Creating Support Structures and Services for Title I High Schools Implementing the International Baccalaureate Programme

Final Report

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April 2010
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Funding for this paper was provided by a grant from the Advanced Placement Incentive Program, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education.

The authors would like to thank all of the participating districts for their cooperation and help in obtaining the information and necessary data to do this study.
The Learner Profile

**IB learners strive to be:**

- inquirers
- knowledgeable
- thinkers
- communicators
- principled
- open-minded
- caring
- risk-takers
- balanced
- reflective
The IB

The International Baccalaureate (IB) has a long record and a strong reputation for providing a “gold standard” of rigorous academic programs and exam systems, and for preparing and certifying students around the world to be ready for university entry. To “be IB” has become a mark of distinction. While IB originally concentrated on curriculum and assessments for students who were close to college entry—in the U.S. typically eleventh and twelfth grades—that Diploma Programme (DP) now combines with the Middle Years (MYP) and the Primary Years (PYP) Programmes to offer a “continuum” of schooling for students aged 3 to 19. IB programs have been widely adopted; spreading to more than 2800 authorized IB World schools in 138 countries, they now serve (according to 2009 figures) more than 770,000 students.

With its demanding requirements and assessments, its academic and international orientation, and its aspirations for admission to highly selective universities, IB has often been seen as an “elite” program: one for highly motivated, academically strong, and often affluent schools and students. But while the original Diploma Programme was often both elective and selective, the MYP and PYP are more intended to be whole school programs, open to all students. In the past few years, IB has continued to grow, and to extend its ambitions, adding into its 2004 strategic plan the mission of “impact through planned growth” and the particular strategy of “broaden[ing] access purposefully where we can have the most impact, particularly with disadvantaged students.” The continuum structure, with its potential both to build a pathway to the Diploma and to expand participation to more students, is an important part of that strategy.

At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education has been focusing its own efforts to increase academic rigor in secondary school programs for disadvantaged students. While much attention has been paid to standards-based accountability and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as efforts to stem what A Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983) called the “rising tide of mediocrity,” another strategy has been to expand on existing examples of ‘excellence’ through the Advanced Placement Initiative. Through this initiative, by 2009 reports, the Department has provided more than $70 million in competitive grants to support and encourage expansion of AP and IB offerings, particularly for underserved students, and to encourage organizations like IBNA to develop new programs and strategies to support schools in this undertaking. According to a Department press release, the goal is not only student opportunity, but school reform: to “not only encourage the growth of AP and IB courses, but also as a mechanism for upgrading the entire high school curriculum” (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ 2/24/2005).

In September 2006, IB North America (now called IBA¹) was awarded an API grant, for $1.08 million over three years, to extend its efforts to broaden access and develop “support structures and services” for Title I high schools that are working to “be IB.” Supported by this grant, between January 2007 and December 2009 IB has undertaken an extensive effort to develop, plot, and refine a new model of structures and services to build a pathway that will connect programs and prepare students from the Middle Years through the Diploma, and to expand participation across schools, staff, and students. Key components of this project have been: to

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¹ In April 2007 the International Baccalaureate Organization changed its name from IBO to IB, and IB North America became IB Americas, or IBA. Through the rest of this report, we use the new name, IBA to refer to the organization and to its regional headquarters in New York.
increase scaffolding materials and leadership activities, to create a new coaching model and provide on-site coaches in schools, to offer new supports and training for guidance counselors, to develop backward mapping of curriculum from MYP through the Diploma, and to draw on the experiences and insights of other IB practitioners through an advisory working group. The grant project goals included not only the design, development, and delivery of these new support structures and services, but also the ultimate expansion of the number of students taking and passing IB exams by 10%.

This is an ambitious and far-reaching project, involving the complexities not only of comprehensive school reform but also of connecting across middle and high schools. The building of the pathway from MYP to Diploma—even once completed—would take six years to move its first cohort of students through the full program from 7th grade to graduation, twice the time that is funded through this grant or covered in this report. While not all of the goals had been fully realized by the end of the grant period, IB had—as this report will detail further below—made considerable and substantive progress. One principal described it as “providential” in providing leverage and structure for change, while another observed that “without this grant, we would have failed and there would have been no MYP in our schools.” With this grant, both IBA and the pilot schools have moved forward in understanding the contexts and meeting the challenges of what it takes “to be IB” in Title I schools, in providing support structures and services to meet school needs, and in producing materials to help schools build the pathway from MYP to the Diploma and expand participation so that more students, staff, and schools see that, and how, it is possible for them to “be IB.”

The Pilot Sites

Four sites agreed to participate as pilots for the IBA project, sites that we have given the pseudonyms of Eos, Aquilon, Hesper, and Austrin (brief profiles of each school are included in Appendix A). These sites undertook the dual task of working to implement MYP to DP pathways, and at the same time testing and giving feedback on the new supports. In addition to the extra assistance and attention from IBA, they also received approximately $14,000 each year to access new and existing services.

While small in number, the partnering middle and high schools at these sites represent considerable variation, and collectively they reflect a broad range of conditions, characteristics, and capacities that IBA is likely to encounter in its efforts to expand access in Title I-eligible schools (see Table 1 below).
Table 1: Characteristics of Study Sites, 2007-08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eos</th>
<th>Aquilon</th>
<th>Hesper</th>
<th>Austrin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Size</strong></td>
<td>25,360</td>
<td>1.1 million</td>
<td>6,169</td>
<td>1,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># High Schools</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High School Choice</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DP Program High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eos</th>
<th>Aquilon</th>
<th>Hesper</th>
<th>Austrie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Enrollment</strong></td>
<td>1,445</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grades</strong></td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Eligible for Free Lunch</strong></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% African-American</strong></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% White</strong></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Asian/Other</strong></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Limited English Proficient</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Special Education</strong></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year DP Programme</strong></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year MYP Authorization</strong></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Pending</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One is a small school, with approximately 400 students, while two are large comprehensive high schools—with 1600 and 1800 students. Faculty size varies as well, from 30 to 200 teachers. One is a new school, where IB was built into the design and structure from the very beginning; three schools are working to add new IB programs and pathways into much older and well-established patterns and practices. One school is growing rapidly, with approximately 400 students added to its enrollment last year; two are confronting declining enrollment. One high school has had the same principal since the beginning of the grant; two have had new principals arrive; one has had four in rapid, and sometimes turbulent succession. One site withdrew from the grant when a new superintendent and principal found they could not maintain the commitment; one school withdrew from its MYP offerings when budget cuts made it impossible to sustain the costs. All sites, however, have continued to ‘be IB’ in their own ways: as one math teacher explained, “the challenge is still there, and I’ve seen what IB does. To do anything else would be foolish.”

The schools differ in their IB offerings and organizational arrangements, as well: one includes grades 7 to 12, and is a fully authorized Middle Years-to-Diploma campus, where all students participate in a fully IB-oriented curriculum. The others follow the more typical American pattern, with high schools enrolling students in grades 9 to 12 who have come from one or more middle schools, or middle schools sending students off to multiple high schools—both of which make building “bridges” across schools particularly difficult. Two high schools are the only high schools in their districts, and take all students who come; two are in districts with multiple high schools and managed choice, though as one coordinator observed, “most students get their first choice, and it’s not Eos.” In three sites, IB enrollment has been equated to some degree with the “honors track.” These high schools offered authorized Diploma Programmes, but were in the process of building school-wide MYP programs in their own lower grades, and of building...
“bridges” to connect those programs with a partnering middle school also in the MYP candidate stage.

The students served by these schools, and within the IB programs, also reflect the broad variation that exists across Title I-eligible schools. At the start of the project, the percentage eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch ranged from 45% to 76% (although reported numbers tend to under-represent eligibility, particularly for high schools), which places them well within the envisioned target zone of the federal API Initiative grant. Demographically they range from 11% to 70% White, from 18 to 34% Black, and from 6 to 67% Hispanic. In terms of students designated to receive Special Education services, one school does not report any students officially classified, while the other three report percentages between 20 and 25%. Designations for Limited English Proficiency, by contrast, are low across sites, with one school reporting 1%, two schools with 3% and one with 10% (more detailed quantitative analyses are in Appendix B).

The pilot schools do have at least three things in common. First, they are all working actively to build MYP pathways and better prepare students for IB Diplomas. Second, they all generously agreed to pilot the new support structures and strategies developed by IBA though the API grant. Third, they all most graciously allowed researchers generous access to their own work.
The Study

Over the three years of the grant period (January 2007 to January 2010) a team of researchers at the Institute for Education and Social Policy (IESP), located at NYU, has been engaged in the evaluation of that project, examining the design, development, and delivery of new support structures and services, and their implementation and impact in the pilot schools. The research was designed around the following broad questions:

**Academic supports:** What supports for staff and for students are being provided? How well do they fit the needs and capacity of the schools?

**Articulation of MYP/IB pathways:** Are IBA and the sites developing coherent connections between MYP and the Diploma Programs?

**Organizational impact:** What is the impact of MYP and the new IB supports on these pilot schools? Is their capacity to implement and expand IB affected?

**Student impact:** What is the impact of the project on student participation, persistence, and performance?

To address these questions, IESP researchers conducted two visits each year to each site, including: (1) interviews with MYP and DP coordinators, school and district administrators, teachers across subjects and programs, and guidance counselors about their status and concerns with implementation of MYP and DP, enrollment and staffing issues, and articulation across grades and schools; (2) observations of staff meetings and professional development activities connected to IB; (3) interviews and observations of support activities and workshops provided by IB or their coaching consultants; (4) review of school and district documents (e.g., overviews, course materials, memos) about IB implementation, academic program, and student recruitment, participation and performance. We have observed joint meetings among our schools (such as sessions on Leadership and on the Coaching model), attended regional meetings and national conferences to document relevant sessions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed; all transcripts and fieldnotes were entered into ATLAS.ti for coding and analysis.

We also gathered relevant quantitative data in each site, such as state and IB exam scores, credit accumulation, demographic data, and student enrollment status for each year. Because each site has a distinct configuration of IB implementation, and because districts and states conduct tests and keep data in different ways, each site offers particular limitations and opportunities for analyses, but these data allowed us to track changes in participation, to compare characteristics of students who participate and those who do not, and to assess strengths in supporting students from initial enrollment in MYP through coursework, projects, and exams, to the Diploma. In addition, we conducted a survey of all Title I-eligible high schools that offer IB programs and a case study of the district role in IB. Both the case study and survey provide empirical context for analysis of patterns in the pilots that have more general application to the larger population that IB seeks to serve.

This report examines the progress of IBA’s efforts to create new support structures and services for Title I schools, and the experiences of the pilot sites in their implementation efforts. It includes sections on: 1) an overview of the challenging and changing contexts of the pilot sites; 2) patterns and progress of implementation (constructing the pathway and expanding...
participation; the implementation rubric and wheels); and 3) the provision of new support structures and services (professional development, guidance counselor training and involvement, the coaching model, and PLGs).
In his landmark book, Seymour Sarason (1993) described what has become a commonplace in educational research: “the predictable failure of school reform.” He documented the often-underestimated “problem of change,” the complexity of school systems, the importance of context, and the entrenched relationships among personnel, power, and culture, which so often overwhelm even carefully crafted school reform designs. Indeed, decade after decade of studies have reported the repeated failure, or foundering, of reforms designed at a distance when they reach the realities of schools—particularly of high schools (Berends, Bodilly & Kirby, 2002; Bodilly, 1998; Carnoy, Elmore, & Siskin, 2003; Muncey & McQuillan, 1996; Siskin, 2003). One major advantage of this grant has been the opportunity to bridge that distance, for IBA to design supports and to develop, refine, or even reject components as they were piloted in the realities of this range of pilot sites. This grant takes IB into settings not only of broadening access to disadvantaged students, but to disadvantaged schools, often characterized as turbulent settings, sites of high turnover and repeated policy interventions, all of which make trying to implement and sustain any reform effort feel precarious, and the pilot schools certainly reflect that characterization. This provides for IBA an opportunity to learn, to develop a more systematic understanding of what it takes to help schools to be or to become IB in these challenging and changing contexts.

In this section, we describe what emerged as the most central and salient challenges for IB’s work in Title I schools.

**Unpredictable problems are a predictable pattern in schools, particularly high needs schools.**

Over the three years of the grant we have certainly seen ample evidence of the kinds of unpredictable, yet regular, incidents that disrupt and interrupt implementation efforts. There were student fights that required administrative or even police intervention, and a break in at an office that led to fears of missing student work and records that would put IB credit in jeopardy. A snowstorm one day cut short the school’s work and our fieldwork; a server breakdown cut off another school’s internet access for two weeks. Budget crises, particularly in year 3 brought cuts, more cuts midyear, and chronic uncertainty as more cuts were constantly anticipated—“it’s grim,” said one principal, explaining a sudden loss of faculty positions and the general sense of crisis. Teachers talked of “trying to stay above water” while a coordinator likened the implementation process to “Waiting for Godot,” noting that “every step forward, there’s another reason to pause. And wait some more.” At Eos High School, an enthusiastic MYP teacher talked of struggling against the “thousand things that happened to me during my planning period that prevent me from doing planning.” Another coordinator, trying to pull staff together for a session on action planning, observed that there was “too much action for real planning,” but these turbulent settings actually call for more planning—the strategic plan, the action plan, and the pragmatic need to always have a plan B.

**Policy pressures can seem overwhelming.** Education reform remains high on the policy agenda at every level, and the pressure to raise test scores, reduce dropout rates, and ready all students for college is rising considerably (Berends et al. 2002; Carnoy et al., 2003; Kirst & Bracco, 2004; Roderick, 2006). The pilot schools, like so many Title I schools, are struggling under the continued demands of No Child Left Behind to make ‘AYP’ (adequate yearly progress), and new
or modified accountability policies enacted by their states and districts. Two schools have, thus far, managed to meet their federal targets, but the urgency of state or district mandates can easily overwhelm the needs of IB. At one, they told us, “teachers are saying they do MYP in March, after the [state] test.” At another, the saying has become almost a slogan: “we can’t do MYP until we make AYP.” Still another principal warned staff at a faculty meeting that “if we don’t get those test scores, we won’t survive as a school.” When survival is at stake, the priorities are clear, and where IB is seen as competing with, rather than complementing the drive to survive these policy pressures, it is unlikely that schools can justify investing the time, attention, and resources required.

The complexity of the system, and disconnected district decisions, can overwhelm even carefully crafted school reform designs. Across districts, particularly large districts, people at all levels of the system make decisions, adopt new programs, institute new policies, or alter budgets, often in ways that affect, or undermine, the implementation of school reforms, including IB. “School districts matter” to the potential and predictable problems of school reform (Spillane, 1996), but the pilot sites express considerable concern that IB doesn’t matter enough to their districts. They spoke of district leaders who “sign off” on the IB application, but “don’t sign up” to help make it happen, and don’t have enough information about or training in IB to even know how to help. The District role in this grant effort has been problematic in multiple ways: in the definition and development of what the role should be; in the investment of district administrators (characterized as signing off rather than signing on); in turnover and difficulties with transmission of information; in alignment issues—with new or tightening policies of accountability and reform; and most recently in a dramatic sense of fiscal uncertainty.

Worried about their still unsuccessful struggle to meet AYP targets, and the continuing stigma of “corrective action,” one district instituted new policies to consolidate guidance and college counselors, and created a new administrator for Student Achievement and Accountability—who has no familiarity with IB. Eos’ district, under considerable pressure from their state accountability system, devised a new curricular approach, with detailed lesson plans, and mandated a new reading program—one of which aligned well with IB. As a science teacher detailed, district administrators introduced “a reading grant; they’re doing [a] Writing program; they’re doing IB; they’re doing MYP; they’re doing new advisory stuff. They’re doing everything, and everything just gets dumped on you. If you do something well, they’ll dump even more stuff on you.” Not just one but three new accountability instruments introduced by the District confronted Aquilon, none of which were designed with IB in mind. There, too, they saw an assortment of new coaches sent by different administrative offices to deliver different kinds of content and program support that ended up creating program confusion. At one school, teachers literally could not keep track of which coach came from which program, or for what purpose—including the coach who came as part of the IB grant. Across the schools, those pressures and conflicts were felt at every level, from the principals’ offices to the classrooms. They struggled to reconcile not easily aligned standards and tasks, all within limited time and resources. Yet as they see it, the district disconnect complicates and conflicts with their efforts, since too often at the central office in depth knowledge of the IB program is lacking and direct statements of support are limited. For Title I schools, especially in larger districts, implementation of IB requires systemic reform, or at least systemic accommodation (Smith
&O’Day, 1991). Without more clear information about IB and its implications for *district* decisions and appropriate provisions, school efforts are seriously constrained.

*Strong and stable leadership may be “essential” for school improvement—but it is too rare to be relied on.* Leadership has been found repeatedly to be an “essential” component and contributor to school reform (Bryk et al, 2009; Carnoy et al., 2003), but strong and stable leadership is a scarce resource, particularly in high schools and in low wealth settings. In the pilot site, while leadership support from the district level has been weak, leadership at the school level has been repeatedly weakened by turnover in the principal’s office. Each of the high schools undertook the grant effort with a principal who had committed to the design, and to supporting the school-wide effort to be IB—the kinds of leadership that researchers describe as essential. By year 3, only one of those principals was still in place. Eos provided the most dramatic examples of how disruptive administrative turnover can be, but while their case may be unusual in intensity, it is consistent with the dominant pattern of rapid turnover among high school principals, particularly in urban schools. The principal’s door may always be open—but “it’s a revolving door.” Eos went through four principals in the three years of the grant, including a retirement, an acting principal who was not retained, and another who was “relieved of duties” after questions arose about graduation credit improprieties. Said one teacher, “there’s a high turn-over rate of principals in this school as far as I know. I mean, even the last two years we’ve had two, three, four principals move in and out. That has a big effect on the atmosphere of the school and the climate of the school.” The repeated negotiations of developing a relationship with a series of new principals took a toll on teachers at Eos, and affected the school’s IB implementation efforts.

Whether new principals came from within the school or outside impacted the schools in varying ways, since outsiders hired by a district were unlikely to have IB experience, or even to know IB. Aquilon, for example, had a new acting principal in fall 2007, as well as a new assistant principal. In both cases the school was able to promote from within, so while administrators were new to their roles they were familiar with, and to, the staff and the programs, so progress continued with little major disruption. Still, because of district procedures, the question of whether acting roles would become permanent assignments hung over school decisions for some time. Eos had also gone through the change to an acting principal (in their case, an abrupt change), but there the district acted to bring in another person, leaving teachers to explain that they had a new principal in the spring, and then a “new, new principal” in the summer—someone who came in from outside, and was unfamiliar with the school, the staff, and IB. Austrin, too, had a new principal from outside, as well as a new superintendent—both of whom were new not only to the school and the district but to the idea of IB. The demands of learning the program, attending the meetings, and supporting the staff through the challenges of major change were simply too much to ask of a new person in a new role in a new place, and contributed to their withdrawal from the grant. Even at Hesper, where the same principal and superintendent had been in place for years, teachers were beginning to worry about sustainability if, as expected, retirements bring changes in the near future. For IB to move into Title I schools, where leadership turnover is a chronic condition, brings the challenge not only of finding strong leaders, but also of finding, and fostering, leadership strength repeatedly.
**Coordinators are at the core of IB programs and implementation, but high needs schools have low capacity to staff that role.** In all of the schools, leadership provided by the Diploma and the Middle Years Programme coordinators was consistently reported as invaluable to advancing and supporting IB at every level—from introducing new administrators to just what IB involves to scheduling courses and coordinating trainings, from creating opportunities for horizontal and vertical planning to assembling binders for IB applications, from managing scheduled exam times to creating new opportunities for personal projects, coordinators carry a tremendous amount of the workload. Teachers consistently reported that when issues or questions arise with IB—from programmatic to professional development—they turned to the coordinators. One teacher stated, “If I come across a problem, I’ll let the coordinator know.” Another said: “it’s usually to [the coordinator]. I just go to her office.” They talked to some degree of assistance from other teachers, but most frequently they named the coordinator as their primary resource, and they relied on coordinators’ expertise about almost anything having to do with IB from pedagogical practice to problem students, from proctoring exams to paying for travel to IB training.

As a result, a great deal of responsibility rests on the shoulders of the coordinators. But what could easily be a fulltime job was often fulfilled along with other demanding roles in the schools, and there was considerable variation in how those roles were distributed and rewarded. Many coordinators taught classes or had administrative duties in addition to IB management, not only in our pilot sites but also across the population of Title I IB schools in the survey. They might be full time teachers who took on the coordinator role as an additional task—and received an additional stipend of $500, or $5,000. They might be assistant principals, who dealt with report cards and scheduling classes and lunchroom duty: “I spend two hours a day standing in the lunchroom. I mean so 25% of my day is shot from standing in the lunchroom for two hours.” They might coordinate MYP and DP, or teach in the Diploma Programme while coordinating the MYP, or in one case even be a district administrator. What they have in common is the fact that they all had, as one put it, “a lot on [my] plate.”

Thus far, IBA and the schools have been fortunate in finding individuals willing to carry “a lot on [their] plates” and committed to building stronger IB programs and pathways. But some, like Austrin’s coordinator, worried that an individual cannot carry too much weight alone: “It’s a question of support, because if we’re going to do this, it can’t just be me.” The importance of that question was reinforced in year 2, when, with too few leaders to share the load, Austrin was unable to continue with the grant. Her statement illustrates the critical importance of precisely the work that IBA has taken on in this project—the design and delivery of additional supports and services so that it won’t be so dependent on individual initiative.

**Professional capacity is compromised by teacher turnover.** Teacher turnover is high across several sites, “huge” in some, and “I mean, that’s normal,” as one of our pilot administrators reported, for Title I schools (Loeb et al., 2005). Eos has experienced three years of contract problems, frozen salaries, and a reported “exodus” of teachers. There was concern there about the high teacher turnover in general (estimates are about 50%), but also about the particular departures of teachers in certain subjects (like science), and with IB training, that have profound implications for their confidence in fully staffing the new MYP program. “I have some kids who have Spanish class, and they had a sub from the beginning of the year. And the sub didn’t speak
Spanish.” An Eos High School teacher talked of how at her school “turnover is huge. I think just last year more than half of the department left . . . I was considered a veteran with my four years of teaching.” The level of turnover that makes fourth year teachers the veterans is a challenge for any school, but particularly for a school trying to implement a program like IB. In fact, several teachers across the sites suggested, “it takes 3-5 years to be trained as an IB teacher, 3-5 years to know IB.” By year 3 of the grant, the MYP coordinator estimated that they had been able to establish a “core group of teachers” trained and actively engaged in IB work—“maybe 30 teachers out of 140 teachers that are here.” Austrin, too, saw teachers exit the district in what Loeb (2000) has found to be a common pattern in teacher labor markets, as teachers tend to move toward a preference for students that are high achieving and high in socioeconomic status, or for the working conditions found in schools attended by such students. Ironically, district administrators said, the problem is compounded by IB training—which makes teachers more marketable in more desirable schools. Hesper had concerns about staffing as well, but for a different reason. There the student body has grown by approximately 25%, with their percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch increasing from 49 to 56%, and their Special Education population now almost to 25%. The need for new staff was high, and the time to prepare those teachers for their students, let alone for school-wide IB, presented a serious challenge for the district. For IBA, although their professional development has been consistently praised as invaluable in improving teaching practice, building a critical mass of trained teachers is a consistent challenge when turnover is a consistent pattern.

Students who are traditionally underserved can be difficult to serve at the level that IB demands. Teachers and administrators were quite clear, particularly in the first year, that the challenge of adopting IB, and of expanding access to most if not all of their students, would be a formidable challenge indeed. For some, it seemed an impossible challenge: “It’s easy to sit there from [somewhere else] and say how great IB is, but we’re an inner city school. 62% of our kids are on free and reduced lunch. We’d love to be a full IB Diploma school, but it will never happen here.”

While they hoped that IB could provide attention and intervention, they were also quite aware that persistent patterns could be hard to break:

There are so many kids that don’t have family support. They are not dumb. Those kids are not dumb. They are smart kids. It’s just that they don’t have family support. Then when they go to the school, they don’t get any attention from the school either. So they continue to be in a pattern. So that’s not right.

As one principal observed, his school had a “horrific reputation. Good kids didn’t come to [this school].” Teachers worried that while their kids might be good kids, they were not what they thought of as the “normal” IB profile: “they don’t have that support structure that most normal kids do, so it needs to be important to them. If we can key in the program. . . I think it can be successful at a certain level.” In many cases, teachers worried that students didn’t have the home support, the internal motivation, or the academic preparation (“they probably perform at sort of a fourth grade level”) to be IB. At the same time they questioned whether the school had the capacity to support the students, to “key in” the program, or even to supply the classrooms: “The fee structure is a hindrance for poor students.” Providing materials was another hindrance: “I don’t have textbooks for my students; I have my own copy, but I don’t have copies for all the
“…or “a lack of supplies, materials; technology is so far behind. I think those are my biggest struggles. They are huge struggles for me.”

Academic supports, as well, were a concern across the sites, and schools reacted by creating new structures of their own. Teachers recognized the high demands of the IB Programmes, in time motivation, and academic performance, and struggled with providing sufficient supports to help students with low levels of academic preparation meet those demands. Aquilon developed a literacy program, for “helping students learn how to deal with difficult text” that they would later expand on with the support of the grant. As a 7th grade teacher explained, to prepare under-prepared students to be IB, they had to start with academic literacy skills:

In the lower grades, we teach them to read in specific ways. It is a deliberate process of developing meta-cognitive skills. They’re using post-its to take notes in books. Then they re-read the post-its. They are learning to value the process.

Other sites added time, through after school or weekend tutoring and support sessions.

At an early workshop teachers and administrators were challenged by an IB coach to think of their own struggles. They were asked to think about one student, someone who was “hard to reach and hard to teach,” and who they wanted to benefit from what they were learning in the trainings—and then to write down a few characteristics of that student. They had no difficulty coming up with the kinds of characteristics that make this work hard, describing, for example, the daunting depiction of a student who is “unmotivated, has attitude issues, no family support, under-performer, poor self esteem, hates the world and school” or one who is “very intelligent, looks for an easy way out, never does homework.” Some highlighted the challenging circumstances of student lives outside the school: “no family support” “father dead, mother in jail” or simply “poverty.” As they identified problem characteristics, lack of potential was never the issue—instead they repeatedly identified lack of motivation (which makes students hard to reach) and lack of preparation (which makes them hard to teach). Over the course of the grant, across the sites, more teachers adopted the belief that more of their students could actually be IB, but they stressed that this could only happen if they were able to provide more time, and more supports, to reach them and teach them.
Patterns and Progress of Implementation

Constructing the Pathway and Expanding Participation

Not only have the schools been working in challenging and changing contexts in complex systems, they have also undertaken what is a challenging and complex design. Unlike AP, which consists of adding individual stand alone courses, IB is designed as a program, with not only required and interconnected courses (with some elective options) and rigorous external exams, but also a Personal Project, an extended research essay of 4,000 words, and demonstration of 150 hours of the “CAS” Creativity, Action, and Service. It is much more a comprehensive program, and implementing IB is much more like comprehensive school reform (Bodilly, 1998; Sarason, 1993), with an extensive array of components, curricular changes, and reconfigurations aimed at whole school change that will be discussed more below.

At the core of this design, however, are two distinct but interdependent projects. The sites are working to build the IB pathway, or pipeline, that will extend from the middle school through the high school, and carry students from 7th grade MYP through to the IB Diploma—and, ultimately, on to college. At the same time, they are striving to expand participation so that more students, more faculty, more staff are involved with IB. Ultimately the aspiration here is to have MYP school-wide, so that everyone can be IB. Both have proven to be challenging undertakings.

Building the Pathway

Building the pathway means building a program change—a pipeline or “bridge” that connects programs and pedagogies across several grades and ofenseparate schools. Schools have encountered numerous challenges in trying to build a pathway from MYP to the DP. There are challenges to having a program that spans grades 6-10 when those grades can include two or even three different buildings, in different locations, with different administrations, whose teachers who do not traditionally meet with one another for planning or even professional development. As one principal put it, this is “an attempt to get the leaders thinking as one body” even though they lead different buildings. There is also the challenge of time, for while it takes a few years to build the pathway, to construct the pieces that connect grade to grade, from 7th grade to graduation, it takes considerably longer—at least six years—for the pipeline to carry its first cohort of students through to the Diploma. So, not surprisingly, we see little impact of this grant on the number of Diplomas at the end of three years. Only Aquilon has a fully constructed and functioning pipeline, and only Aquilon showed a pattern of increase in the number of IB Diplomas awarded (Figure 1).
Part of the difficulty lies in logistical problems, such as coordinating curricula, or finding the time and place to collaborate. Part of the challenge is a problem of logic, recognizing and reinforcing a common and coherent idea of what it means to be IB across different programs, in different forms and faculties, and among diverse subjects and grade levels.

_Making the logistical task of building bridges is even more challenging when feeder patterns do not provide clear or consistent paths between schools._ The idea of the continuum, of building the pathway from MYP to prepare students for the Diploma, fractures in large districts with multiple schools and managed choice. Some IB high schools have multiple ‘feeder’ middle schools that may not offer MYP; some MYP middle schools send their students on to high schools without IB. Even at Aquilon, which houses grades 7-12 in a single building, they encounter the problem. District choice policy means that some new students will choose, or be assigned, to Aquilon in 9th grade. The 9th grade teachers report a distinct difference between students who attended Aquilon in 7th and 8th grade and those who did not, noting differences in both academic preparation and students’ understanding of Aquilon’s very distinct school culture. The fact that some students come into high school with prior MYP experience and some do not is frustrating for high school teachers across the sites. Many teachers at Hesper and Eos report having half their class familiar with MYP, and half not, which slows down class progress and makes them worry they are “back to square one” instead of building momentum. Other teachers wonder why IB is in some schools and not others, which makes them cautious about committing to the program. A skeptical physical education teacher from Eos asked, “if it’s such a great program, why isn’t it at all the middle schools?” At Hesper, by year 3 of the grant, MYP had begun to be at all the middle schools, and 9th grade teachers were quick to see the benefits of a fully constructed pipeline in preparing students to be IB. Eos Middle School had been so successful with MYP that some students were choosing to attend Eos High School so they could continue with IB. The Eos Middle School principal observed that, “for the first time in 5 or 6 years, I actually have students who aren’t defaulting to Eos HS, but are actually saying ‘I think
that’s the place I want to go’ and the numbers are getting much bigger. It’s because of IB. [They say] I want to go there because of IB’ and that’s a nice change I see.” While the numbers are still quite small, the effects of a pipeline are beginning to be felt.

The logistics of connecting faculties across campuses can be daunting. Even if all the schools in the district adopted MYP and DP, getting the teachers from different buildings in the same place at the same time to discuss how this continuum will work poses a serious challenge. While schools are trying to work on the MYP continuum, there is an issue of physically getting high school and middle school teachers together to meet, since middle schools and high schools typically have limited meeting space and different schedules. Staffs have encountered conflicts about carpooling, parking spaces, and “why do we have to go there every time?” When schools do manage to meet together, they sometimes discover other kinds of conflicts, since different faculties are struggling with different pressures, or working at different paces. Teachers at Eos High School, for example, found that the middle school teachers were “much farther along” in terms of embracing an all-school MYP focus, and decided that joint Professional Development sessions would not be productive. Even teachers in the same school have difficulty finding time to meet together, due to large size or lack of common planning time, and they see this as a major obstacle to implementing MYP, particularly in the high schools. Scheduling is also an issue, since “it is difficult to get all of the same teachers and the same students grouped together scheduling-wise.” Despite the difficulties, teachers and coordinators are continuing to work at the logistics, recognizing both the benefits to be gained and the distance still to span: “There is not enough communication between MYP and the IB teachers—not enough crossover and not enough scaffolding.”

Beyond logistics, the logic connecting MYP to DP is not always apparent, and the “mesh” between what seem to be different philosophies and pedagogies can be difficult to ascertain. A larger issue beyond the scaffolding is that the philosophies of the MYP and DP programs seem disconnected from one another. Numerous respondents appeared concerned that MYP and DP teach different skills and have very different philosophies, pointing out that “I think there’s a disconnect between MYP and IB.” A guidance counselor who wanted to encourage students into IB worried that “there’s 9 and 10 MYP, but there are not any IB courses for 9th and 10th grade. There should be pre-IB classes that they would take to be ready to enter DP.” That distinction, as in the quotes above, in which people spoke of MYP and IB as two distinct and different entities, rather than of MYP and DP as parts of the same IB, is both telling and common. Even a student explained to us that “MYP is grades 7 to 10, and IB is 11 and 12.” As one math teacher explained, “there is an MYP-IB gap. We’ve begun the conversation about the bridge, to use the personal project as a gateway to the extended essay. We should work backwards from the DP program to see what is needed.” In their conversations about the bridge, however, they confront different understandings: “DP is very subject oriented . . . MYP not necessarily.” The DP coordinator at Aquilon explained that DP and MYP are “two different programs established at two different times with two different philosophies. And they don’t 100% mesh.” Finding the “mesh” or the complementary connection between MYP and DP was an area where schools needed more support.

This difference manifests itself in what students are expected to do in each program, and what many worry is a gap in their preparation from 10th grade MYP to 11th grade DP. “In MYP
students and teachers have more leeway. In IB the stakes are higher,” explained one history teacher, again using the label “IB” to mean the Diploma Programme. The DP coordinator at Aquilon described this disconnect with the example, “kids jump into the extended essay in the 11th grade [and think] ‘oh yeah, I can do this, I did the personal project last year.’ It’s like, yeah, you learned how to knit. I now want you to write a 4,000-word history research project.” The concern is that students are not prepared for the increased academic rigor they experience because many MYP teachers still do not understand how to prepare students for what they will encounter in DP. An English teacher at Eos explained, “we can talk to [the staff] about Areas of Interaction until we're blue in the face, but if they don't understand rigor--if they don’t know what it is to provide a kid with something that's hard but they can still do it, and to make it accessible, then we're nowhere. We're not going to be really doing MYP. We're just going to be doing crappy lessons and talking about the environment or something.” If the teachers do not understand what DP entails, how can they prepare their MYP students for what they will encounter? A 7th grade teacher suggested, “as an MYP teacher, I’d like to know DP better. Perhaps we could co-teach classes; that would give me a better understanding of DP.” That understanding, while slow to develop, is what those building the pipeline hope to construct.

The pipeline doesn’t end at the Diploma; it should carry student through to success in college. Often teachers, counselors, and administrators alike spoke of the Diploma not as an end in itself, but as a marker along the pathway to college. A science teacher talked of the change in students coming through the pipeline, exemplified by one student: “just the change in her, I mean so disciplined now, and I think . . . IB can set that stage and prepares them so well for what they have ahead of them.” For that reason, many were less concerned about the low numbers or lack of increase in Diplomas awarded (though they would all like to see those numbers rise), and more concerned about the numbers of students who would participate in IB courses and be better prepared for success in college. This goal serves schools well at a time when national reform pressures increasingly call for all schools to meet graduation standards of “college and career ready” (Kirst & Bracco, 2004). It also reflects the aspirations of students and parents who are choosing these IB schools. One parent, at a meeting, talked of choosing the school as a place where “students would actually learn something. They would learn how to learn” which they would need in college. As a graduating senior at Aquilon explained, “IB prepared us for college. More hours for community service; that counts on your college application. Your writing is one step ahead.”

The schools are grappling with how to prepare students, to help them move “one step ahead” not only in academic work, but building the pathway that has them thinking about college even in middle school, visiting college campuses, and preparing for all the steps of the college admissions process, from choosing to filling out financial aid forms, to writing application essays, to writing appeal letters when the financial offers aren’t enough to make college affordable. This is a particularly important issue in schools, like many Title I schools, where a college-going culture is not easy to access in the community or the school. Priming the pipeline to college entails not only the academic skills and preparation that IB has traditionally provided, but a broader array of college readiness supports ranging from campus awareness to filling out FAFSA forms (Oakes et al. 2002; Roderick et al. 2008). So both Eos and Hesper have started (and shared) a strategy of taking their students to a local campus to work on extended essays in the college library and “feel what it’s like” to be at college. At Aquilon, where the small size,
teacher advisory roles, and all-IB curriculum combine to reduce the need for many traditional guidance counselor tasks, they have invested in a counselor whose primary task is college advising, “because it made sense that if you’re going to be IB, you should be looking at college entry.” He orients student thinking toward college starting in 7th grade, and begins sessions on the application process early in MYP, on access to financial aid in 10th grade. Posters of colleges line the walls; college acceptance lists are posted in the front hall; spreadsheets, schedules, and timelines cover the desk; every student’s progress on the pathway to college is carefully monitored; and reminders are promptly issued. Success is collectively celebrated, and graduates return to visit and talk with students about their experience. This investment in the support structures that students need to move fully through the pipeline, to and through college, adds a critical element to implementing IB in Title I schools—which the other sites were eager to hear more about. While they might not have the resources to provide a full college counselor, the structures and strategies Aquilon has developed would provide tools for a broad range of Title I schools.

Despite the schools’ work to increase both the pathway and the participation in IB, the impact of the pipeline to the Diploma and through the Diploma to college remains more projected than realized. There has been more widespread success, however, in expanding participation in IB.

Expanding Participation

Expanding participation to more students can be problematic due to the fundamental tension of who an “IB student” is. At the high school level, IB was seen as elective and selective. Three of the four high schools began their IB involvement with DP, which they understood to attract and to serve highly motivated students with a high academic orientation. The DP program is elective and selective in terms of teachers as well, who value the opportunity to work with academically advanced students. At Austrin, Hesper, and Eos, IB was understood as an honors track, competing with other specialized programs but appropriate for only academically advanced students. In Year 1 of the grant, a coordinator at Eos explained that less than 5% of 9th graders were in the classes—like honors math-- thought to be IB. Stated an Eos teacher, “IB is a very small part of our school population and we would like to make it bigger but we also want - - but the kids all have to be successful. And it’s a hard mix… If we did have MYP seeding IB, our numbers might go up but I’m not sure our success would.” There was considerable concern about finding the right mix, that if schools had too many students pursue the “full Diploma” option, they might weaken the program, dilute the brand, or suffer consequences for having too low a pass rate. At Austrin, they had the added concern of costs, since the school paid the fees for students to take the exams.

The discrepancy between who are thought to be IB students (and teachers) and the other students is great. A foreign language teacher said that at Eos, there are “two kinds of teacher, two kinds of student, two kinds of treatment” and that “they feel they are special.” Indeed, the chance to be in, or teach in, the Diploma Programme and be “special” has been of high value, and a benefit many want to preserve. Even at Aquilon, where the school was intentionally started as an IB school, but not all students actually earn the full Diploma, teachers claimed to have “difficulty” with the “‘MYP for all, IBD for some’ model. There is a tension, and we’re not sure how to resolve it.” Getting past the labeling, the long-held preconceived notions of what an “IB
student” or a Diploma Candidate looks and acts like is a much more difficult challenge than starting up the MYP program where IB is new to everyone, and is defined, from the start, as something that everyone can (and should) do.

A DP science teacher thought that expanding IB to more students at Eos could cause more students to “struggle,” stating, “Over a quarter of the population here has learning disabilities, not to say that a student with a learning disability cannot succeed in IB but I think that a lot of the behavioral problems, absenteeism… We have so many problems at this school that I think the students would have a very tough time.”

Still, teachers tried to make it work for their students by “balancing the needs of different achievement levels, we need time to work with small groups of kids . . . by the end of the year, parents get impressed by the change in habits. Students are reading and constructing knowledge.” Another MYP teacher stated, “I find if you push on the top, you can be successful in moving the middle up. The weak kids I help after school. I find the minute I move beyond a certain level, I lose a lot of the kids. So three times a week we offer tutoring help. We develop personal relationships and expectations.”

Training teachers in MYP is imperative in expanding participation. An Aquilon administrator stated, “we find teachers are willing to try new materials and procedures if you give them and show them why. You have to take the same stance with teachers as with kids: hold their hand and tell them ‘we can do it.’” Adopting MYP required adopting new teaching techniques and curricula, which many teachers are hesitant to do. Additionally, many schools found themselves “blocked out” of trainings, especially MYP, that filled up before they could manage to sign up.

But reaching a critical mass of teachers, and resistance to these changes have been more problematic at the high schools. This has resulted in an uneven implementation of MYP in most sites, particularly in 9th and 10th grades. According to the assistant principal at Eos High School, 9th graders have “exposure” to MYP “in some of their classes. There are lesson plans using the template. It’s not 100%. About 1/3 of teachers are doing it in their classes.” In many classrooms, they worry, “it’s not really being done the way IB envisions it” so student experience with and academic preparation for the Diploma is still quite unreliable. Finding ways to provide training to a critical mass of teachers, and then to keep those teachers has been a challenge.

In order to adopt the MYP program, teachers need to revamp their curricula and teaching methods, and adopt structures such as common planning time and grade level meetings—changes which seem to ‘fit’ more easily with the mental models already in place in middle schools. Eos and Hesper, for example, have had successful expansions of MYP into their middle schools, which could be because the structure of middle school lends itself to adopting the necessary structures. They also both had their middle schools removed from the state sanction category, a signal of academic importance that both sites largely attribute to being IB—giving feedback to further broaden and deepen implementation. A principal talked of how “MYP is good teaching,” a phrase used by several others. They are referring to the process of MYP, however, not the content coverage required for state accountability tests, which high school teachers feel more pressure to produce. In the middle schools, where pressure for coverage is lower, departmental divisions weaker, interdisciplinary connections more familiar, and active
learning more encouraged, the definition of “good teaching” has been traditionally more in line with the models MYP presents.

While MYP implementation in 7th and 8th grades has strengthened, expanding MYP across 9th and 10th grades has proven more difficult. This may, in part, be a function of size, as the sheer scale of taking on full-school MYP in a large high school is daunting. As the principal at Hesper explained, at the high school level

You have more teachers you have to work with. So, for us at [Hesper], it means bringing all of the 9th grade, and all of the 10th grade teachers on board. We have 143 teachers here . . . bringing 75 or 80 teachers, of two combined grade levels, together to complete units of work, to understand the areas of interaction of the MYP, so the five lenses of instruction, and how we’re to incorporate them in the daily lessons, to get them to plan for integrated, you know, lessons where they can do thematic units, if you will, across the core subjects. That’s challenging in a school setting like this.

While correspondence with the mental model of “good teaching” in the middle school may make implementation of MYP less unsettling, the scale and structure of middle schools also help to ease the mechanics.

For expanding access to disadvantaged students, in disadvantaged schools, the fee structure of IB, with a charge for each student who registers for each exam, can be a disincentive. Administrators at all four schools expressed frustration with the cost of the IB exams, claiming that in an urban Title I school, that cost is prohibitive. For some teachers and coordinators, encouraging each additional student to take an IB course or to sign up for an IB exam meant careful considerations of whether the benefits would outweigh the costs, and what budget those costs might come out of. Particularly difficult was the timing, where students had to be signed up well before they, or their teachers, could be confident of the likelihood of success. Indeed, even after assessment results came back, teachers and students alike were sometimes surprised by who had, or had not, passed. At Hesper, the District picked up the tab for the exams until the 2007-2008 school year, at which point budget cuts meant that the school or the student had to start paying for exams. A guidance counselor at Hesper explained the problem:

We just went from not charging the kids for the tests… now all of the sudden in the middle of the year, after we’ve enrolled all these kids in the class, they’re told in the middle of the year that they’re going to paying and they’re not cheap. I mean it’s like $150 just to register and then $70 for each additional test.

In 2010 the fees for exams were $135 for each student who registered, plus $92 for each exam. While those fees may not be expensive compared to SAT or AP costs, in Title I schools such as the pilots, every expenditure must be carefully considered, and neither the families nor the schools find those dollars easy to afford. An assistant principal at Aquilon stated, “I think, for urban diverse schools, the fee structure is a hindrance--the running the MYP, just the membership fee is $6,000 and then it’s another $8,000 or something for Diploma plus the cost of exams. It creates less of an opportunity to fund after school and other activities that would help
students meet the demands year by year.” By 2010 those school fees were $8,000 for MYP and $9,600 for the Diploma Programme.

Despite the many challenges to building the pipeline and expanding participation, all four sites had more students enrolled in IB courses, taught by more teachers trained in IB, and taking IB exams by the end of the grant than they did at the beginning. As Figure 2 below shows, they have all been increasing the numbers of exams that students take, and the numbers of students who take them.

Figure 2: Number of IB Exams Taken

![Figure 2: Number of IB Exams Taken](image)

The number of exams gives a better measure of expanding participation than the number of Diplomas, where only Aquilon showed an increase in the number of IB Diplomas awarded. But it is also a leading indicator of the increase in Diplomas the sites hope to see in the next few years, when current MYP students are able to move fully through the pipeline.

Implementation Rubric and Wheels

Beyond the two core projects of extending the pipeline and expanding participation, implementation of IB involves a comprehensive set of concepts and components, of new kinds of curriculum and assessments, and new approaches to teaching and learning. A tool of assessment rubrics and implementation wheels provides another way of looking at the overall patterns and progress of implementation across major areas of that undertaking. Originally developed as a tool to analyze and display implementation in Comprehensive School Reform Designs (Siskin & Robinson, 2007) these rubrics and wheels allow for the volume of implementation data collected from multiple sites over three years, including survey, interview, and observation data; the need
to explicate major components or “parts” of the design and their relation to the whole; and observation of uneven implementation both within and across sample sites. To better understand the patterns and progress of partial implementation, these wheels provide representations that enable a full viewing of the entire design at once, without losing track of the key components that comprise the design and, in turn, guide the implementation work of IB.

Figure 3 below presents the wheel template, the basic tool for data reduction and display. This wheel image reflects the comprehensive approach of the IB Programmes—the four domains that are major areas of the IBO Programme Standards and Practices: (1) philosophy; (2) organization; (3) curriculum/instruction; and (4) the student. For this particular study, we have added an additional domain, (5) authorization/implementation to represent the sites progress to officially become IB through the application and authorization process. These components are arranged, and color-coded as wedges, or spokes on the wheel.

Figure 3: IB Implementation Wheel Template

The components are further organized (and subdivided) into smaller sections, representing selected practices that indicate evidence of implementation in these major domains:

- **Standard A1: Philosophy**: There is close alignment between the educational beliefs and values of the school and those of the programme.
- **Standard A2**: The school promotes international-mindedness on the part of the adults and the students in the school community.
- **Standard B: Organization**: The school demonstrates ongoing commitment to, and provides support for, the programme through appropriate administrative structures and systems, staffing and resources.
- **Standard C1: Curriculum**: A comprehensive, coherent, written curriculum, based on the requirements of the programme and developed by the school, is available to all sections of the school community.
• **Standard C2**: The school has implemented a system through which all teachers plan and reflect in collaborative teams.

• **Standard C3**: Teaching and learning at the school empowers and encourages students to become lifelong learners, to be responsible towards themselves, their learning, other people and the environment, and to take appropriate action.

• **Standard C4**: There is an agreed approach to assessment, and to the recording and reporting of assessment data, which reflects the practices and requirements of the programme.

• **Standard D1: The Student**: Students learn to choose to act, and to reflect on their actions, so that they contribute to their own well-being and that of the community and the environment.

• **Standard D2**: In the final year of the programme, all students complete a programme-specific project that allows them to demonstrate a consolidation of their learning, in the case of the PYP and MYP, and to demonstrate the extension and development

While these were originally drawn from the official handbook of Standards and Practices, these component wedges were selected, and the assessment rubrics (Appendix C) were then refined based on interviews and observations in the sites, on conversations with pilot site staff, coordinators, and coaches. The rubrics describe four levels of implementation progress for each component, based on what they said and on what we saw in the sites. These characterizations reflect the progression (or sometimes the regression) of implementation over time. Drawing upon survey, interview, and observation data, we assessed implementation in each area as 0- “not yet,” 1- “starting,” 2- “in progress,” and 3- “in place.” So, for example, one key component under Philosophy is the premise that to be IB a “school promotes international-mindedness on the part of the adults and the students in the school community.” The rubric describes the stages as moving from:

- **Not Yet**: Courses do not provide opportunities to learn about global issues or the value of diversity;
- **Starting**: Some courses provide statements of the value of diversity; there is evidence of “foods and flags” in the school;
- **In Progress**: Courses provide opportunities to learn about issues of global significance; students learn about global citizenship;
- **In Place**: Courses provide opportunities to learn about issues of local and global significance and connect them to content; IB resources connect students and staff across countries; students and staff exhibit an understanding of global citizenship.

For most of our sites, this was a new and unfamiliar emphasis. In some cases, it seemed the only evidence of anything ‘international’ was a banner declaring it to be an International Baccalaureate school. As schools were starting to explore international connections, we might see a poster on the wall, or a special event celebration of ethnic cuisine—evidence of “food and flags.” As schools moved to more institutional and academic integration of international mindedness, to where international mindedness would be in place, we might see teachers from another country in an Austrin social studies classroom, talking about what their schools and political systems were like. Or hear statements such as one an Eos principal offered: “many students here have lived their entire lives with out going beyond the city, not even beyond their
block.” They “started a fundraising campaign, for going to Europe and the Far East,” have made a connection with a school in Japan, and are “going to expand on that next year, to visit other IB schools with a group of students.” Beyond making a statement, they have already made contact, and started a program connecting classes through the art department, and have been talking about this with Hesper’s principal to explore ways of expanding (and funding) opportunities.

Based on what we heard in conversations with administrators, teachers, and counselors, and on what we saw in classrooms and corridors, we assessed each site in each component area according to the rubric. Those ratings were then displayed on the wheels, corresponding to the concentric rings, with “no or low” levels of implementation in the smaller inner rings and higher levels of implementation filling the larger outer rings. Increases in the colored area associated with each category signify a deepening of engagement and potential impact—as if the bars on a bar chart had been arrayed in a circle.

In our sample, none of the high schools were able to realize full implementation of the IB Programme—which is not surprising given the scale of the undertaking and the time covered by the study. They were, however, able to see what the rubrics assess, and to assess their own progress in the process of implementation. As we examine site patterns using the wheels, they could move beyond and beneath the aggregated—and often aggravating—findings of partial implementation to examine and reveal more specific detail about the “trends and patterns” of implementation in their sites.

In this project, the wheel image provided an overarching metaphor for conveying not only the particular experiences of individual schools with IB implementation, but also how their experiences reflect and expand upon the existing empirical literature base on innovation adoption and implementation—the problem of change, and the predictable failures of whole school reform designs. The wheel image characterizes the movement, direction, and strength of implementation across diverse contexts over time. In short, the wheels are visual presentations of the complex dynamics of implementation, and the implementation of IB is certainly a highly dynamic and complex undertaking.

The wheel images also enhanced our understanding of the “different paths” or strategies that schools were creating on their own as they implemented the design. Some schools made a comprehensive effort to engage most of the design’s components at once, while others took a more targeted approach. For example, one path led towards a focus on increased collaboration around issues of MYP between the high school and middle school in a district. Other paths might focus on training more teachers in MYP methods, “backward mapping” the MYP curriculum, or extending the IB pipeline through the final Diploma year of a school’s first graduating class. As schools were making different choices about which parts of the MYP Programme to implement first and how to proceed, we would expect to see variation across schools—and we do. The nature of partial implementation as displayed by these wheels helps explain the inconsistent, but context-specific, patterns and progress of IB implementation.

In the section that follows, each site has two wheels, one representing where it was “at the beginning of the grant” and one “at the end of the grant.” There is a trade-off in treating implementation as a site-level, rather than a school-level phenomenon, mostly vividly reflected
in the case of Eos (Figure 2), where the paths of MYP adoption and implementation at the middle and high schools stand in sharp contrast. School level wheels at this site would look quite different, but our purpose in this grant has not been to evaluate the pilot schools, but to examine the patterns and progress of their implementation efforts as a way to assess the strengths and suitability of the supports across the sites.

**Eos**

Over the three years of the grant, despite encountering some of the most challenging circumstances and turbulent changes of any of the sites, Eos (Figure 4) was able to gain ground in IB implementation in many areas, including Philosophy, Organization and Authorization.

**Figure 4: Eos**

Much of this movement was due to gains Eos Middle School achieved, and the contrast between the two schools—in the same district—is sharp. During the course of the grant, Eos Middle School made great progress in implementing a school-wide MYP program, and in moving their implementation from structural to instructional changes, while Eos High School still struggled with 9th and 10th grade MYP implementation structures—although individual teachers and ‘pockets’ of colleagues made substantial shifts to practice and instruction. The principal at EMS credited the additional supports from the IB grant with the school’s implementation progress.

We focused on delivery, facilitation, ways to deliver the content of IB- the PLG training processes…. The leadership piece is important. It gave us a core group of teachers who are committed to IB. It gave them the tools and processes to work with other teachers. It gave them protocols... There is a piece for school-wide development that really lifted us from go-to training, to bring things back and have show and tell.
She also stated that the coach was “critical to where we are now,” contrasting the “now” to where they were at the beginning of the grant:

I was ready to crawl under a table last year and didn’t feel like anybody was on board, from the district, from the high school… There has been a change of Superintendent in the midst of this, and we haven’t lost momentum… Six years ago, I thought it was a strand. Everyone was looking for the IB students and we didn’t get school-wide buy-in. . . . It factionalized the faculty and that’s not good for school culture. [Now we are] all on the same page philosophically…but it took us six years to get here.

MYP’s momentum has been less pervasive at Eos High School, partly due to the larger size and organizational complexity of the high school, partly due to the constantly changing administration, and partly due to persistent lack of “buy-in” on the part of many teachers. An MYP coordinator at Eos High School explained the difficult time they had getting teachers on-board with MYP:

They feel like it's an initiative that's coming and going. They don't know if it's going to be here for the long run. That creates this atmosphere that's toxic. That creates this lack of buy in. Teachers don't want to go to a training, or when there are trainings here, they don't want to participate, so there's a whole lack of training issue, so there's a lot of teachers that don't know anything about the MYP even though we've done this for a year. They've opted not to write units or opted not to go to extended days and participate in these learning groups.

Additionally, Eos High School has had difficulty attracting students, particularly the academically oriented students they hoped IB would draw. Students who attended Eos Middle School tended to “pick the other school. They take their tools and strategies and then go make another school successful. I don't know what the percentage is, but I don't think a high percentage of the kids come here,” said a physical education teacher at the high school. She went on to state,

One of the biggest challenges is the school selection process. It's not a level playing field. Kids go where their friends want to go, and most of the kids want to go to the other school… The majority of kids that we have, this is probably not their first choice, which is unfortunate… The perception of our school is gangs and fighting. That's not necessarily the case, or it's not that much different from the other schools. For whatever reason, we're always in the press for that.

Teachers and administrators at Eos High School were trying to use MYP as a way to improve the school and attract more students to EHS, and by year 3 there were signs in the student choice process that Eos High School was being chosen more often, and more deliberately by more students, particularly those from Eos Middle School—though the numbers remained low.

While teachers and administrators hoped to draw better-prepared students, they (at least those who had “bought in” to IB) stressed that IB is “not an elite program” and that any student is capable of taking IB courses. A science teacher at Eos stated, “I don’t see it as a gifted program
where you have to be highly intelligent to be -- it’s not this elite group program invented for the most gifted students. It’s really meant for any student that’s motivated and willing to try and do the work, and take the college level class.” Another teacher hoped “If we can move them along in the MYP and they learn the love of lifelong learning and become aware of global instead of my little street in [the city], that helps.”

However, as of Spring 2009, Eos High School still was not “whole school MYP.” The teachers were confused about this, and were not sure when the whole school would start implementing MYP. One staff member said, “I’m not quite sure how it goes. I think there are pockets of it. Next year, supposedly everybody's going to be a part of the IB program because it's the whole school now. I think because we weren't the whole school, they just did little pieces here and there.”

While there were “pockets” of enthusiasm for adopting a school-wide MYP program, challenges such as administrative and teacher turnover hampered the implementation effort to move beyond “little pieces.” A DP history teacher echoed that sentiment:

A school needs stability, and our kids need structure; especially the population we have, they need structure. A lot of them don’t have it at home. They need it at school. And we have not had structure… I think that’s really hard for the kids that they sort of, they come in school in ninth grade, they have a principal, they have an assistant principal. By the time they graduate in twelfth grade, they’re both gone. And I think the kids see a lack of commitment sometimes on the part of administrators. That they’re just here for the year or year or two and they don’t have the dedication and the devotion to Eos that--I mean, the kids are here a lot longer than administrators. So I think for the kids that’s really hard and I think that--we always have rules and then somebody else comes in and they change the rules.

While some teachers thought that adopting an all-school MYP program would help the students, other staff members thought that the problems inherent in the school culture of Eos made adopting the program much more challenging:

I think [adopting all-school MYP] is a strategy, but that strategy needs to come with the awareness that you can only have a good program if you have students and the ability to teach… I don't think there will be much change if behavior and the absenteeism don’t change. We can have the greatest MYP program, but if you have 50% turnout rate for those students, I mean, is it going to help the people not coming to school?

Due to these challenges at Eos High School, and the still strong group of teachers who have “opted out,” much of the teaching at Eos had not yet changed. This is reflected in the categories of Curriculum/ Instruction and The Student, which have not changed substantially during the years of their grant involvement overall, although across the middle school, and in pockets in the high school, the changes in both teacher practice and student performance have been dramatic. While this causes considerable frustration for some of the enthusiastic early adopters, they do see signs of IB spreading . . . just spreading much more slowly than they had hoped.
Aquilon

At the beginning of the grant, Aquilon (Figure 5) was already further along in moving toward school-wide implementation than the other schools, as the school was intentionally designed, from its start, to be an IB School. Despite changes in personnel and district policy, as they worked to extend the pipeline though their first graduating classes, and to deepen IB practices, their implementation progress moved steadily forward.

Figure 5: Aquilon

Unlike Eos faculty, all Aquilon teachers had been hired under the premise of being IB, although they were still working to solidify the practices. All students, as well, had enrolled knowing they were coming to an IB school, although their sense of what that really meant varied considerably. They are also smaller in size, and with less organizational subdivision, which supports faculty communication and commitment. During the course of the grant, Aquilon moved implementation forward in many areas, most notably in the Curriculum/Instruction category, where they reached full implementation in all sub-categories. One key contributing factor here was that all teachers at Aquilon were able to receive IB training (with the exception of one new hire), which has made a major difference not only in individual classrooms but also in establishing collective practice, which is quite different from the “pockets” and “pieces” at Eos. That difference is revealed in the ways they talked about how “we have to do a better job” or how “we” align and “we” assess. Sending teachers out to training, bringing back ideas, and sharing them through the team meetings has helped Aquilon move IB forward, and move it throughout the school. According to an assistant principal:

Because of our grant, we’ve sent many teachers to Level Twos and many to Level Threes; and we’re going to send some teachers to assessment. So our teachers are pretty well trained. It’s the continuum of training within the school. So they go to training, and they come back, and it’s ‘we have to do a better job.’
A math teacher at Aquilon explained how they incorporated the IB training into their teaching:

We do incorporate [the training] because it is important, but in addition… our training also has to do with how do we align our teaching methods and the way that we assess kids based on the MYP program. That’s important. The standards are important but our main goal here at our school is to teach with MYP in mind as opposed to teaching with, let’s say, having the students pass a test.

This deliberate focus on teaching “with MYP in mind” was clearly reflected in the wheel, and it was evident in classrooms and staff meetings at the school. As a foreign language teacher said, “It’s the whole training of students from this perspective, this education, its philosophy, its study habits, it's global, it's everything… When kids are provided a rich, learning experience and environment, they can do this…. It's really amazing. I see that with my own eyes.”

Aquilon had a clear focus on IB/ School Alignment. The mission of Aquilon is “to get everybody as an IB Diploma Candidate.” However, according to an administrator, “some people, they have the motivation and they have the ability to do it. Some people they have the motivation, but they don't have the ability to do it. And some kids have the ability, but don't have the motivation.” The Aquilon principal was very clear that “students are Diploma students until they exhibit an inability to be.” While she stated, “the children, they need someone to believe they can do it even when they don’t believe they can do it,” she was clear that not all of the students would actually achieve the full Diploma. But the inability to fulfill all of the requirements, to pass all of the exams, to earn that IB Diploma was not equated with failure. Instead the success in IB courses, the awarding of IB certificates, the graduation with a high school diploma, and an acceptance to college were all celebrated—with considerable ceremony-- as markers of success in IB.

Teachers, too, did not necessarily expect every student would receive an IB Diploma, though they did think IB was appropriate for every student at Aquilon. According to a math teacher, “whether they, you know, jump over the bar or just skim it or hit, at least we’re setting the bar high. So that’s why I feel it’s so good to make it a whole school thing because it just allows people to jump higher.”

Aquilon lost ground in one category, District Support, as the district was undergoing major administrative changes, tremendous new accountability pressures, and serious financial cuts. Moreover IB, which is in only a small number of the hundreds of schools in the district, was not a district priority. An administrator at Aquilon expressed concern that the district cares “not a hoot about IB.” In Spring 2009 she gave this explanation:

It continues to be this: the [district] doesn't give me money for our exams. The [district] doesn't give me money for our membership and what the [district], I fear, is going to do is say is “You need to stop spending money on IB and pay for after school activities for these kids.” Money--I fear that that's coming. I fear that my budget is going to be cut so severely that I can't afford IB.
By the end of the grant, Aquilon reached full implementation in 15 of 21 sub-categories—but the district budget cuts resulted in their reluctant decision to no longer offer MYP as an official program.

**Hesper**

Hesper (Figure 6) has seen considerable growth in IB implementation at the high school, and while only one of the two middle schools that ‘feed’ the high school offered MYP at the beginning of the grant, by the end of the grant both had adopted the program. Implementation has been growing steadily, and administrative support has remained solid.

Figure 6: Hesper

Hesper High School’s principal brought IB to the high school in 1995, and has been credited with convincing the superintendent and middle school principals of the benefits of the IB program, and thus spreading it throughout the city. Staff members almost seem to equate him with IB, and he has remained a true believer in the program. Moreover, and in sharp contrast with the other sites, this early adopter has remained in the same leadership position throughout the grant period.

During their involvement with the grant, Hesper’s IB involvement grew to include both middle schools, and the district now more clearly supports growth and sustenance of IB. This can be seen in the growth seen in all areas of the Authorization category, even though Hesper has not yet been fully authorized for MYP. Additionally, the fact that they are almost fully “in place” in all of the Curriculum/Instruction subcategories shows how fully IB has begun to take root at the classroom level. While in years 1 and 2, teams of teachers worked to implement IB across the schools, uneven participation in trainings had led to uneven implementation of MYP, and some teams had no members who had been through training (and some who chose not to go). As one early MYP teacher, and team member, explained, at first they would:

Throw together four teachers and say, “now do MYP.” Well, some have training; some have not. Some have more vested interest or feel more comfortable with it, some don’t. And then, of course, you have personality conflicts or not. So in some cases it works.
really well; in some cases it doesn’t. Our team—we’d been together for, you know, four or five years and finally, you know we’d been talking about doing this for a long time. And then finally it’s like, well, what’s stopping us? And we just went for it. And there were a few efforts like that. I know the math and the English teacher also worked together. There’s definitely room for improvement. There’s no question about that. I don’t think we have the support for the time to develop those lessons, especially during the school year. I mean, it takes a lot of work to do that. You know you have to sit down, you have to conceptualize, you have to plan it out. You have to, you know, be on the same page and that takes a lot of time. And I don’t see that; there’s not a place in the day for that. Or at least there hasn’t been.

The programs and practices had, by year 3, begun to spread considerably, although many felt there was “still room for improvement.”

Hesper’s MYP coordinator explained that while it took some time to build the foundation, what they have been doing has allowed them to move forward with accelerating speed, and increasing scale:

Well, it’s really been just a two-year plan of building a foundation, getting all the teachers on the same page, making sure that they have all kinds of materials. Every single teacher now in our three buildings have binders that have all kinds of information for them, and then we started just breaking down MYP unit planners. We’ve done some trainings with… introduction of MYP. We’ve had a guidance counselor training… we’ve had our monthly meetings, our PLG meetings, and then also just a lot of opportunities for one on one meetings. We’ve also been involved with the backward mapping, curriculum mapping. And with that has been the mention of a course outline, and to try to unify that throughout the three buildings. So that’s been pretty exciting.

Hesper’s high school teachers have seen the academic preparation and IB readiness of their 9th graders improve in recent years, and many of them chalked this up to extending the MYP program to the middle schools. A global studies MYP teacher at Hesper High was impressed with the 9th graders he taught: “They’re good. This year’s kids are wonderful—very receptive to certainly what I require in the classroom. Unbelievable. Quality, quality work…. They’re growing intellectually. You’ve just got to—you just have to introduce them to this.” An assistant principal at Hesper High School agreed that incoming 9th grade students appear better prepared than previous years’ students. “I think from what I’ve heard that kids understand the [MYP] language and they’re familiar with the [MYP] terms now.”

Another teacher saw the change in her students not only in their preparation, but also their orientation toward academic work, and she credited having MYP in the middle school with that improvement: “They’re doing the work, which is good. Whereas, years ago you couldn’t get them to do work. They just didn’t do it. So now, yes, they’re doing it. So yes, I think that it was very helpful to have the MYP program at [the middle school] because I’m seeing it in my classroom.”
The demographics of who is an IB student have also changed, said a Hesper social studies teacher:

It’s strange since, even in the last four years that I’ve been here. It’s definitely more diverse now than it has been in the past, although that’s posed some difficulties for us. When I first came it was more sort of your white, middle class kids taking the class. Now I have a lot more minority representation this year. I also have a lot of students coming in that wouldn’t be your traditional IB students. They often don’t have the same skills level as the kids that used to take it used to have. Classes are bigger; there are more sections.

Classes are bigger, more teachers are engaged, students are more diverse, preparation seems up, and IB has spread to an additional school. After a slow pace in its “foundation building” year, Hesper accelerated its implementation pace and made many substantial gains during the course of the grant, most notably in the areas of Curriculum/ Instruction and Authorization, where they were “in place” in 8 of the 10 subcategories. Hesper did not lose ground in any category.

Austrin

Austrin (Figure 7) made minor gains during the course of the grant, but never achieved full implementation in any areas. In fact, in the spring of 2008, Austrin decided to no longer participate in the grant, so the data on their progress reflect only the initial stages of implementation. There were many reasons for their withdrawal, including staff changes and district reconfiguration, as well as scarce resources (particularly of time). They did continue, however, to be IB.

Figure 7: Austrin

During the course of the grant, Austrin went through major leadership and administrative changes, including a change in principals and superintendents, introduction of a new “house” system, and shifting grade configurations at the middle schools. According to the district coordinator at Austrin, one problem was that in hiring new principals, the district replaced those who knew about IB and MYP with people who did not, and who—with all the pressures of
coming in as new administrators to a challenging setting-- found it hard to find time to learn IB. Overall there was difficulty in maintaining coordinated and committed administrative support for IB, which seemed primarily an issue of scarce time and competing demands. The coordinator cautioned,

If the principal is unsure about the success of the program, then the principal isn’t going to really be buying into the meetings at the IBA office. And the conversations with the [coaching partners]. And the idea of a coach coming in to help that person.

The coordinator was committed to making the IB program work, but felt alone in the process after the administrative changes. The new principal, who had not been at Austrin when they began participation, did not really ‘buy into’ the time demanded for the meetings, or the conversations, or the coaching visits. That was evident in the explanation of their decision to drop out of the grant:

I think it was very time consuming. For me personally, the times I was at the meetings did not move forward my thinking about how I can better implement this program. It was a lot of talk, talk, talk and I’m more of an action person… give me the plan I’ll get it to work. And it was a lot of time out of the building, as a first year principal, which was problematic.

Ultimately, the wheels do not show progress in many areas, but this is in large part because Austrin discontinued participation in the grant in year 2, which meant that they were never able to take advantage of the coaching, counselor meetings, or leadership training that the grant offered. Moreover, while the schools did continue to offer IB programs, data collection did not continue into the 3rd year, when implementation progress would be expected to accelerate. Austrin might be continuing to widen and deepen its IB offerings, but our wheels only reflect the effects, and the time, of their participation in the grant.
Provision of Support Structures and Services

Over the three years of the grant, IBA has worked to understand the challenges of Title I contexts, to work with the pilot sites on their implementation efforts, and to design and deliver new support structures and services that would help them in that work—and that could be developed at scale to help more Title I schools to be IB. Because this was a research and development project, and because the experiences and input of the pilot sites were used in an ongoing way to adapt and modify the design, some of the original components that IB had proposed, such as their *Seminars in Science*, an online professional development course, turned out to not suit the immediate needs of the schools and were discontinued from the grant work (though that project continued as a part of IBA’s larger efforts). In other cases, such as feedback from pilot sites that they were having major problems accessing IB trainings and workshops and coordinators found it “too bad they couldn’t do it electronically,” IBA developed new tools—an online registration process for all IB World Schools was introduced in 2009. Most of the design components—the access to professional development, the guidance counselor training and involvement, the introduction of a coaching model and intervention of on-site coaches, the strategies of professional learning groups, backward mapping of curriculum and action planning, were developed and delivered as proposed. There were also, however, signs of substantial support from elements of participating in the grant that were not necessarily specified in the design, and that were perhaps more surprising: a “Hawthorne effect” from being selected into the grant, the direct services of IBA as advocate and facilitator, the constitution of a network of schools, and the effect of being postponed in the authorization process.

*Participating in the grant provided a Hawthorne effect.* Back in the 1920s, a group of researchers worked on an experiment to engineer working conditions to produce greater efficiency in the workplace. The surprising finding, what became known as the Hawthorne effect, was that efficiency increased whether they increased or decreased inputs such as lighting, simply as an effect of the selection into the experiment, and the attention paid to the workers. In this grant effort, too, we saw what might be termed a Hawthorne effect. Beyond the effects of specific interventions of the design components, teachers and administrators valued and felt supported by the interest in and attention to their work, most notably by IBA staff, just by virtue of being ‘selected’ for the grant. Particularly in schools where public attention is often associated with negative events, that positive attention can have a potent effect to reinforce their work. It also supports their sense that the work they were undertaking in “finding out and creating a strategy” to help more students be IB is valuable, and that this value is shared. An MYP coordinator at Eos explained,

So, this particular grant is being offered by IB to five, I believe, inner city districts and their philosophy was that this program could help inner city kids in their academics and to become a lot more well rounded individuals. So bringing a program like this on board could only help kids. … Initially I think they recognized the low enrollment of the Diploma Programme and saw the Middle Years as a great way to increase enrollment. And there was a lot of money involved with that grant… So I think that the money that grant brought with it along with the possibility of really finding out and creating a strategy for more students to be in the Diploma Programme is why they initially started it.
Participating in the grant as pilot sites fostered a sense of a cause that they believed in, and could contribute to, even among teachers who could not say, in specific terms, what the grant actually involved. A middle school principal who had been working on MYP for three years before this grant began reported that, due to the grant, “I feel more strongly connected to IBA and the people and the processes—because of the grant and the structures that were put into place—than I ever have been in six years. I think that’s very powerful.”

Participating in the grant brought the direct support and advocacy of IBA staff. The people at IBA also proved to be a remarkably strong support for the schools, which one coordinator suggested, “felt like a lifeline.” The MYP coordinator at Hesper said that their school had “constant communication” with the IBA office liaison, and “we email probably every other week at least, you know, if not more than that.” A district coordinator was especially enthusiastic about the assistance she received from the IBA office: “I just love her, love her, love her… I can’t say enough for the IBA office. Anything I’ve ever needed she’s helped me with. I mean, this is essential in my role as the coordinator. They really help.”

They have helped in a variety of ways. Most importantly, and quite frequently, people referred to the IBA staff as being helpful in terms of funding or facilitating registration for the trainings. While the registration process was often frustrating, having access to an advocate at the IBA office eased this process for them, and sometimes made access possible. People at Eos were grateful for the help they received from IBA in getting teachers into trainings. “They’ve been very, very helpful in that respect,” said one administrator. “[The project manager] always manages to, you know, cut through the bureaucracy. And she gets us what we need,” said the high school DP coordinator at Hesper. There, staff talked of assistance not only in “getting teachers into training sessions that were technically closed” but also technical assistance in backward mapping, devising curriculum maps, and registering students for exams.

Being part of a network of access schools provided significant advantages. One benefit that schools consistently reported—even in year 1 before many of the support structures and services were available to them—was the opportunity to find each other, to talk together at meetings, to compare notes about common problems, and to share new ideas and strategies. In many cases, this has come in contrast to what they described as an earlier fear that IB wasn’t really for urban schools, that IB “doesn’t really understand urban schools” or “IB doesn’t know how to teach in urban city schools.” One teacher talked of having looked into another IB school, an “exemplar,” in anticipation of adopting MYP; but that one was “one of the top ten schools in the state; that would not be an example for me.” Another recalled looking at the photos on the web and seeing schools and students who “don’t look like us.” Instead, teachers, principals, and coordinators were looking to see schools more “like us,” or to talk with “a school a lot like ours, to see what they’re doing.” They “would prefer to do something [training or professional development] with the same socio-economic background, and urban.” The network of pilot sites provided that opportunity.

What they reported as so valuable was the chance, through the grant, to see and work with other schools more like themselves, in the meetings that they had with each other. Although these pilot schools are quite different in many ways, they shared a common mission in serving disadvantaged students; they have a common commitment to broadening access and
strengthening their programs and pathways. They also shared a common understanding of what it entails to take on that work in the challenging and changing contexts of Title I settings. Those commonalities were important, and across the schools participants described both the need for exemplars and colleagues more like themselves, and the benefit of being able to share specific examples and strategies with the other pilot sites.

Educators in Hesper and Eos discussed the ways the grant brought the schools in their own district together, and together with the other grant schools, to collaborate on MYP. That connection with “schools like us” allowed them to pick up momentum again when they had felt they couldn’t “move things forward:”

Bringing us together around those common issues in trying to bring agencies together to work collectively and collaboratively was very powerful, forcing us to sit down with other schools that were like us, to actually get honest with ourselves about how we could or couldn’t move things forward; to talk about research-based best practices and professional learning groups and how to move the masses forward. And building that base of support was extremely powerful… We have started to build the sustainability within the district… I worry that we will lose that structure when the grant ends. At the same time, I am comfortable with the fact that we have used the grant as a bridge to get our district to think that this is important and to work towards that sustainability.

The reinforcement and reassurance of being part of a network of similar schools, and the resource of being able to compare notes, to discuss each other’s progress and sympathize with common problems, was a tremendous support across the sites.

Being postponed in the authorization process was painful, but provided increased focus and political leverage. The progress of the sites through the process of becoming an officially authorized IB World School was neither as straightforward or as fast as they had hoped. While one of the pilot schools had been authorized for IB in both the MYP and Diploma Programmes before this project began, the other three were all in the process of moving toward MYP authorization, and all three received news in August 2007 that they had been “postponed.” That news was accompanied by reports describing specific areas of concern identified by external teams who had visited and reviewed the schools: some offered as feedback, but others as issues that “must” be addressed for the process to move forward. Concerns ranged from the concrete (50 hours of instructional time in specific courses) to the conceptual (more evidence of international mindedness) and reached from student activities (community service) through teacher time (vertical and horizontal planning) to the whole school and district (greater visibility of MYP, distribution of training access). The official designation of ‘postponed’ came as a surprise to several people in the schools, who had not even known that was a possibility—and indeed, well into the second year most teachers seemed unaware of their new status. But for those who had received the news, the problems identified were not surprising. Coordinators were likely to report that they knew these aspects were not yet in place—they just weren’t sure how to find the time, the money, the support, and the leadership, to get them realized. For some, the official designation seemed almost welcome, a chance to “step back and look at the goals of the program” and to talk with school and district leaders about what it would take to reach those goals. . . armed with a little extra political leverage.” The official letter added a sense of urgency
to their claims for school and district support: “it made [the superintendent] really look at the
program, and listen to us,” one explained hopefully. Others, less optimistic, were not sure that
either they or the district could marshal the necessary resources to meet the requirements, and
said they were turning to IBA with a “plea for help.” But whether they saw it as encouraging or
discouraging, the external review and the careful constructive feedback combined to provide
both increased urgency and political leverage to move them forward. While the standard
timeline to authorization may be too short for the kinds of changes that Title I schools need to
make to be IB, both urgency and political leverage at the district level provide support they need
to keep moving.

Professional Development

*Professional Development opportunities provided the most essential support, and the grant
provided structures and services to allow schools greater access to those opportunities.* IB has
long offered professional development opportunities with a reputation for high quality. Often
staffed by IB practitioners, the sessions offer trainings at different levels, for different roles
(coordinators or teachers), and in different content areas. Across participants, across sites, across
subjects, the positive responses to IB’s professional development trainings and workshops were
simply stunning in their consistency, in the intensity of positive ratings, in the specificity of
examples of changes in pedagogy, and in the observable differences in classroom practice of
both teachers and students. The ways in which the grant has helped to fund or facilitate access to
this professional development have been invaluable, and it is clear that where more teachers have
been able to participate in more trainings, there has been more progress on implementation and
more improvement in student performance.

Teachers and administrators were consistent in recognizing that the quality of their own
programs depends, in the end, on the quality of teaching they can provide: “IB is a guideline, but
you need passionate teachers.” Beyond passion, they need teachers who are prepared for the
considerable difficulty of providing such an ambitious academic program in challenging
contexts. They understood that this would be hard work, and were actively seeking ways to
make that work better. With extraordinary enthusiasm, and exceptional consistency, they talked
of IB training as not only “helpful,” “high quality,” and “the best” in providing them with
practical information, but also “inspirational” in “refreshing” their passion for teaching. As one
teacher said, “The teaching training in IB is very high quality. I go to trainings. They are
rigorous, a lot of time on task, labor intensive. They focus on the power of networking and the
international thread.” Another teacher elaborated:

> I think the training that the IB has—over some of the other trainings that I’ve had—is
> really, really good. It’s kind of inspirational, it kind of motivates you and you want to do
> all of these things when you get out of it and you want to try all these things in classes.
> Where I don’t always get that from other workshops I’ve been to.

Another teacher called them “the best I ever had,” stating, “it’s that refreshing, like you feel
proud of being a teacher even though it’s during the end of classes and . . . you are tired, and it’s
summertime-- it’s that refreshing. It’s like you recharge your batteries.”
During the first year of the grant, participants expressed concern that “IB doesn’t know how to teach in urban city schools” or that the trainings, while academically rich, were not appropriate for their classroom needs. However, through developing additional workshops and focused training sessions, pre-sessions at the national conference, and an increasing focus on issues of expanding access, IBA was able to expand its own capacity to provide professional development to Title I schools. The responses to professional development in the second half of the grant period have been consistently, and remarkably, high although there is still an unmet need for more sessions, and more trainers who have experience in diverse schools.

More telling than the general comments were the observable ways that teachers were able to bring back and enact ideas that make IB classrooms distinctive, and that make a difference for students. So at Aquilon, teachers would not only testify to the quality of the trainings, they could show us in specific ways how they used the “essential understandings” about teaching and learning, or vertical scope and sequence maps, the unit planner, and where they “use IB assessment criteria, with adapted descriptors, for all major assessments, and, as much as possible, minor ones as well.” At Eos Middle School, as IB teaching has spread school-wide, student work and essential questions are posted on walls; learning walks to look for promising and consistent practices are common; professional development based on IB methods has become part of the regular routine of the school day. Achievement scores are up, behavior problems are down, and both the principal and staff credit IB teaching with making the difference. At the High School, where scores are still low, behavior problems are still frequent, and IB training has reached only “pockets” the difference is even more apparent. In a school where teachers estimate half the students are absent any day, a walk down the corridor reveals many rooms with few students in class, with teachers seated at desks below power point presentations, or sitting and reading while a movie runs on the video monitor. In contrast, IB classrooms are striking. There is student work on the walls, there are students actively working on projects, and there are more students in the room. Across the sites, classrooms where teachers have been trained in and are engaging IB teaching, the rooms and the practices of both teachers and students are demonstrably different.

In fact, across the sites, the biggest complaint about professional development in IB is that they can’t get enough of it. What would help them most, teachers suggested, is “more time to get together with the IB teachers. That would be nice. And more training, but we don’t have money.” In particular, they would like to meet with other teachers in similar urban schools who have been successful with IB so that they could see how those schools do it, and learn more about “how do you get students to that point.” The MYP coordinator at Eos Middle School took her faculty to meet with a similar school in a neighboring state, and said of the experience:

They were so helpful and kind, and we learned so much about how IB works in a different sense than ours… we saw classrooms and we were able to talk to the teachers and they showed us some of the units and like things that they are doing and it proved that IB worked. A lot of teachers were getting a little bit frustrated…This dynamic that we saw, is pretty similar to the dynamics at Eos. Our test scores are very similar; our student populations are very similar, so we actually have a lot in common.
Other teachers were seeking opportunities for that kind of professional development experience and professional connection with people in similar settings.

Issues of quantity and access can pose a challenge as schools find it difficult to get the right people to the right trainings at the right time. They identified, in particular, problems with funding, travel costs, and scheduling logistics as major obstacles. As one teacher observed, “teacher training fees are expensive.” The Hesper MYP coordinator said it cost “$15,000 to send 12 of us to Texas” and “I think if there was something a little bit closer more teachers would go.” That investment is a particular concern where teacher turnover is high. The coordinator at Hesper added,

You can't teach an IB course unless you’ve been trained, and generally speaking we don’t send teachers to IB training unless they’ve been two years, two or three years. And there’s a reason for that. We’re looking for a commitment. When you’re spending about $1,500 to train somebody and then they go to another district with your training, that’s not a wise investment.

Finding adequate funding in districts with competing needs and scare resources makes it difficult to train as many teachers as they need, or to provide as much training as teachers would like. While it might take, as one veteran IB teacher at Aquilon estimated, “three to five years to know IB,” across the schools, few teachers have been able to participate in trainings for more than one session, and some teachers have not yet had the opportunity to attend even one. Where teacher turnover is high, so high that a 4th year teacher is considered a veteran teacher, that problem is particularly acute. Even more daunting is the observation from one administrator that in his district, over several years of participating in IB, they have trained—and paid to train—65 teachers, but 27 of them have since left the district. In fact, he observed that IB training may have made them more attractive to neighboring districts.

Even when schools did secure funding, they often found it hard to access the trainings, to get the right people signed up at the right time. Again, turnover and bureaucratically-bound district budgets make it difficult to plan ahead—and coordinators worry that the logistics of IBA’s procedures require them to know which teachers will attend which sessions—well before they find out what teacher assignments will be, and long before they could get the paperwork processed to pay for the training. Said an administrator:

Unfortunately, we got blocked out again. And the same thing happened, you know, last year when I tried to register teachers. You know, I thought I was getting in there early enough, but I mean, with the Middle Years Programme, the problem is that there are so few schools that are doing it so there are fewer trainings and there are many more schools who are being, you know, more active in trying to bring on the Middle Years Programme. So there are probably more people wanting to get into those trainings than there are training spots available. Unlike the DP, where there are more trainings of those, although those go quickly.

One school reported that participating in the grant project, and the direct intervention of the IBA staff gave them an advantage in not getting “blocked out” before they could register. But they
worry that the financial and bureaucratic constraints in Title I schools make it difficult to access the high quality professional development supports that they need, and that they commend IBA for providing.

As it became apparent that access to training and travel costs presented a serious obstacle for the sites, IBA created an alternative structure: if the sites couldn’t get enough people to the trainings, IBA would bring a training to them. At both Hesper and Eos, where large school size, limited budgets, and turnover issues made the problem particularly pressing, on-site professional development sessions on MYP were made available to all, or most, staff. This opened up the trainings to people whose attendance at off-site sessions would have been an unlikely priority give the difficulties and the travel costs: counselors, teachers across a range of subjects, administrators—and even an occasional district administrator-- had the chance to participate in the training, and to participate together. That experience, as a principal described it, was “very powerful” in creating a sense of collective enterprise, and in signaling both district and school commitment to IB. The sheer scale of having so many people engaged at the same time on the same topic, and the economy of scale in not having to arrange airfares, provided a support structure of exceptional value. Another reason it was “very powerful” was that many of the more reluctant teachers had been skeptical—with good reason, given the common transience of educational reforms—to invest their own time and energy in learning about IB without a signal that this effort would last through the next administrative turnover. The on-site professional development conveyed a message of IB’s importance to their sites, and of their sites’ importance to IB. While resistant teachers, particularly at Eos, still found ways to halt the momentum, and reduced budgets cut the number of professional days that were available at all, the power of this intervention to “move the masses forward” was considerable.

The question here is not whether IBA can provide high quality and “helpful” support, but whether they can provide it at the scale and on the schedules that will fit the needs of high needs high schools, and whether they could create the capacity themselves to provide more on-site, or regional professional development opportunities.

Guidance Counselor Training and Involvement

Guidance counselor training and involvement has been crucial to removing a barrier, to building school wide involvement, and to expanding access. In the first year of the grant, guidance counselors were often identified as a barrier, or a difficulty, in changing understandings of who could be IB, and to expanding access to more students. By year 3, after IBA’s support in outreach to and training for guidance counselors, that barrier had been considerably breached, and counselors were seen as an integral part of the implementation projects. While teachers—especially passionate teachers--play a critical role in what happens inside classes, teachers and administrators across the schools pointed repeatedly to the crucial role played by guidance counselors in determining which students enter which classrooms in the first place, and how IB was understood across the school. When we asked how decisions were made about who takes IB classes, respondents most often named the counselors: “the counselors decide. It depends on [students’] previous classes.” The context was quite different at Aquilon, where students enter in 7th grade and where all students take IB courses. At the other three schools, however, the new
pathways from middle school MYP to high school courses were still under construction, the established ‘tracks’ still tended to dominate, and guidance counselors played a large role as “gatekeepers” of who had access to which tracks. According to the district coordinator at Hesper, guidance counselors were “aware” of IB for scheduling purposes: “they’re responsible for scheduling them into the correct courses. So if you’re a guidance counselor it is your responsibility to know what the program is… they should be fully cognizant of all the programs.” Often, however, counselors had not been “fully cognizant” or included in the trainings and planning sessions. As an Eos principal cautioned, “I'm not sure that they fully know how important their part is in implementing and growing the IB program. I'm not sure how much they even understand what it is.”

In the first year of the grant, concerns arose about the role of the guidance counselor as “gatekeepers” who—without direct involvement in IB—were likely to see IB courses as appropriate for only the most high achieving and highly motivated students. IB teachers worried that counselors made decisions based on prerequisites, and prior course performance, “so the kids get not encouraged, but discouraged to do it.” At Eos, counselors identified one set of 9th grade honors classes as the source of IB students, because “while any student is allowed” to take IB, it was “hard to enter the IB programme if they weren’t tracked from the beginning.” Both Hesper and Austrin, too, characterized small numbers of 9th grade honors students as their likely Diploma Candidates. A coordinator at Hesper expressed concern that sometimes guidance counselors kept special education students out of IB: “We’ve had meetings with [the guidance department] to try and explain to them that special education students can succeed in IB.” The Hesper principal stressed the need to train their counselors in “understanding the rigors and challenges of IB, what it is and what it isn’t, and understanding that it’s a goal of the school to have full access.” He explained that

Obviously, [guidance counselors are] the liaison between the home and the school, and our guidance counselors were a critical component. It’s a critical layer in there, recruiting students, selling the mission statement to parents, and providing that support, that support layer for the IB. It’s very rigorous, and unless counselors understand that, they don’t know what you’re talking about… They’re scheduling kids. But if they don’t know what IB is, haven’t had that special training, then they wouldn’t know that.

Teachers and coordinators suggested that counselors who hadn’t had that “special training” understood IB as something for “students following the honors track,” for students already on a narrow path “set in place in middle school, and IB track is reserved for those who were in honors classes, who have prerequisites in advanced math or early foreign language classes.” They pointedly observed that their efforts to expand access would be severely limited if they couldn’t recruit students who “are not in that little box” and if “[counselors] don’t look outside that pool.” They worried that “we tend to underestimate children’s abilities” and that the schools, and counselors, would need to learn new ways “to find the students who are smart and who need to be IB if they weren’t found in middle school.”

In the second year, IBA began to provide workshops for counselors to see their potential role in expanding access, and IB’s potential to serve more students. Guidance counselors who had had no exposure to IB except for the Diploma Programme found the training to be helpful not only in
orienting them to the access possibilities of MYP, but also simply in “including” them in the reform effort, so they were no longer “left out of things.” After her first session, in year 3, one described how

    The counselor training has been crucial. It makes everyone accountable and gives all the guidance counselors information for how to help the students. It’s also a great training, very hands on. Usually counselors are left out of things, but we were included in this.

The middle school principal at Eos said that, after the training, “the counselors are more inclined to talk with parents about [MYP]. They posted the Learner Profile in the office, use it as a talking point. They are working on getting kids to want to go to Eos High School.” A Spanish teacher observed that “I have a lot more phone calls asking questions from guidance than before—‘where we should put this kid? Is he IB material, or is he a normal kid?’ It seems like they are more aware there are other things that kids can do.’ Recognizing the potential of IB to serve the ‘normal kid’ is essential to expanding access and establishing a pipeline. Because this training did not come until the 2nd or 3rd year of the grant, there was a weak impact on the outcome data, particularly on the numbers of Diplomas. But the potential impact of their inclusion was highlighted when one IB teacher, in year 3, worried that now too many students were being encouraged to try IB, since counselors would “push them in ‘even if they weren’t really prepared for it. In another telling example, a guidance counselor who in year 1 had known little about IB except that it was for the exceptional student, in year 3 talked of the “tough crowd” of veteran teachers, and of the need to “sell this” MYP to more of them. The very idea that she felt part of an effort to “sell” IB, rather than feeling “left out” gives evidence of the effectiveness of IBA’s investment in guidance counselor training.

The Coaching Model

A key component of this grant was to create a new coaching model and provide on-site coaches in the schools. In year 2, IBA partnered with an external consulting group to develop the model and to host workshops with the pilot schools on topics such as designing Action Plans and developing norms and structures for Professional Learning Groups (PLGs). IBA also worked with the consultants to hire individual coaches to work with the pilot schools on-site, and to convene gatherings for guidance counselors to strengthen and clarify their roles in relation to IB placement, scheduling, and supports. Those on-site coaches began work with schools to provide structure and support in the process of building the PLGs, planning, and backward mapping of curriculum in the content areas from the Diploma back to 7th grade MYP courses. Coaches provided individualized assistance to schools as well, based on the particular needs of the site or the staff, or the particular strengths and interests of the on-site coaches. The coach at Eos, for example, conducted meetings to strengthen connections between the two schools, helped with authorization, and facilitated meetings of staff—like the guidance counselors or special education teachers—who had previously felt left out. Hesper’s coach also provided help through the authorization process, but focused more on providing pedagogical advice, and worked with individual teachers. At Aquilon, where the authorization process was completed, teachers already were working in teams, and the whole school had been IB for some time, the appropriate role and potential benefit of an on-site coach was less clear.
Across the sites, two concerns arose fairly quickly and persisted over the grant period. One question was about the form of the coaching model—how much was this model designed to be about generic school reform, or how much should it be shaped to the unique needs and practices of IB? The second was about fit—how well did the individual coach understand the context of working in Title I schools, and how well did the professional strengths and personalities of particular coaches suit the sites they were assigned?

The form of the coaching model focused the pilots’ attention on whole school reform and the problems and process of change. In choosing their partner, the consulting group that would help to develop the coaching model, IBA moved outside of their own community of professional developers and consultants. In so doing, they added an external agency with considerable expertise in school reform efforts, but less familiarity with IB procedures and programs, and less experience with urban schools. This caused concern in some meetings, where participants found the activities engaging and enjoyable, and the workshop leaders professional and prepared—but that the “takeaways” of practical next steps for IB implementation weren’t always evident. In one workshop, where site teams met with coaches to talk about improving teaching, the topics tended to be generic (more sharing) or tactical (proctors for IB exams) rather than moving toward the technical core of teaching and curriculum in IB. While groups did talk of the “need to support a DP trajectory” and to “use the same tools” there were few references to IB-specific tools or tasks, and no discussion of the IB unit planners or assessments. In another meeting, where part of the task of the day was to analyze their own progress, prepare a plan of next steps, and share that plan with the other pilot sites for feedback, they were able to take advantage of the network of schools, and the IBA staff, to dig more deeply into the specific steps of doing IB work.

At one meeting, where teachers and administrators came together to talk about Professional Learning Groups as a strategy to support IB implementation, the workshop drew on research on professional learning communities in general—but made little connection to the vertical and horizontal planning that IB, and the schools, had been doing. So participants were not clear whether this was a “new thing, or just a new name.” At that same meeting, several talked of the “urgency” of NCLB responses, about the “imperative” of state and district pressures, and how everything they are doing now “needs to be contiguous with our discussions” about those imperatives. There they found the coaching partner group to be both knowledgeable and useful. One idea that emerged out of that meeting, that schools found very helpful, was a “reframing”—the possibility that they could frame IB not as a separate goal in and of itself, but rather as a means to an end, as a way to move toward the ultimate— and urgent—goal of improving student learning and achievement. Over the course of the grant, as the consultants became more familiar with IB programs and procedures and with the pilot schools, reconciling what had seemed like disconnected goals and disjointed strategies became more common. The concerns became less urgent, but their persistence suggests that IBA should continue its efforts to integrate the strengths of their own professional development system, and the vocabulary of their own practices into the next iteration of the model.

On-site coaches needed expertise in IB, experience in urban schools, practical knowledge about the processes and problems of change—and to be a good fit to their particular site. The primary task of an on-site coach is to meet the schools where they are now, and help them identify and
take the next steps to move forward—which requires not only extraordinary technical skills, but also interpersonal ones. The “fit” can be just as important as the skill set. At one school, administrators described the fit with their coach as “ideal” in terms of experience with challenging schools, with knowledge of IB, and just in terms of “personality.” They doubted the same result would have been achieved with any other coach. They also capitalized on that connection—not only in scheduled visits but also through phone calls and email contacts that helped to establish a strong sense of both professional resource and personal connection. At another site, they identified a less than ideal “fit” as a key reason they did not find the on-site coaching beneficial: “I don’t think it’s a matter of the structure, although that may be part of it. I think it’s more . . . sometimes it’s just got to be a good fit.” Where the fit was not good, teachers and administrators were quick to remind us that even the benefit of having a coach provided comes at considerable cost—the time, the energy, the need to have classes covered, the task of scheduling, and convincing (or in one case coercing) teachers to take time away from teaching or planning. Some of the schools were also suffering from a surplus of coaches—sent by different district and state officials, to provide support in different programs, with all too often different strategies. At one site, six different coaches were coming to ‘support’ the school in different ways, and teachers could not keep track of which coach was for which reform effort. On another visit, a teacher spoke with us about her experience with the two coaches—although only one was actually attached to IB. In these examples, we saw a confusion resulting from coaching overload and lack of district coordination or alignment.

On-site coaches helped schools go through the authorization process, bringing schools and administrators in the district together to work on their preparation. Particularly after the sites received notice that they had been postponed in the authorization process, the pressure to understand and meet the requirements of that process became a high priority, and the coaches became a valued resource in that effort. A Hesper administrator spoke of having the coach as a “godsend” when it came to help organizing and preparing for the authorization visit. An Eos administrator said that an onsite visit was “invaluable” and “precedent setting in the district, as the first time two buildings came together with one solid purpose,” to reintroduce IB to many, and to reinforce the idea that IB was there to stay “not going anywhere” in a district where teachers have learned to “hunker down until the next thing passes.”

Similarly, an Eos MYP coordinator claimed that the coach’s presence was “critical” to MYP development, as well as their progress in getting the administrators from the two schools to meet with one another and to bring their staffs together. According to the middle school principal,

Bringing us together around those common issues in trying to bring agencies together to work collectively and collaboratively was very powerful, forcing us to sit down with other schools that were like us, to actually get honest with ourselves about how we could or couldn’t move forward; to talk about research-based best practices and professional learning groups and how to move the masses forward and building that base of support was extremely powerful…

Coaches brought enthusiasm for IB to the schools, providing substantial feedback for both the teachers and the coordinators. Several administrators found their coaches to be “phenomenal” and “positive about the IB experience” and to provide a “monitoring component that’s nice,
knowing there are outside people looking in on you from time to time.” The principal at Hesper High School said that their coach “speaks the language of the IB pedagogy” and spent time “mentoring those teachers, and making believers out of them.” The coaches also spent time working with coordinators, conducting trainings, modeling “learning walks” through classrooms, and helping staffs write action plans, making IB more visible across the school.

An MYP coordinator at Eos said that the coach

helped me as a coordinator individually to realize what some of the needs are and—as to how we can fix some of the issues with teacher buy-in. He helped bridge the gap with the two buildings when we met with [the superintendent]. He helped position ourselves for being able to have some flexibility with our current [administration]. He’s been a spokesperson for IB and the benefits of it and how it can help us as a district… Teachers love meeting with him. They feel the trainings they’ve had with him have been productive and useful. They feel like they need more of that training.

The coach at Eos in particular had considerable IB experience, teaching experience, and school reform experience, all of which were crucial to his success in establishing rapport and spreading enthusiasm about IB, and defusing (at least to some degree) the strong resistance among faculty that persisted at the high school.

Sometimes coaches helped the staffs with more than just IB, providing them with pedagogical strategies and new ways of thinking about teaching. At Hesper, with the help of the coach, changes in classroom practice and student behavior helped spread MYP across the high school and into a second middle school. The Hesper MYP coordinator said the coach helped the staff “look at teaching differently” and helped them “become better teachers as well.” According to an administrator, the coach

speaks the teachers’ language, speaks the language of the IB pedagogy and is very teacher friendly… She will coach-- side-by-side coaching, and mentoring those teachers, and making believers out of them. That’s practices, strategies, instructional techniques, how to innovate the areas of interaction in MYP, critical lenses, the thematic approaches to inquire will all be there.

At Eos, too, the coach helped the staff at Eos write unit plans, learn to use OCC rubrics, attend training workshops, visit a similar school in another state, and strengthen PLG facilitation. Aquilon’s faculty, particularly some in special subjects who had not been able to attend the off site meetings, also found the coach visits a way to receive encouragement and critical feedback about teaching practice, and about the collaboration tools and protocols of PLG structures.

On-site coaches needed to have specific knowledge and skills that the schools lacked; otherwise, they were not useful to the already overworked staff members. Given the range of contexts, of school configurations, and of pre-existing participation in IB, the range of supports that were needed, and appropriate, at the different sites was considerable. At Eos High School, for example, there were still many faculty and support staff who had had little or no contact with IB
at all. Special Education teachers, guidance counselors, internal coaches, and new, new principals needed an overall introduction to IB, and a preliminary discussion about its implications for their roles. The staff at Aquilon, on the other hand, who had almost all been to IB trainings, many to level 2 and 3 sessions, were less clear about just what skills a coach might bring to them. Their needs were less about introductory overviews to IB or how to move to whole school change. Instead what they were looking for was detailed and practical advice and experience in moving underprepared students though IB assignments and assessments—which was not the strength of their particular coach. So for their site, the coaching “has not been terribly useful.” Another administrator echoed that sentiment:

The coach is not here often enough to be [helpful]… The coach has not been beneficial… I don’t think it’s a matter of the structure, although that may be part of it. I think it’s more… sometimes it’s just got to be a good fit… the way [the coach is] useful to us may not be the way that’s useful for other people.

Where they did find the coaching beneficial was when it moved more directly to the kinds of tasks they saw the need to work on:

It’s more… helping to make the work a bit more productive in meetings; creating a safe space as opposed to helping us meet at all…because we are already meeting. We have identified what we want to work on, and now the coach has been here to help with PLGs and to help that work along.”

In order to have a strong impact on schools, coaches would have to spend more time at each site, and to develop not only personal ‘fit’ but enough understanding of the context to tailor the professional fit to the particular needs of the site—which calls for a tremendous amount of capacity and adaptability on the coaches part. Schools saw coaches as valuable if and when they could bring a strong background in IB, ideally with experience teaching in an IB school, and if they had sufficient experience in urban settings to appreciate the challenges of being IB in Title I settings.

The costs of on-site coaching are high, both for IBA and for the schools. While IBA bore the actual costs of providing the coach’s time and travel, school staff were quick to remind us of the opportunity costs to them:

They were just really concerned with an on-site coach. Where I thought it would be a really great asset, they really weren’t sure what capacity the person would be here in, and worried that it would just cause more work for the principal. Now, on one hand, of course it’s going to be more work for the principal. But hopefully, it would be positive work.

Principals worried that it was not just “more work” but that time with coaches was time taken from urgent matters of school discipline or AYP preparation. For teachers, it required missed planning periods, or classes that needed to be covered by others. Moreover, as coaching has become a widespread school improvement strategy, in some sites it required coordinating visits across coaches from other sources, working on other programs, promoting other strategies—
which could easily lead to increased resistance or overload. If IBA is to continue the coaching support strategy, questions of costs, of coordination and fit, and of more concentrated focus on IB implementation and teaching should continue to be part of their development effort.

**PLGs**

With the assistance of the coaches, pilot schools adopted Professional Learning Groups (PLGs), small groups of teachers who met in structured meetings and used specific protocols to discuss MYP curriculum and student work on a regular basis. While the name was new to most schools, the concept was similar to IB’s use of “vertical” and “horizontal” planning, to planning by subject- and grade-level teams, or to small learning communities, which most schools had used, and to work on “the power of protocols” (McDonald et al., 2007) which some schools had been introduced to, or engaged in, in prior years. The schools found the PLGs and protocols helpful in varying ways: in making meetings more productive, in spreading IB to more staff, and in distributing leadership more widely.

**PLG structures and protocols made meetings more productive.** The staff at Aquilon, for example, already met regularly in vertical and horizontal planning meetings, and were already engaged in much of the work that the coach expected PLGs to conduct. One team, however, said they had become “lax” about the regular use of protocols, and had seen meetings become less productive in recent years—a pattern that often occurs in schools that have adopted small learning community reforms. There they found the protocols useful in providing a structured way to discuss student work, and the shift back to using protocols on a regular basis made the work they were already doing more constructive and consistent.

Eos, on the other hand, found the PLG meetings helpful as a new structure, using them as times to bring teachers together to talk about IB, to engage in backward mapping, and to learn how to write lesson plans using the MYP unit planners. Their progress was interrupted in Fall 2009, however, by a union member’s memo to the staff that claimed requiring PLG activities violated the union contract:

> You can use, create, and write IB and MYP lessons and units if you choose to, and if they are approved by the principal… MYP teams can be required to meet, if the time is allotted in lieu of a duty. Once again, your attendance is required, however, you cannot be forced to write units or lessons.

This memo brought the progress of the PLGs at the high school to an abrupt halt, since backward mapping and refining unit plans had been their core task. With MYP enthusiasm still limited to “pockets” of teachers, and a “new, new principal” and leadership team in place, the political strength to counter that memo simply wasn’t present. Eos Middle School, by contrast, reached a ‘tipping point’ where enough faculty had become committed to MYP and PLGs to institutionalize their practice into the school routine. They established a dedicated “PLG room” where groups met regularly, and which was filled with planning materials and large work tables, with flip charts regarding the school’s MYP progress covering the walls. PLGs became a primary vehicle for professional development and teacher expectations.
Hesper also found the PLGs useful, using the new protocols as a way to run department meetings and as a mechanism to move forward the use of MYP unit planners. Hesper staff also found the PLGs fit with their district’s transformation to “professional learning communities,” using them as a way to get teachers together to talk to one another in a structured, sustained way, both within each school and across the schools, where high school and middle school teachers would meet together to talk about teaching, and about teaching IB.

**PLGs allow teachers to share IB information and practices in sites where access to IB trainings is limited.** Across all of the sites people talked of the need for “more money and more training” and the need to send more teachers, coordinators, and administrators (including district administrators) to IB workshops as the most critical support they could hope for. And it is clear that the more people who attend IB trainings, the more progress can be made in implementation of the programs, and the more student access and performance improve. But the sites also confronted constraints, in limited funds, sessions that filled, teacher turnover, and the scarce resource of time that would make achieving that hope unlikely. PLGs, with IB trained teachers as facilitators, provide a way of sharing that resource within the school, and within the reach of school budgets. Teachers and coordinators spoke of the PLGs as a way of increasing “buy in” among teachers who were not “on board,” and of using the fact that these were led by colleagues, other teachers or chairs from within the site who commanded a kind of credibility that outsiders could not provide:

> The regular teachers, it takes a while. Some are really hesitating. It’s a tough crowd around here, so to sell it to some teachers [is hard]. Everyone likes to resist change, and it you’re a veteran teacher, those are tough people to sell this to.

By enlisting teachers as leaders, by giving veterans small groups with structured protocols and time for sustained conversations about their work and their concerns, PLGs provide a vehicle for reaching reluctant teachers and changing beliefs.

**PLGs provide a method of distributing leadership across the staff, which is a tremendous advantage in schools with high levels of administrative turnover.** Each PLG had a trained leader, or facilitator, who met with other PLG leaders regularly. At Eos middle school, where PLGs came as a somewhat new structure, staff saw that “natural leaders” stepped up and pushed into some “difficult” conversations about teaching and learning that helped even skeptical teachers come “on board.” In other sites, department chairs—who are often the default leaders that high school teachers turn to—were brought into IB in active ways that diminished the distance between reluctant veterans and early adopters, and weakened teacher resistance. The PLG leaders met together to talk about strategies, sometimes with the support of their on-site coaches, and frequently referred to these meetings as some of the most beneficial meetings they attended. Having a trained corps of PLG leaders who were then charged with helping their respective departments or grade teams advance the goals of MYP was useful. The consistency and stability of leadership that PLGs can provide is particularly helpful in an inconsistent urban school environment, like the environments in many of the pilot schools; the consistency and collaborative engagement structures of protocols provided a mechanism to connect those ideas to practice.
Conclusion

Over the three years of this grant, both IBA and the pilot sites have, as one person in year 2 so succinctly put it, “been working on this really, really hard, but it’s difficult.” This is an ambitious and complex reform effort that requires considerable hard work, and that phrase turns up repeatedly in interviews and fieldnotes. Students talked of their own hard work: the personal project “was a lot of work. But it showed I could do it” or the “extended essay . . . it was a lot of work” or just “IB is a lot of work.” Teachers spoke of the years of hard work to really learn to teach IB, or to convince colleagues that this program could work in their school or for their students. Principals talked of the major mental shift, and the difficulty of reconfiguring professional routines and cultures. Coordinators talked of the multiplicity of demands that managing IB asked of them—often without the release time to let them work as hard as they wanted. Sometimes, it felt like “too much to ask right now” or “too much work,” but in fact, teachers and students, coordinators and principals, also spoke of just how worthwhile this work was. And they continued to work at it—even under difficult circumstances, even through new superintendents and new or “new, new principals,” and even when the budget cuts and financial uncertainty turned the setting from challenging to “grim.” Even the two sites where overload led them to drop out of the grant, or underfunding to drop official MYP status, they continued to talk of their strong desire to be IB.

In the course of that hard work, they have confronted the challenging and changing contexts that so often characterize disadvantaged schools, and all to often lead to the “predictable failure of school reform (Sarason, 1993). They have encountered, and adapted to, idiosyncratic and unpredictable problems that can disrupt focus and interrupt momentum. They have coped with policy pressures to raise standards and adopt new interventions that often were not aligned with IB. They have seen leadership turnover, in some schools with striking regularity, to a degree that suggests while strong and stable leadership may be an essential component of successful school reform, it is often too rare to be relied on. They have struggled with teacher turnover that can make training a critical mass of teachers seem an impossible task. Perhaps most challenging of all, they have taken on the task of changing beliefs and expectations, to convince—and to demonstrate—that disadvantaged students in disadvantaged schools can succeed in being IB.

The patterns of implementation suggest that this is still a work in progress—but that all sites, with the supports and structures provided by IBA, were in fact making progress. This was only a three year grant, and given what we know about the time for comprehensive school reform to take hold (particularly in high schools), and the time it would take to fully build the pipeline and carry a cohort of students through to graduation, findings of partial implementation are not surprising. This was, after all, a design that asked schools to construct pathways from 7th grade through to the Diploma, and to expand participation across increasing numbers of students and staffs. It’s components included the need to 1) widen access to middle school students; 2) construct connections between different MYP programs and schools; 3) widen access to MYP students school-wide in the high schools; 4) recruit, train, and team teachers across 9th and 10th grades; 5) enroll more 11th and 12th grade students in IB courses; 6) ensure the quality of teaching and assessment in those courses; 7) devise extra supports for students who need it; 8) develop and expand opportunities for community service and research projects; 9) offer an array of IB courses and certificate course options for diverse student interests; 10) encourage more
students to aim for the Diploma and take the exams; and 11) ensure that more students are prepared to pass the exams and earn the Diploma. All of these are “difficult” to do, and even more difficult to connect, especially in challenging and changing contexts, at the speed asked in the IB authorization process, and in the presence of competing demands from district and state accountability systems and AYP. Particularly difficult were the logistical demands of connecting programs and faculties across different buildings (compounded by complex feeder patterns) and the logical connections that seemed not always obvious between the “philosophies” of MYP and DP. Beyond those internal difficulties, and in ways that the design had not anticipated, schools struggled as well with extending the ‘pipeline’ they were constructing beyond their own walls and into the colleges. Yet, despite these challenges, considerable progress was made in constructing at least the early parts of the pipeline (particularly in middle schools, where the ‘fit’ seemed easier), and in expanding participation so that more students were taking IB classes, more teachers were trained in and working to implement IB in their classrooms, and more evidence of improvement in student’s educational experience was apparent.

The provision of support structures and services that IBA designed and delivered clearly played a part in enabling that progress, and in keeping the schools engaged in the work—even when it was hard. Supports that had not been specified in the grant proposal—the Hawthorne effect of selection into the grant experience, the informal support and advocacy of IBA staff, and being part of a network of similar schools all emerged as key enabling conditions. So, in perhaps surprising ways, did the fact of being “postponed” in the authorization process—an unanticipated and undesired status that provided an increase in both the sense of urgency within the schools and political leverage with their districts.

Access to IB professional development opportunities stands out as the most essential support structure, and the grant provided services (funding and the intervention of IBA staff) and new structures (on-site trainings in two districts) to allow the pilot sites greater access to those opportunities. Indeed, the extraordinarily positive (even raving) descriptions of the trainings, and the remarkably consistent responses stand out as exceptional across studies of educational reform and professional development. While there were some concerns about the need to bring in more people and more content from urban sites, the responses were clear and consistent: across the schools, people just wanted more of IB’s professional development sessions.

Guidance counselor training and involvement, as well, played a key role in the sites’ progress, particularly in expanding participation. From counselors who had felt “left out” or were seen as “gatekeepers” who “discouraged” students from participating in IB unless they had stellar academic records and prerequisites, to informed and involved participants in a school wide expansion effort is a remarkable change in three years. And while all counselors may not yet be “fully cognizant” or “on board” it is clear that, particularly in large high schools, implementation and expanded access cannot progress without their participation.

The coaching model, and the introduction of on-site coaches to support the sites, played an “invaluable” role in some settings, and was “not terribly useful” in others, which suggests that this support service, while promising, is itself still a work in progress. The form of the coaching model focused the schools’ attention on issues of whole school reform and the problems and
processes of change, which was certainly an issue that needed attention, but had not yet fully integrated the strengths of IB professional development or the specifics of change to IB practices. On-site coaches, whose usefulness was strongest when they could bring expertise in IB, experience in urban settings, and practical knowledge about school change, also needed to be a good “fit” to their particular sites. Where those criteria were all in place, coaching seemed “invaluable” indeed. But the cost of this kind of support service, (to both IBA and to the schools) the difficulty in finding a pool of qualified and willing people, and the confusion created in sites that already have multiple coaches coming at them from multiple agencies suggest careful consideration about whether this is a practical strategy to take to scale. As IBA moves to a more regional structure, or as networks of existing urban IB schools and districts grow, there may be other, and less costly, ways to provide similar supports.

PLGs, small groups of teachers who met in grade level or departmental teams, with facilitators trained by the coaching partners, brought a different kind of coaching and professional development inside the schools. Similar in many ways to the vertical and horizontal planning groups of IB, the PLGs added new structures and protocols (or reminded teams to use old ones) that made meetings more productive. They allowed teachers to share IB information and practices in sites were access to IB trainings was limited. PLGs also provided a method of distributing leadership and building institutional memory, which was a particular advantage in sites with high levels of administrative turnover. Moreover departmental PLGs, with department chairs as facilitators, tapped into the traditional teacher leadership in high schools, and allowed them to more readily enlist ‘skeptical’ or reluctant teachers in collegial work.

A key theory of action of this grant project was the idea that the continuum of IB programmes, the introduction of MYP in the middle and high schools would serve as a pipeline to carry more students to the Diploma, and as a means to expand access and increase success for the disadvantaged students IBA seeks to serve. With supports that are suitable and strong enough, Title I schools would be able to build the pathway to connect programs from the middle through high school, and establish the pipeline to carry students through to the Diploma and on to college.

Two observed patterns should give caution about that theory here, both linked to district policies of choice. First, is the trend at Aquilon, a school deliberately designed around the pipeline idea—planned to provide IB in a traditionally underserved area, to all students in grades 7 to 12. And while the school can set some criteria for admission, it cannot choose particular students, or select on demographics; the matching is done centrally by the district. As the school has established its programs and its reputation, it has increasingly attracted applicants, and enrollment, from students who are more white, more affluent, and more academically prepared. Second, is at Eos, where again district policy provides high school choice. Here the pipeline from the middle school to the high school is tenuous at best, and the high school’s efforts at becoming school-wide MYP have not yet been established, but the pre-IB track (and pathway to the Diploma) has been diffused. As the school-wide IB program at the middle school has become more established, and more successful, staff see their students more likely to choose—and to be chosen by —the high schools with stronger academic reputations. Ironically, they fear they have built a strong pipeline for academic success, but not yet for IB. Both sites are working on what can only be seen as unanticipated, and even perverse, consequences of success.
More telling, however, are the signs of success in increased implementation of IB across the schools, in increasing numbers of students who are taking IB courses and teachers who are trained in and teaching IB, and in pipelines that are being constructed to carry more students through to the Diploma and on to college.

The final word, however, should come from one of those students. A graduating senior at Aquilon, who had gone through the full pipeline, had taken all IB courses all the way though school, and who was happily making plans (with acceptance and financial aid in hand) for college for next year. She talked of the “hard work” of doing IB, but also of what that work had meant for her:

   It boosted my sense of self-motivation. Aquilon remolded me. It changed me for the better. You can be inspired by a project you love.
References


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