

September 2020

Dear Families:

Welcome to an IB School! Every school year is an important and exciting year for you and your child. Your child is entering a school that offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) to all students. This international framework for teaching and learning at select elementary schools in AACPS values learning across the subject areas in order to create lasting knowledge and to build skills for learning and for life.

### **What is the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme?**

The IB Primary Years Programme, for students aged 3 to 12, focuses on purposeful inquiry as the leading vehicle for learning. The PYP framework emphasizes the central principle of agency that is threaded throughout the structure of the programme: the learner, learning and teaching, and the learning community. The structure underlines that everyone connected to the school community has voice, choice and ownership to impact learning and teaching. These holistic components complement and reinforce each other to form a coherent whole.

### **What are the Essential Elements of an IB World School Education?**

Essential elements are incorporated into this framework, so that students are given the opportunity to:

- gain knowledge that is relevant and of global significance
- develop an understanding of concepts, which allows them to make connections throughout their learning
- acquire transdisciplinary and disciplinary skills
- develop traits that will lead to international mindedness
- develop agency by taking meaningful and intentional action

### **Concepts: What do we want students to understand?**

Powerful ideas that have relevance within the subject areas, but also transcend them. Students must explore and re-explore to develop a coherent, in-depth understanding. *Form, Function, Causation, Change, Connection, Perspective, Responsibility*

### **Knowledge: What do we want students to know about?**

Significant, relevant content that we wish students to explore and know about, taking into consideration their prior experience and understanding. The most significant and distinctive feature of the IB Primary Years Programme is the **six transdisciplinary themes**: *Who We Are, How We Organize Ourselves, Where We Are in Place and Time, How We Express Ourselves, How the World Works, Sharing the Planet*

### **Approaches to Learning: What do we want students to be able to do?**

Demonstrate the skills needed to succeed in a changing, challenging world, which may be disciplinary or transdisciplinary in nature. *Thinking, Self-management, Communication, Research, Social*

### **Action: How do we want students to act?**

Student-initiated action is considered as a dynamic outcome of agency, and an integral part of the learning process that can arise at any time. Action might come in the form of participation, advocacy, social justice, social entrepreneurship, and life choices.

**IB Learner Profile** - Traits recognized and explicitly taught as those of an internationally minded citizen: *Thinker, Inquirer, Principled, Knowledgeable, Communicator, Open-minded, Risk-taker, Balanced, Reflective, Caring*. For more information:

[www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)

<https://www.aacps.org/Page/6747>

**How is the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme taught in AACPS?** All students will learn a world language, and at our school the additional language is determined by the school. Our students and teachers purposefully connect learning to the community around us as we become internationally minded. Beginning in kindergarten, our students explore ways to use their rapidly growing knowledge and skills to take steps to positively impact their family, friends, and school community, and then in older grades, the local and regional community. Your child will be involved in a wide variety of engaging learning experiences organized into four to six inquiry-based units of study that will nurture academic and social development, as well as the IB Learner Profile. In both IB and AACPS, differentiated instruction is expected at all grade levels; we meet each student at their current level and support and challenge him or her to meet the standards and move beyond them. Our inclusive classrooms are highly diverse, and teachers plan strategically in order to meet the needs of ALL learners. IB schools, including ours, welcome parent/guardian involvement for you are critical in helping us meaningfully connect school learning to the world around us and to our communities.

As an IB Primary Years Programme school, we continue to offer the traditional subject areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in the classroom, though enhanced with greater connections among them. We integrate into the classroom instruction arts, health & wellness, real-world applications, the target world language, and opportunities to take action from learning as often as we are able. Teacher teams use the standards to craft four-six (4-6) concept-based units of inquiry lasting approximately five to twelve (5-12) weeks. The IB Primary Years Programme units of inquiry themes at Grades Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> are: *Who We Are; How We Organize Ourselves; How We Express Ourselves; Where We Are In Place and Time; How the World Works and Sharing the Planet.*

An IB Primary Years Programme school develops unique units of inquiry based on identified local, state and IB standards. Each school's units are reflective of the students, the teachers, and the school community. We reflect and improve on the units of inquiry annually. Within the units of inquiry, your child will experience developmentally appropriate teaching and learning including the following subject areas required by our county, our state, and the International Baccalaureate Organization:

**Language/English Language Arts** – Language is the vehicle for creating meaning. Language learning includes reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting. Language Arts instruction is based on the Maryland College and Career Ready Curriculum and the IB PYP Language scope and sequence. Objectives related to reading skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, reading strategies, and reading comprehension are taught during both large group and differentiated small group sessions. A variety of texts are used to support the establishment of reading for beginning readers and expand the reading skills of children as more advanced readers. Writing instruction focuses on the conventions of writing as well as writing to communicate by writing narrative, explanatory and opinion pieces. From each unit of inquiry flows a logical progression of writing tasks.

**Mathematics:** Mathematics instruction is based on Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for Mathematics, including the Standards for Mathematical Practice, and the IB PYP Mathematics scope and sequence. The focus is on establishing and extending understanding related to number, quantity, addition, subtraction, geometry, and measurement. Students will participate in both large and small group instruction that will help them acquire and extend their understanding of mathematical concepts and improve their ability to apply their new understandings to real-life situations.

**Science:** Students actively engage in interdisciplinary applications and learning using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the IB PYP Science scope and sequence.

**Social Studies:** Students actively engage in interdisciplinary applications and learning using National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 standards and the IB PYP Social Studies scope and sequence in order to become informed citizens.

**Environmental Literacy:** Students actively engage in interdisciplinary applications and learning using the MSDE Environmental Literacy standards. These standards support the IB Primary Years' emphasis on caring for our world through stewardship. Each year students have a more sophisticated environmental focus. During Kindergarten students take part in Trees Are Terrific Environmental Program with staff from the Environmental and Outdoor Education Office.

Single-subject **Cultural Arts** classes offered in our AACPS IB Primary Years Programme school include: **World and Classical Language, Visual Arts, Music Media, and Physical Education.**

**English Language Acquisition Program (ESOL):** English Language Acquisition (ELA) classes comply with the requirements of Title III ESSA. The goal of English Language Acquisition instruction is to enable English Learners to construct meaning from oral and written language, express complex ideas and information, as well as access instruction. In order to accomplish this goal, the ELA curriculum is based on WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards:

- Social and Instructional Language
- The Language of Language Arts
- The Language of Mathematics
- The Language of Science
- The Language of Social Studies

While the ELA teacher is responsible for English Language Development according to the WIDA ELD standards, the Maryland State Standards for College and Career Readiness, as well as National and State Content Standards, are the context used for teaching the language. All students who have been identified as eligible to receive English Language Acquisition services will take WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, the annual assessment to measure English Language Proficiency.

We are eager for a year of transdisciplinary learning for your child and with your child. Through our inquiries, teaching and learning activities, interactions with students, educators, and the community, your child will further develop our IB Learner Profile: *Thinker, Inquirer, Principled, Knowledgeable, Communicator, Open-minded, Risk-taker, Balanced, Reflective, Caring*. If you desire additional information, please contact your child's teacher, school based IB Coordinator or your principal.

**i-Ready Diagnostic and Personalized Path:** This year, our students will take the i-Ready diagnostic. This diagnostic is a short series of questions that will help teachers know how to group students so that we can best address student needs and build on their strengths. The i-Ready diagnostic is administered on the computer and then the program creates a personalized series of games and activities unique for each student. We ask that each student spend 10 - 15 minutes each day on reading and math i-Ready activities for homework or asynchronous learning time. To learn more about i-Ready, please go to [www.aacps.org/iready](http://www.aacps.org/iready).

Sincerely,