

Lamar High School, Houston, TX

Background: The school, which enrolls over 3,300 students, was designated as an IB school in 1982. It began opening up access to the IB program, which had previously been considered an exclusive program, over 15 years ago. In 2012, 37 percent of Lamar's students were Hispanic; 28 percent were white; and 29 percent were African-American. Almost half of students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

What were the early years of open access like? "Difficult," said the school's principal James McSwain. It took a while to dispel the notion they were going to lower the standards. But McSwain said the requirements of the International Baccalaureate Organization don't go away. "There's no way around the exams," he said.

How big is the IB program? In 2013, 70 seniors received the IB diploma.

What about ninth and 10th graders? Lamar offers the official IB Middle Years program, but it also offers non-IB courses. Students may pick either path.

Can non-IB diploma students take IB classes? Yes.

But how many do? Last year, 58 percent of seniors took at least one IB exam and 70 percent of them had enrolled one or more advanced classes.

What about AP? AP classes are offered only when there is no IB equivalent.

How do you enter the IB program? All students submit an application but it is intended for counseling purposes once a student is enrolled. Students may opt to take IB courses at any time and principal James McSwain said his teachers and counseling staff often push students who show promise to move up a level.

But what if a student is struggling? The school offers support classes and academic support groups for students, alongside academic counseling to make sure students are in the right class.

How are teachers trained? Every teacher is sent to a district IB academy and trained in IB methodologies.

So...how do students do? The average IB exam score is 4.72 out of seven possible points (passing is 4). In seven subjects, the average score was higher the world average (for more on the school's IB results, see [here](#)). The school on the whole graduates 97 percent of students. On Texas standardized tests, 96 percent of students meet the standard in both math and English. (For more on academic outcomes, see the school's district profile [here](#).)

South Side High School, Rockville Center, NY

Background: The school is the only high school in Rockville and serves roughly 1,100 students. It launched its IB program in 1981. Like Lamar, the school is ranked as one of the top 200 in the country by US News and World Report. Fifteen percent of students qualify for subsidized lunch; 75 percent of students are white; 13 percent are Hispanic and eight percent are African-American. The school opened up access in the 90s but began increasing IB enrollment in the early 2000s as part of an aggressive [detracking program](#).

What were the early years of open access like? Placing all ninth graders in the same “pre-IB” courses was relatively well-received, said principal Carol Burris. But “when we detracked 10th grade, all hell broke loose.” She convinced the school board to wait and see what happened. Things calmed down and when the school went to IB English for all, “we did not get resistance,” Burris said. (More on how they did it [here](#)).

How big is the IB program? All 11th and 12th graders are now required to take IB English and will soon be required to do the same for social studies.

What about ninth and 10th graders? Every student is enrolled in ninth and tenth grade “pre-IB” courses.

Can non-IB diploma students take IB classes? Yes.

But how many do? This year, 100 percent of graduates took at least one IB class, due to the elimination of non-IB English. In previous years, roughly 80 percent of students have taken at least one IB exam and half of all students received an IB diploma.

What about AP? AP classes are offered as well as IB.

How do you enter the IB program? Any student may take an IB course. There is no application required.

But what if a student is struggling? The school offers support classes and specific supports for students who are now enrolled in the mandatory IB English classes.

How are teachers trained? At least one teacher in each subject area is trained in IB and helps inform curriculum and instruction decisions. And no teacher teaches only diploma classes. That way, teachers know what’s expected and can start preparing students early on.

So...how do students do? In 2006, the average IB English exam score was 4.54 out of seven possible points (passing is 4). In math, the average was 4.74. On the New York Regents exams, which are required to receive a high school diploma, 100 percent of students meet the standard in both math and English. (For more on academic outcomes, see the school’s US News and World Report [profile](#).)

Thornton High School, Thornton, Colorado

Background: The high school, which is in Adams 12 Five-Star school district, established its IB program in 1992. Over half the school's students are Hispanic, 32 percent are white and eight percent are Asian. Forty two percent of students qualify for free or reduced price lunches. The school opened access this past year, in response to the establishment of a nearby IB feeder middle school.

What were the early years of open access like? Thornton is still in the early years but the biggest challenge so far, administrators say, has been logistical. "We needed time to figure out how to accommodate personal projects and all the other components [of IB]," said Roger Dowd, the district's IB coordinator. And while many teachers were supportive, administrator still had to combat the perception they were watering down the program. One big benefit Dowd cited was that IB aligned with the new Colorado academic standards, which rolled out this year.

How big is the IB program? About 50 seniors were enrolled in the IB diploma program this year. Overall, 12 percent of students participated in 2012, although that number is likely to increase when more recent information is released.

What about ninth and 10th graders? Thornton offers the IB Middle Years Program for ninth and tenth graders. Starting this past school year, all ninth graders enrolled in MYP.

Can non-IB diploma students take IB classes? Yes.

But how many do? 131 students registered for IB exams in 2013, including diploma candidates. Almost all 11th grade students took IB English this past year.

What about AP? Some courses offered.

How do you enter the IB diploma program? Students must take eight core MYP classes to enter the IB program in 11th grade, although motivated students who have not done so may be able to enter anyway.

But what if a student is struggling? That is an area of difficulty, school and district officials said. They are working on trying to adapt to students from different backgrounds.

How are teachers trained? At least one teacher in each subject area is trained in IB and helps inform curriculum and instruction decisions. But administrators say many, if not most, teachers are trained in IB.

So...how do students do? Well, the impacts of the open access launched in 2013 are not yet clear although participation on exams has increased some especially among Hispanic students. In 2012, 79 percent of students passed the exams. On Colorado standardized tests, 50 percent of students scored proficient in English and 26 percent in math.