

# IBDP SUCCESS

**DEVIN DEMARTINI COOKE**, INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE COORDINATOR AND FACULTY

In 2016, after a three-year self-study and application process, Convent & Stuart Hall began offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum to the Class of 2018 in their junior year. Those hearty pioneers eventually became the first graduates to receive the IB Diploma. While new to the school, the IB was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968 with the intention “to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” The IB’s history of educating young people to take on the global challenges mirrors the aims of the Goals and Criteria of the Sacred Heart, and the inclusion of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) in the high school curriculum was therefore a strong match for our educational community.

The IBDP is taken in Grades 11 and 12, and students select six academic courses from specific subject groups that include general coursework as well as IBDP deliverables (both internal and external exams). Students

also complete a course on “The Theory of Knowledge,” reflect and engage in personal growth through the documentation of experiences in CAS (Creativity, Activity, Service), and complete an extended research paper on a question of their own development. While many of our alumni are familiar with the rigor and commitment to personal growth within the Convent & Stuart Hall curriculum, the IBDP provides an additional framework to further explore the richness of a Sacred Heart education and its commitment to the core values of intellectual curiosity, personal growth and a commitment to making the world a better place.

In July 2020, after five years of offering the IBDP, Convent & Stuart Hall engaged in a new self-study process alongside the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) to complete a five-year instructional review. Work on this yearlong report culminated in August 2021, and the school achieved a strong reaccreditation. The process illuminated the success that the school and its graduates have achieved. The

IBO shared in its commendations that “Convent & Stuart Hall has a system of academic support that is holistic in nature and is integrated from ninth grade into the twelfth grade year and beyond. The focus on the success of the whole learner is clearly demonstrated in the processes embedded in the school.”

The report included testaments from faculty, students, alumni and families, and expressed the deep care and commitment to forming lifelong learners at Convent & Stuart Hall through IBDP courses and others. While 63 percent of our IBDP graduates from the Class of 2021 went on to attend the most selective colleges, it is not only the college matriculation that is reflective of the promise of what IBDP brings. It is what the graduates accomplish. Cesar Guerrero, Director of Admissions and Academic Guidance shared, “While the college matriculation list looks impressive, what needs to be recognized is the amount of effort and work that those students dedicated during their time in the IBDP. The program is only as fruitful as the extent to which a student authentically

engages all of its elements, including their extended essay and the research involved. The CAS project should be a highlight of how they pursue their interests in the world they’re in rather than just simply creating a club. Ultimately, what the matriculation list doesn’t tell you is the story of this graduating class and how they dove into their experience.”

Since 2016, the IBDP at Convent & Stuart Hall has experienced consistent and intentional growth in course offerings, from 14 courses available to the first cohort to 34 courses for the Class of 2023. The evolution of the program has increased student interest, from 24 students graduating with an IBDP education in 2018

to 93 current juniors who entered the IBDP in the fall of 2021. Along with the increased enrollment, a wider selection of courses and more IB-trained faculty, there has also been a measurable increase in students earning the full

IB Diploma, with 94 percent of our most recent IBDP graduates attaining a dual Convent & Stuart Hall and IB Diploma.

Reflecting on both the growth and the success of students in the IBDP over the last five years, Rachel Simpson, Head of Convent High School and Chief Academic Officer, affirms the value of the IBDP saying, “When meeting with juniors who have just begun their IB Diploma Programme, or when interviewing IB alumni at admissions events, I am always impressed and struck by the IB student’s evident investment in what they are learning and how the IB Diploma Programme is a significant vehicle for who they become — intellectually curious and creative people, and engaged and active citizens.”

**ABOVE:** Students lead physics and chemistry experiments.

