



Helen Keller Elementary School Mission Statement

The mission of Helen Keller Elementary School is to establish and maintain an educational community that empowers all students to become principled, independent inquirers who are socially responsible global citizens.

The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program

Helen Keller Elementary School is proud to offer the International Baccalaureate's Primary Years Program (PYP). This educational program, appropriate for students age 3 to 12, focuses on developing the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of EVERY child in EVERY classroom.

The International Baccalaureate introduced the Primary Years Program in 1997 with the purpose of developing, "inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect." (IB Mission Statement). A PYP school strives toward developing internationally minded people. World wide there are currently 976 schools offering the PYP and many more, like Helen Keller Elementary, in the process of becoming an authorized IB World School.

The Learner Profile

The PYP supports the development of international mindedness primarily through the IB Learner Profile. This is a set of ten human characteristics, see below, we aspire all students to possess and practice throughout their lives. The Learner Profile is the heart of the Primary Years Program. A student demonstrating these attributes IS an internationally minded person.

The IB Learner Profile

The aim of all IB programs is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

IB learners strive to be:

- Inquirers** They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.
- Knowledgeable** They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.
- Thinkers:** They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognize and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.
- Communicators** They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.
- Principled** They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.
- Open-minded** They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.
- Caring** They show empathy, compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have 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 courage and 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.

The Five Essential Elements of The PYP

In addition to teaching the practice of the Learner Profile, the PYP also prescribes a curriculum framework with five essential elements; **knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and action**. Each of these elements is connected to the Learner Profile and used to construct our school’s curriculum.

KNOWLEDGE: Students in the Primary Years Program attain knowledge through the six transdisciplinary units taught at each grade level. The units are called “transdisciplinary” because they are not limited to a single subject area (such as science), but rather pull and connect content from all subject areas (science, social studies, math, reading, writing, technology) through a central idea. Each unit’s central idea is a big, conceptual understanding that would be relevant to anyone in the world. More detailed information from all subject areas are then woven together to form the content of each unit.

The IB provides six themes to construct these central ideas and units around – *Who We Are, Where We Are in Time and Place, How We Express Ourselves, How the World Works, How We Organize Ourselves, and Sharing the Planet*. The following are Helen Keller Elementary’s unit titles under each theme. This is referred to as the Program of Inquiry (POI). This is a continual **work in progress** and will change periodically. Teachers collaborate regularly to develop these units, reflect on their effectiveness and make changes as deemed appropriate. The majority of our state and district curriculum will be woven into and taught within these units. However, not all state and district benchmarks can be connected. Therefore, explicit instruction of these will occur outside the confines of the IB units.

Themes	Who We Are	Where We Are in Time And Place	How We Express Ourselves	How the World Works	How We Organize Ourselves	Sharing The Planet
K	Myself & Others	Seasons	Genre	Function of Living Things	Living Together	
1 st	Me In The World	Personal Histories	Express Yourself	Solids & Liquids	Goods & Services	Change Yourself
2 nd	Cultures in the World	Contributions in the World	Communication in the World	Change in the World	Commerce in the World	Conservation of the World
3 rd	We The People	Explore the Planet	Discover Communication	Movers & Shakers	Structure & Function	Human Impact
4 th	Let’s Get Working	Let’s Get Moving	Let’s Be Expressive	Let’s Get Energized	Let’s Get Organized	Let’s Be Balanced
5 th	Rights & Responsibilities	Journeys & Discoveries	Symbols	Advances in Technology	Money – vs- Earth	Systems

CONCEPTS: The following concepts are also incorporated into the transdisciplinary units; *form, function causation, change, connection, perspective, responsibility, and reflection*. When collaborating to write the units, teachers decide which of these concepts best match the central idea of each unit and develop lessons to reinforce them. Focusing on these concepts allow students to grasp “the big picture” of what is being taught and a way to connect the detailed facts presented to them.

SKILLS: The PYP promotes the teaching of numerous *social skills, communication skills, research skills, thinking skills, and self-management skills*. Instruction and practice of these skills are worked into each lesson of the transdisciplinary units.

ATTITUDES: In order to take on the acquisition of new knowledge, concepts and skills, students must display certain attitudes toward learning and the people around them. The PYP teaches students about how each individual’s approach to every situation can positively, or negatively affect the outcome. The attitudes; *appreciation, commitment, confidence, cooperation, creativity, curiosity, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, respect, and tolerance*, and their impact on students success, are taught throughout the school by all the Helen Keller staff. If a student possesses and displays these attitudes, they are demonstrating practice of the Learner Profile.

ACTION: The final essential element of the PYP is student action. The ultimate goal of the program is to have students independently *choosing a course of action, taking that action, and then reflecting on it*. All the other pieces of this program prepare students to do this with skill and integrity, with caring and thoughtfulness. While we are looking for this to occur, without adult prompting, at all the grade levels, the PYP has set up a **5th Grade Exhibition**. The last IB unit in 5th will be written and conducted by each student. This is their opportunity to demonstrate *action* in the world. Specific information about the exhibition will be provided to 5th grade parents at Curriculum Night in the Fall of each school year.