team. This is also useful in my personal life as interacting with people encourages the development of social skills and an understanding of how best to work with different types of people.

Can you give an example of how the IB helped you develop critical thinking skills?

I believe one of the most unique and fascinating things about the IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) is the *Theory of Knowledge* course. It made me think broadly and philosophically about the nature of the knowledge I was learning. It made me ask questions such as 'How do we know this is true?', 'How reliable is this claim?', 'How can this be approached from a different perspective?' and 'Is certainty attainable?'

This allowed me to develop critical thinking skills to not just take the things I was learning for granted, but to understand how this knowledge was created, how reliable it is and what its implications are to me and the field's community. It makes you consider the grey zone between facts and fiction and to question the knowledge around us.

In what ways has the IB approach to learning prepared you for the demands of university life?

The IB has undoubtedly prepared me well for the demands of studying at university. The time management skills I developed in the IB have been particularly valuable. At university, I've discovered that you must manage a lot of tasks and assignments going on simultaneously and keep track of their progress and due dates. Thankfully, I am very experienced with balancing my time across multiple different commitments due to the workloads of the IBDP. The IB approach to encouraging students to take responsibility and independently manage their own learning has prepared me well for university, where students need to be independent, and responsible for their self-directed learning.

CRANBROOK'S APPROACH TO LEARNING DEVELOPS crucial skills that prepare our students for the world outside of school. As an IB Continuum school we teach our students to 'learn how to learn'. We focus on character formation so that when our students leave school, they have the character and skills needed for the new world of work—individuals who are resilient enough to embrace change, who have the 'grit' to problem-solve, and the imagination to not only innovate but to find human-centred solutions that build community and care for our world. ■