



# Lower Merion School District

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December 17, 2020

Dear parents, guardians, and caregivers:

In July of 2000 Harriton High School of the Lower Merion School District became the 1,234<sup>th</sup> high school in the world to offer the highly esteemed International Baccalaureate Diploma Program as a curricular option. In the two decades since, hundreds of Lower Merion School District's students have earned the IB Diploma and have employed their knowledge and skills in universities in the United States and abroad. Housed at Harriton, this district-wide program is available to all juniors and seniors who reside within the District.

Our graduates consistently tell me how well their work in IB has prepared them for their college studies, one of the primary reasons our community began to investigate this academic option in the late 1990's. Though the program is very highly respected in the college admissions process, "the gold standard of high school curriculum in admissions circles" according to the associate executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (*Education Week*, March 29, 2006), the skills that it instills in our students will serve them very well throughout their college careers and beyond.

Many of our IB alumni have continued their international education at the undergraduate or graduate level throughout the world. Though the IB Diploma facilitates international study, the vast majority of our IB alumni grew up in our community and has pursued undergraduate work in the United States. Planning to study outside the US is not a pre-requisite for pursuing the IB Diploma.

The Diploma Program of the International Baccalaureate is a demanding pre-university course of study that leads to examinations and an internationally recognized and respected high school diploma for successful candidates. It is designed for highly motivated eleventh and twelfth grade students and incorporates the best elements of different national systems without being based on any one. The IB's goal is to provide students with the values and opportunities that will enable them to develop sound judgement, make wise choices, and respect others in the global community. In the more than fifty years since its founding, the IB diploma has become a symbol of academic integrity and intellectual promise. The student who satisfies its demands demonstrates a strong commitment to learning, both in terms of the mastery of subject content and the development of the skills and discipline necessary for success in a competitive world.

In most "normal" years, as the IB Diploma Program Coordinator I offer evening informational presentations in the fall for families with students in grades 9-10 and again in January in advance of the high school choice deadline for families of middle school students. 2020, of course, is not a normal year. In lieu of live events, a recorded presentation is available [here](#). It explores the philosophy and details of the program and includes reflections from current students and recent graduates. Additionally, the program's documentation is available [here](#). Though the program is housed at Harriton High School, all sophomores who reside within the Lower Merion School District are invited to apply for admission. All applicants are admitted; the admission process is designed to support our students' thinking around the program and to foster ownership of the decision to participate in it. The application will be available in the near future.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. I may be reached via email at [obrient@lmsd.org](mailto:obrient@lmsd.org) or by phone at 610-658-3958.

Sincerely,

Thomas O'Brien  
IB Diploma Program Coordinator

