



Vasa International School of Stockholm

ANNO 1998

Vasa International School of Stockholm Parents' Handbook

IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

Vasa International mission statement

Vasa International School of Stockholm is a small, family-like, multicultural IB World school that strives to foster a challenging, open-minded and inclusive environment for its students. We aim to be caring and inspiring teachers, ambitious and principled students, and informed and engaged parents.

Our mission is to stimulate curiosity through inquiry and encourage respectful relationships between all stakeholders. We constantly seek to empower students to express themselves individually and collaboratively, preparing them for the challenges of the future and encouraging them to become lifelong learners and active global citizens.

Vasa International philosophy

At Vasa International School of Stockholm we value and develop the international profile of all our stakeholders. As an IB World school, we are committed to the IB vision for the creation of a collaborative, diverse community united by a mission to make the world a better place through meaningful education.

At our school we promote the learning of different languages and the understanding of different cultures. Our students, their families and our staff are multicultural, multilingual and as a community we embrace and promote all those different identities and cultures. By aiming to instill the IB values into the hearts of all stakeholders we encourage our students, teachers and parents to strive to become inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, courageous, balanced and reflective.

As a school, we promote collaboration and effective teamwork at all levels and we inspire each other to ask questions and learn through meaningful inquiry. We set challenging goals and develop the perseverance to achieve them. We also value reflection as a means to deepen our understanding and to improve teaching and learning. As an IB school, we further value the importance of taking action as a means of connecting our learning to real-life situations and as a means to improve ourselves and the world around us.

Table of contents

[Welcome to Vasa International](#)

[School leadership](#)

[General school guidelines](#)

[Building hours](#)

[Valuables](#)

[Lost and found](#)

[Lunch](#)

[Student service](#)

[Special education needs](#)

[General guidelines](#)

[Pedagogical investigation – Action plan](#)

[Compensatory aids](#)

[General guidelines](#)

[Health records](#)

[Vaccination](#)

[Counselor](#)

[Educational counseling](#)

[Library](#)

[Administration and routines](#)

[SchoolSoft](#)

[Access](#)

[Attendance](#)

[Homework](#)

[Teacher planning](#)

[Comments](#)

[Developmental talks](#)

[Documents](#)

[School website](#)

[PYP](#)

[Developmental talks and parent meetings](#)

[Report cards](#)

[Snack](#)

[Clothing](#)

[Classroom supplies](#)

[Cell phones](#)

[Absence from school](#)

[Leaving your child at school](#)

[ASC – After School Care/Fritids](#)

[Parent engagement](#)

[Teaching and learning](#)

[IB Learner Profile](#)

[Language](#)

[Knowledge - What do we want the students to know?](#)

[Essential elements](#)

[Conceptual learning - What do we want the students to understand?](#)

[Attitudes - What do we want the students to feel value and demonstrate?](#)

[Action - How do we want the students to act?](#)

[Assessment](#)

[Formative assessment](#)

[Summative assessment](#)

Welcome to Vasa International School of Stockholm

We are truly happy that you have chosen to put your child's education in our hands. It is our goal as an IB school to present all students with significant, engaging, relevant and challenging learning experiences. We strive to ensure that all children feel safe and develop as much as possible. This handbook aims to give you a better idea of the school regarding routines, administration and the teaching and learning that takes place here.

Vasa International houses approximately 360 students and 25 staff members. We have 18 classes from preIB (pre-school) to MYP4 (Swedish grade 9). We are a certified IB *World School* that offers the PYP (Primary Years Programme). As our MYP (Middle Years Programme) is relatively new, we are still in the candidate phase. We also offer International classes in preIB, PYP1-6, and MYP 1-3. These classes are taught in English, although they do have an ample amount of Swedish lessons. The school was founded in 1998 by Mrs. Anette Parts, head of the school board. The school does not have any particular political or religious affiliation, and is regulated by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Aside from well equipped classrooms, the school facilities include a lunchroom, gym hall, science lab, music room and a library. The Principal of the school is Mrs. Anette Parts.

Contact information

School Leadership

Head of school / Principal

Anette Parts

anette.parts@europaskolan.nu

PYP Coordinator

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Vice principal/ MYP Coordinator

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All other staff may be contacted via `first name.last name@europaskolan.nu`

General school guidelines

Opening hours

The building is open 7:45-18:00 daily. Due to safety reasons, children in the PYP must be accompanied by an adult or registered in the after school care program if they are on campus outside of school hours (school hours might vary, please check your child's schedule).

Valuables

It is strongly discouraged to bring valuable items to school. Bringing valuable items such as computers and phones to school are at the owner's own risk, and Vasa International takes no responsibility for lost or stolen property.

Lost and found

All property should be clearly marked with the student's first and last name. A telephone number is also quite helpful in locating the proper owner of objects that get left around the school.

A lost and found box is located close to the back yard entrance on the entry floor. All objects that are found outside of classrooms (not on the hooks) are brought to the lost and found, unless there is a clear name on the article. All lost and found objects will be donated to a local charity if not reclaimed within one week of the end of each term.

Lunch

Students receive a healthy and well-rounded meal served each day in our lunchroom. The food comes from ISS World, a well known caterer that provides many schools in the Stockholm region with good food. Our food is 30% organic.

Special meals are available upon request. If you, for health or religious reasons, need to request a special diet, please fill in the form that is sent home in the beginning of each academic year. If you misplace or for any reason need this form, you will find it on SchoolSoft.

Student service

Special education needs

General guidelines

Vasa International's commitment to the SEN program aims to ensure that the development of all students is the shared responsibility of all staff. We strive towards practicing **inclusion** within our school network, which is about responding positively to each individual's unique needs. It also aims to minimize the marginalization of students due to their differences.

Pedagogical investigation – Action plan

To ensure that all students get the appropriate help they need, we follow guidelines from the National Board for Education regarding investigating all matters concerning a student's welfare. The class teacher, in collaboration with the health care team, will establish a pedagogical investigation to examine the needs in each specific case. If the conclusion is that the situation requires measures that go beyond the teacher's expertise, an action plan will be established. An action plan is always made in collaboration with the school health care team, student and legal guardian.

Compensatory aids

All students in need of compensatory aids will be given the opportunity to use them. Examples of aids could be: Stava rex, talsyntes or audio books.

School health service

General guidelines

The school health care team at Vasa International consists of a school nurse, a school counselor and a doctor. During their time in school, all students are invited to individual health care visits and health guidance. The school health care team also works with preventive care and they visit classrooms during the school year.

Health records

When a student is accepted to Vasa International, guardians will be asked to sign a health record requisition to approve that the school health care team may obtain the transfer of health records from BVC (Child welfare center), or the previous school.

Vaccination

The school health services offer all students vaccinations according to the national vaccination program, and the vaccinations started at BVC are monitored. Prior to vaccination, the students always bring information home and parental consent is needed before vaccinations are performed. If students have previously followed another vaccination program than the Swedish one, and have received vaccinations outside the BVC and school, the legal guardian is asked to submit a copy of the given vaccinations to the school nurse.

Counselor

Meeting with a school counselor is available upon request.

Educational counseling

Before starting MYP1, all students are given the opportunity to choose an additional language, either Spanish or French. The class teacher in PYP6 will provide information about this.

For the MYP students, Career and Educational Counseling is available on campus to help students select an appropriate high school program; Swedish or International.

Library

There is a librarian on site who can help students with research and finding books appropriate to their interests and reading levels. The books from the school library are for school use. Regular visits to the city library are also made during the term. We consider our library a 'hub of inquiry' where students can conduct research and collect information for their lessons and other projects.

Administration and routines

SchoolSoft

Access

SchoolSoft is the school's digital platform for administrative needs, such as attendance, schedules, test results and a lot more. You will be provided with the information regarding login once your child has begun school (or shortly prior to). If you have not received the information by school start, please make sure you contact the school administration. If you would like help with the interface, you should contact the class teacher for further assistance.

When accessing SchoolSoft for the first time, make sure to fill in your contact details under "My Profile". As legal guardian, you are responsible for keeping these details updated.

Attendance

All reporting of attendance is done in SchoolSoft. If the student is staying home from school, it is very important that you register this in SchoolSoft before 8:30 in the morning.

Homework

Most teachers put homework in SchoolSoft to create easy access for you at home. There you can see when the homework is due and what it involves. Results from assessments may also be found on SchoolSoft.

Teacher planning

You will find teacher planning on SchoolSoft, both lesson plans and a rough outline for the term.

Comments

If the teacher wants to comment on something specific that has happened during class regarding individual students, SchoolSoft is often used as a tool to keep you informed.

Developmental talks

Prior to developmental talks, legal guardians will be asked to leave comments and questions about the student's overall school situation. Prior to developmental talks there will be an email sent out as a reminder of the above.

Documents

There is an array of different documents to be found on SchoolSoft under the heading "Files and links".

School website (www.vasainternationalschoolofstockholm.com)

The school website is used as a first point of contact containing information for those who are interested in joining the school. There is a description of the school and the IB-programs offered as well as the local curriculum. Interested families will also find application forms here.

PYP

Developmental talks and parent meetings

Developmental talks and parent meetings are held once a term. During the developmental talk, the teacher, student and legal guardian will go through the student's academic and social development so far, and talk about the student's interests and what the focus should be on, up until the next development talk. The developmental talk will be prepared in advance by the teacher and both student and legal guardian input is appreciated.

Parent meetings are where the teacher meets all parents simultaneously to give general information of what is happening in school. It is also a time to discuss and ask questions about the different aspects of the PYP program. It is a great opportunity to get to meet other parents to exchange thoughts and experiences.

Report cards

Report cards are given out twice an academic year at the end of each term. They will contain a summative assessment of the student's achievements in all subjects taught.

Snack

Please have your child bring a fruit/vegetable or sandwich every day. We kindly ask that you do **not** send candy, juice boxes, crisps, cookies, rice cakes, buns or similar. Occasionally, parents will be asked to provide packed lunch for outings and such (the same rules apply as for snacks). Please note that it is forbidden to bring any kind of nuts to school due to allergy issues.

Clothing

As the PYP classrooms are shoe-free zones all PYP students need to bring indoor shoes. As the students will be outside every day, we strongly advise appropriate clothing based upon the current/predicted daily weather (keeping in mind that weather predictions are often wrong here in Stockholm...be prepared for the worst). We will go outside in rain, snow or hail. Make sure to mark student clothing clearly with name and preferably phone number, as this increases the chances of items being found and returned when lost.

All students attend Physical Education. Therefore proper clothing for the activity at hand is required. Check SchoolSoft for further information from the PE teacher regarding what kind of clothing/gear that would be appropriate for each unit/lesson. If for some reason a student is not participating in an outside PE activity, an extra set of warm clothes is advisable when observing and participating only in group discussions, etc.

Classroom supplies

Classroom supplies/equipment for students are provided by the school. This includes, but is not limited to pencils, notebooks, colored paper, portfolio binder, colored pencils, markers, etc.

Cell phones

We do not advise children to bring cell phones as the school cannot assume any responsibility for the loss or damage of them while at school. However, if they are brought to school, the teachers will most likely collect all cell phones in the morning and return them at the end of the day. If a student needs to use the phone during school hours, parents will need to inform the class teacher ahead of time.

Absence from school

If a student is absent from school due to illness, it is important that parents register this in SchoolSoft before 8:30. If not registered accordingly, this will be reported as unexcused absence and the teacher must call home sometime during the school day.

The teacher may give permission for up to five days leave each academic year. If you want to request vacation during school days, you need to fill in the appropriate form found on SchoolSoft and turn it into the class teacher. Remember to register absent days on SchoolSoft.

Leaving your child at school

When dropping your child off at school, please note that the parking spaces outside the school are very limited. Your chances of finding a spot in the morning are very slim. We strongly suggest that you leave your car elsewhere and travel by public transport.

Parents with children in PYP 1 are welcome to escort their child to the classroom *the first two weeks* of school. After that we would be very grateful if you would say goodbye to your child in the school entrance.

ASC – After School Care/Fritids

Vasa International recommends that children in PYP1-4 be a part of the After School Care program. The ASC at Vasa International is closely aligned with the school, and one of its aims is to enhance and further develop the students' learning and understanding of the English language as it is practiced in communication with staff in the ASC. Besides the social development in PYP classes, an emphasis is put upon Arts-, Music- and PE activities both within and beyond the school campus. The ASC is open between 8:00 and 18:00, at the discretion of the family. An afternoon snack is served each day.

The fee structure for enrollment in ASC/Fritids in the City of Stockholm is based on a percentage of the family income: 2% for the first child, 1% for the second and third, and 0% for the fourth. However, the fee shall not to exceed 858 SEK/month for the first child and 429 SEK/month for subsequent children.

Parent engagement

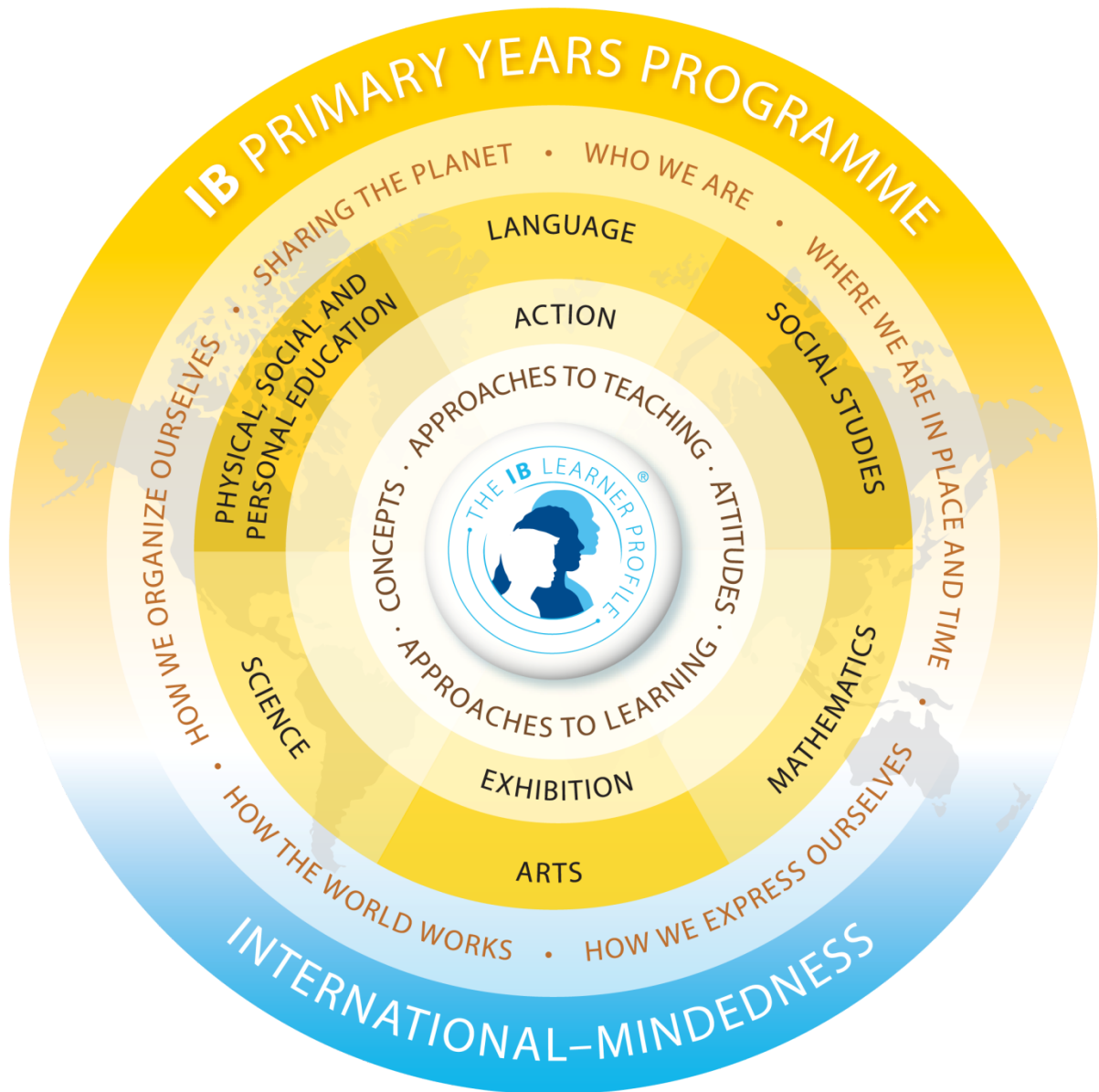
We would like you to be active in your child's school work, meaning that you discuss relevant assignments and chat with your child about the unit of inquiry at hand. You are of course welcome to come and visit us at school, however we would like you to communicate with relevant staff at least one day in advance to check that it is a suitable time.

We have an active PTA that holds meetings every term where the Principal is present. The meetings are open and the PTA would love to see more parents engaged.

As a PYP1 legal guardian, you are asked to host and organize the yearly winter party for the PYP. All profits from the fest go to the big spring outing. Further details about the winter party will be presented at the first parent meeting.

In an IB-school you will be asked for your opinion regarding the IB. This could be via surveys, workshops, etc. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Teaching and learning in PYP



Being an IB world school means that it is our aim to educate for life. Our ambition is to create internationally minded and knowledgeable citizens. We know that our students get a good start for higher education, whether it be a Swedish gymnasium, the IB Diploma program or a college/high school somewhere else in the world. Many come back to visit providing us with positive feedback regarding the success of our goals.

IB Learner Profile

At the core of the PYP is the Learner Profile. These characteristics were identified by the developers of all four International Baccalaureate programs and provide a common core to the IB continuum. Students and teachers often refer to these attributes and strive actively on a daily basis to be:

Inquirers: Develop a natural curiosity about the world. Acquire the necessary skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning.

Knowledgeable: Explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. Acquiring in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of subjects.

Thinkers: Exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize approaches to complex problems, and make reasoned decisions.

Communicators: Understand and expressing ideas confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication.

Principled: Act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities.

Open-minded: Understand and appreciating their own cultures and personal histories and are open to perspectives, values and traditions of the other individuals and communities.

Caring: Show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. Having a personal commitment to service and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Risk-Takers: They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas, and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

Balanced: They understand the importance of intellectual, physical and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

Reflective: They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and personal development.

Language

As an IB school we are obliged to present the students with one language in addition to the language of instruction, so in our school all students are taught English from PYP1. As we believe that all staff are language teachers, more than half of the staff in the ASC are native English speakers. Music and Arts are taught in English by native English speakers. PE (Idrott och hälsa) is also taught in English by international staff.

Vasa International's bilingual classes follow both the Swedish curriculum and the IB curriculum, meaning that from MYP 1, the students in the bilingual classes will receive a Swedish report card. The International classes will receive a report card based upon the IB curriculum.

A variety of mother tongue lessons are also offered after normal lesson time for all our students.

To find our complete language policy and other relevant documents please visit:

https://padlet.com/vasa_international/4zxrzxo85yec

Knowledge - What do we want the students to know?

We study all subjects covered in the Swedish curriculum (Lgr 11). As PYP is a transdisciplinary program most subjects will be taught in our units of inquiry. We will make sure that all students reach all demands regarding content and skills that come with Lgr 11, but we will also follow the IB scope and sequence documents. The bilingual class report cards will reflect the student's development in comparison to the goals in Lgr 11.

A school year at Vasa International always consists of six units of inquiry. These units are based upon a central idea, which the teacher and the students explore for a number of weeks, usually 4-6. Both students and parents need to be actively working with the central idea during the current unit. Doing so helps the students deepen their understanding and inquire deeper into the unit at hand.

Sample Unit of Inquiry (UOI)

Transdisciplinary theme: How we express ourselves

Title of unit of inquiry: The impact of advertising

Central idea: Advertising influences how we think and the choices we make

Lines of inquiry:

The purpose of advertising

The types, styles and locations of advertisements

The devices used to make advertising effective and to influence our choices

The central ideas are formulated to fit under the six different transdisciplinary themes that are chosen from the IB for their global significance and illustrating the commonalities of human existence. The transdisciplinary themes are considered essential in the context of a program of international education.

The PYP transdisciplinary themes:

- Who we are

- **Where we are in place and time**
- **How we express ourselves**
- **How we organize ourselves**
- **How the world works**
- **Sharing the planet**

All science and social studies education will be taught inside the framework of the units and often many other subjects will be part of them as well. If some of the subject specific goals and skills don't fit under the unit work, they will be taught as stand alone topics.

Essential elements

Continuing with the idea that knowledge is only one part of the development of a child, the PYP has compiled the essential elements which are used in the classroom to aim towards a balance in the program of study. Below you will find the five essential elements which are used throughout a PYP classroom:

Knowledge, Concepts, Skills, Attitudes and Action

Each essential element contributes to the social and cognitive development of a child. These essential elements create the foundation of the PYP and set it apart from other thematic approaches to learning. Since we have already spoken about the knowledge aspect of the PYP in the previous section this section will only address the remaining four essential elements.

Conceptual learning - What do we want the students to understand?

The teacher and students will look at the inquiry at hand through different conceptual lenses, to give the students chances to make connections over the subject boundaries. The teachers will choose two or three concepts for each unit that they think supports that unit, and they will make sure that all key concepts are used during the year.

The PYP Key concepts:

Form

Function

Responsibility

Reflection

Causation

Connection

Change

Perspective

The most common use of key concepts is through questioning. Below are some sample questions for a given theme.

| Central idea | Key concept(s) | Question(s) |
|---|--------------------|---|
| All living things go through a process of | change, connection | How are the changes that two animals go through alike? (<i>connection</i>) How does an animal (e.g. butterfly) change during its lifetime? (<i>change</i>) |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| change | | |
| Through arts people use different forms of expression | function, perspective, reflection | What does expressing yourself through art look like ? (<i>form</i>) How can different people have different perspectives on a piece of artwork? (<i>perspective</i>) |

All units within all grade levels form together the school's Programme of Inquiry (PoI). The PoI is reviewed every year to make sure that the horizontal and vertical development under each transdisciplinary theme is satisfactory. Our PoI is found on SchoolSoft and in every classroom.

Skills - What do we want the students to be able to do?

The importance of developing subject specific skills as well as skills that transcend subject boundaries is identified both in the IB curriculum and Lgr 11. It is important for the student to not only learn certain skills, but also to understand them and to be able to connect skills in different subject areas to each other. When studying a certain unit of inquiry, the teacher identifies which skills will be necessary for the students to develop and understand. The students will also have time to reflect over the skills and to what extent they think the skills were applied in that certain unit of inquiry. Lgr 11 has chosen a number of skills that are desirable that the student develops for each subject. Below you can find the specific skills the IB has determined essential for the development of the student.

| <i>Thinking</i> | <i>Social</i> | <i>Communication</i> | <i>Self-management</i> | <i>Research</i> |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Acquisition of knowledge</i> | <i>Accepting responsibility</i> | <i>Listening</i> | <i>Gross motor skills</i> | <i>Formulating questions</i> |
| <i>Comprehension</i> | <i>Respecting others</i> | <i>Speaking</i> | <i>Fine motor skills</i> | <i>Observing</i> |
| <i>Application</i> | <i>Cooperating</i> | <i>Reading</i> | <i>Organization</i> | <i>Planning</i> |
| <i>Analysis</i> | <i>Resolving conflict</i> | <i>Writing</i> | <i>Time management</i> | <i>Collecting data</i> |
| <i>Synthesis</i> | <i>Group decision-making</i> | <i>Viewing</i> | <i>Safety</i> | <i>Recording data</i> |
| <i>Evaluation</i> | <i>Adopting a variety of group roles</i> | <i>Presenting</i> | <i>Healthy lifestyle</i> | <i>Organizing data</i> |
| <i>Dialectical thinking</i> | | <i>Non-verbal communication</i> | <i>Codes of behavior</i> | <i>Interpreting data</i> |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Metacognition</i> | | | <i>Informed choices</i> | <i>Presenting research findings</i> |
|----------------------|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Attitudes - What attitudes do we want the students demonstrate?

As the PYP program strives to educate the whole child, it has identified a set of personal attitudes that are necessary to become an internationally minded person who grows up to live and interact with people and society. The teacher will look for and discuss these attitudes with the students, thus making the attitudes an important part of everyday life in school. They are assessed, incorporated into the portfolio, and become a part of the IUP.

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Appreciation</i> | <i>Creativity</i> | <i>Independence</i> |
| <i>Commitment</i> | <i>Curiosity</i> | <i>Integrity</i> |
| <i>Confidence</i> | <i>Empathy</i> | <i>Respect</i> |
| <i>Cooperation</i> | <i>Enthusiasm</i> | <i>Tolerance</i> |

Action - How do we want the students to act?

The PYP believes that successful inquiry will lead to responsible student action. As an IB school, it is Vasa International's obligation to make sure that there is opportunity for action within the unit of inquiry. The teacher will guide the students in choosing action, and acting and reflecting over their action in order to make a difference in the world. The form of action will of course look very different depending on the grade level. Action can and will take place both guided in the classroom and independently elsewhere.

Action beyond the classroom

A parent reports to a teacher that her four-year-old child has taken action at home, after having been on a school excursion to a recycling station/sewage treatment plant/centre:

Parent: *On your trip did the children learn about water conservation?*

Teacher: *It was one component of our investigations. Why do you ask?*

Parent: *Because during the weekend I was starting the shower for my son. He ran out of the room and came back with a bucket, and put it in the shower. When I asked him what he was doing, he replied: "I'm catching the water that is not hot enough yet for my shower, so I can save it and give the garden a drink after my shower."*

Teacher: *That's really interesting. He is taking action as a result of what he learned. Please let me know if this continues and if you notice anything else.*

As stated above, action as a result of an inquiry can take place anywhere and anytime. Therefore, teachers would be very happy if you told them about action the students take at home or outside of school, as it is powerful evidence of one of the essential elements of the PYP.

Assessment

Formative assessment

During the unit of inquiry or current subject area, the teacher will check the student's development so that it is moving in the right direction, that no misconceptions have arisen, that the student understands where to move next, and to develop as much as possible in regards to the goals of the area of work. Examples of how formative assessment can take place are:

- journal entry
- quiz
- mini-conference
- observation
- short response
- project

Summative assessment

At the end of a unit of inquiry or a subject area, a summative assessment is done to see to what extent the student understands the central idea or the goals set up for the area of work. The assessments are recorded and lay as a foundation for the IUP, where teacher, student and parents together look at the student's whole school development.

A part of the assessment plan is the portfolio. In the portfolio the student gathers evidence of development, understanding and work that the student is particularly happy with. The student gets to reflect over what and why a specific piece of work should be put inside the portfolio. The portfolio follows the student through the whole PYP for the student to see the development in different subjects.

To find our complete assessment policy and other relevant documents please visit:

https://padlet.com/vasa_international/4zxrzxo85yec