

Executive Report to Policy and Priorities Committee

Refresh of International Baccalaureate (IB) Program in UGDSB

To: Policy and Priorities Committee
From: Peter Sovran, Director of Education/CEO
Prepared by: Denise Heaslip, Superintendent of Education
Date: June 4, 2024
Report Type: ACTION

Recommendation

1. THAT the 'Refresh of International Baccalaureate (IB) Program in UGDSB' report be received;
2. THAT the IB Diploma Program at Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute (GCVI) continue, with admissions starting in Grade 11 from September 2026; and
3. THAT staff explore the expansion of the IB Diploma Program to the County of Dufferin and North Wellington.

Background

The Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) strives to be a leader in delivering exceptional, adaptable and inclusive learning experiences for all students. To achieve this vision, the UGDSB reviews specialized programs like the International Baccalaureate Program to ensure they meet student needs.

In 2018, a Secondary Program Review was completed to create a vision for secondary education in the UGDSB, and to ensure we are addressing the learning needs of all students. It was designed to identify student learning characteristics and explore strategies to support student pathways and excellence in student achievement. The review found that while a large percentage of students (75%) were supported in working toward their future plans, there are opportunities to increase access to specialized programs and improve outcomes for students.

This document is available in alternative formats upon request.

Following the 2018 review, trustees requested individual secondary program reviews to be conducted before opening of the new Guelph secondary school and every five years thereafter. To date, program reviews have included Continuing Education, Alternative Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programming for Multilingual Language Learners (MLL). The UGDSB Multi-Year Plan (MYP) is also an important component of each review, which includes a vision to be recognized as leaders that create unparalleled, agile and inclusive learning experiences for all students.

An independent review of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program in UGDSB was completed by Sue Dunlop. This review followed the board's procurement procedures, which included defining the review's scope and considering three potential reviewers. Sue Dunlop, an experienced educational consultant, with many years of service in education and senior leadership, was selected to complete the review.

The review examined IB programming at Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute (GCVI) for students in Grades 9 and 10, as well as the Grade 11 and 12 IB Diploma Program (IB DP). Equity of access and engagement, including location or geography of the program, accommodation needs, diversity, and financial implications for the board were reviewed. This included information gathering from central and school staff, meeting with school staff, and gathering perspectives from students currently in IB, parents/guardians/caregivers of students in IB, and GCVI staff, through a survey.

Refresh of International Baccalaureate Programming in UGDSB

This report includes key components of the review that was completed, along with a rationale for the above recommendations, beginning with a timeline of the IB DP program and updates to Board approved recommendations from March of 2013.

Timeline for IB Program

May 1, 2012 - Approval to conduct IB feasibility study and Learning Choices Committee struck to provide report and recommendations for an IB DP

March 26, 2013 - Board approval to establish an IB DP, following Learning Choices Committee report and recommendations

September 2014 - Grade 9 students enter IB preparatory classes at GCVI

September 2016 - Grade 11 students enter IB Diploma Program at GCVI

February 2016 - GCVI becomes IB World School authorized

June 2018 - First IB Diplomas awarded at GCVI

Following receipt of the Learning Choices committee report, Trustees approved the following recommendations at the March 26, 2013, Board Meeting:

Upper Grand District School Board approves the following recommendations:

- a. the establishment of a Diploma International Baccalaureate Program in the Upper Grand District School Board;
- b. the submission of an *IB School Information Form* by Guelph CVI (GCVI) to initiate the process of school accreditation for an International Baccalaureate Diploma program to commence in September 2016;
- c. the establishment and on-going maintenance of a student bursary fund of \$25,000 commencing in September 2016 to ensure that any student who is accepted through the application process to the Diploma IB program and for whom the financial requirements are a barrier to admission, is not prevented from benefiting from this program;
- d. notwithstanding recommendation c, that parent/guardians will be required to pay a set fee for the two-year IB Diploma Program not to exceed \$1300.00 in each year to cover the costs of the program;
- e. the establishment of a \$100,000 budget line for September 2013, managed by the Secondary Superintendent of Education, to support the three year start up costs until the IB Diploma Program is self sustaining, commencing in September 2016;
- f. that three sections of time release, commencing in the 2013-14 school year, be provided to Guelph CVI to support the IB Coordinator's role and responsibilities;
- g. that transportation, other than to students who would normally qualify for busing in the Guelph CVI catchment area, will not be provided;
- h. any student who is accepted into GCVI's IB track and does not continue in the program, for any reason, will be returned to their home school.

What is the IB Diploma Program (IB DP)?

The IB DP is a globally recognized educational framework designed for students aged 16 to 19 (Grades 11 and 12). The program aims to develop well-rounded individuals by fostering academic excellence, personal growth and international-mindedness. Students engage in a challenging curriculum that includes a broad range of subjects, emphasizing critical thinking, research skills and intercultural understanding. The IB DP also requires

students to complete three Core non-classroom courses: Theory of Knowledge, an Extended Essay, and participate in Creativity, Activity, Service activities.

The IB DP is offered in 18 of 31 public English-speaking school boards in Ontario, as well as several separate school boards. Some boards offer preparatory programming, while others offer the IB DP on its own.

What is the Preparatory Program?

Elementary students who choose to apply to the IB DP at GCVI, are required to submit an application in early Fall of their Grade 8 year. Prior to entering the IB DP in Grade 11, students are cohorted into IB preparatory classes for Grades 9 and 10. Preparatory courses in Grade 9 and 10 are considered part of the IB Middle Years Program (Grades 7-10) and are not a requirement to complete the IB DP.

Analysis

Below are updates to recommendations that were approved by the Board to establish an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB DP) and a summary of key components from the IB Program review, including the following categories:

- Additional IB Program Costs
- IB Program Success
- Geographical Area of Students Accepted into IB Program
- Applications and Acceptance
- Destreaming
- Enrolment Trends and Retention over Four Years
- Feedback Survey

Establishment of an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IB DP)

(recommendations a, b)

GCVI staff worked diligently to meet the requirements to become an accredited IB school, starting the IB Diploma Program in September 2016. This followed two years of providing preparatory IB courses to students in Grades 9 and 10. The Learning Choices Committee report that recommended an IB DP emphasized that in order to build a successful program, it was important to first offer the program at a single school location. When the IB DP for GCVI was approved, there was strong support expressed for the need to find a way to grow the program in other locations in order to provide equitable access to students across the system. While the GCVI Diploma Program is open to any student who is successful through the application process, to ensure geographical equity over time, it was also recommended that the Board review the need and interest for an additional IB program to mitigate distance, transportation challenges, and travel time for

students.

Student Fees and Bursary Funding (*recommendations c, d*)

Student fees for the IB DP are \$2,000 (total) and families may choose to make four payments of \$500 (each semester of Grade 11 and 12). Fees paid by parents/guardians/caregivers are not tuition fees but allocated to cover the costs of examinations, enrichment opportunities and other specific costs related to the student. There are no student fees collected for Grades 9 and 10 preparatory classes and approved bursary funds of \$25,000 remain available to support Grade 11 and 12 IB DP students, where finances would otherwise be a barrier to attend and benefit from the program.

Additional IB Funding (*recommendation e*)

As approved, a budget line of \$100,000 was provided to support start-up of the IB DP, which was to cover costs for initial staff training and renewal for revised curriculum, IB resources and professional fees. These funds were to be available for the first three years, starting in 2013-2014. The IB program was to be self-sustaining following a three-year period, commencing 2016-2017. The IB program as it is currently offered is not self-sustaining and the school continues to receive close to \$100,000 each year from the UGDSB, to support and maintain the program.

Additional Teaching Sections (*recommendation f*)

As approved, three additional teaching sections (FTE 0.5) were added to support an IB Coordinator role, above what was generated by student enrolment. The number of additional sections has increased since the introduction of IB and currently includes 18 additional sections (FTE 3.0), with some years receiving 24 or 25 sections. The chart below reflects the number of additional teaching sections assigned for each year and the full time equivalent (FTE) is noted on the bottom line.

For the 2023-2024 school year, 10 of the additional 18 sections support the IB Coordinator role, guidance, assignment support, marketing/recruitment, and eight sections are used to support IB DP classes, where class numbers are lower.

Additional Teaching Sections (#) Assigned to Support the IB Program											
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
#	3	3	5	6	25	25	24	24	18	18	18
FTE	0.50	0.50	0.83	1.00	4.17	4.17	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

Class Size Comparison of IB Diploma Courses and Standard Curriculum Courses

Grade 9 and 10 IB preparatory courses are staffed using the same formula as standard curriculum courses and follow the collective agreement for class size. IB DP classes tend to have lower class sizes for some subjects compared to standard curriculum class sizes, primarily resulting from approximately 50% of students leaving IB programming after Grade 10 or part way through the IB DP. The shrinking cohort creates a need for additional sections to ensure that required courses are offered and choices are available for students in the IB DP. The chart below includes examples of IB DP class sizes compared to standard curriculum classes for several courses offered this school year at GCVI in 2023-2024.

Class Size Comparison of IB DP Courses and Standard Curriculum Courses		
Course	IB DP Class Size	Standard Curriculum Class Size
HSP3U (Yr 1 Psychology, Gr 11 Anthropology)	21.0	31.0
HSB4U (Yr 2 Psychology, Gr 12 Anthropology)	16.7	24.5
MDM4U (IB Math Studies, OSSD Data Mgmt)	15.0	28.0
AVI4M (Gr 12, Year 2 Visual Art)	18.0	31.0
BBB4M (IB Economics, OSSD Intl Business)	16.5	26.5
CIA4U (Gr 12, Year 2 Economics)	18.0	30.0
SPH3U (Gr 12, Year 1 Physics)	22.0	25.5
SPH4U (Gr 12, Year 2 Physics)	17.5	30.5

Transportation (*recommendation g*)

As approved, transportation is provided to students who live within the GCVI catchment area and qualify for busing. Transportation is not provided for students attending the IB Program who live outside the GCVI catchment area. There are no transportation costs to the board, but it has been noted that this can pose accessibility and financial challenges for students and families.

Students Leaving the IB Program (*recommendation h*)

Students accepted into the IB Program at GCVI who do not continue in the program for any reason, were to return to their designated home school. This has not been the practice and students leaving the program between Grade 9 and prior to graduation from the IB DP have mostly remained at GCVI. Overtime, this will continue to amplify the already existing accommodation pressures for space at GCVI.

Key Components from the IB Program Review

Additional IB Program Costs

An additional budget line was provided for start-up costs to establish an IB DP, covering costs for teacher training and re-training, curriculum resources and other professional development. The IB program was to be self-sustaining by September, 2016, but continues to receive close to \$125,000 each year to support the program as it is currently operating. Three additional teaching sections (0.5 FTE) were added for the first three years and following this, sections increased to 24 (4 FTE), followed by 18 sections to support the program. Of the 18 sections added for 2013-2014 school year, 10 sections support the Coordinator role and other IB support staff, with eight sections assigned to supplement IB DP classes. The additional budget line and teaching sections to support the Coordinator role and support staff amount to approximately \$600,000 per year, with the eight teaching sections added to support IB DP classes being in addition to this amount

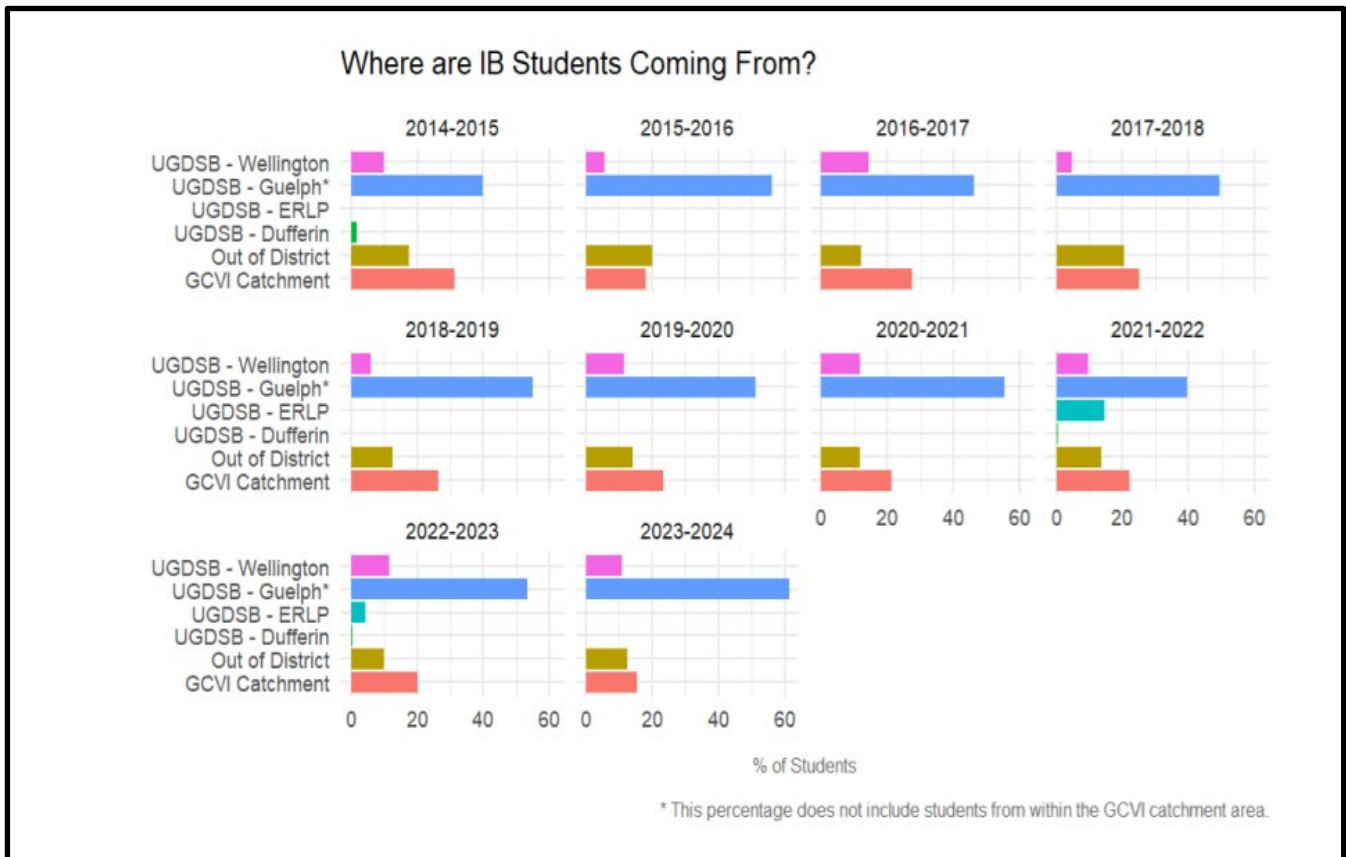
IB Programming Success

The IB Coordinator, teaching staff and Principal at GCVI believe strongly in the IB DP and its positive impact on students and on the school community. They are very proud of the IB program that has been built over the last decade and the student success that has come from it. Enrolment has increased due to marketing efforts and popularity of the program. The positive reputation of this program has also risen as GCVI IB students outperform students worldwide. In June 2023, GCVI's average total IB points was 35.8

compared to the world average of 30.24 (out of 45). Twenty percent of GCVI's IB graduates earned 40 points or more. Of this, four earned 44 points and one earned a perfect score of 45 points, an accomplishment earned by less than 1% of IB graduates worldwide.

Geographical Area of Students Accepted into IB Program

The graph below provides an overview of the regional area that students registered in the IB DP are coming from. Students who live in the GCVI catchment area are shown separately from the area of Guelph. The majority of students in IB live in Guelph with Wellington County and Out of District students making up the next largest groups of students living outside of Guelph.



Applications and Acceptance

The application process includes several components and has changed over time to reduce barriers. The IB Coordinator continues to explore other ways to reduce barriers and improve equity of access to the program. Each application to the IB DP is scored, including academic performance, learning skills and school involvement. Students are

notified in December of their Grade 8 year if they are accepted into the Grade 9 Preparatory Program, if they have been added to the waitlist or if their application is declined. Ranking is determined through the scoring of the applications.

The waitlist for students applying to enter IB programming continues to increase each year, as demonstrated in the chart below.

School Year	2017 -2018	2018 -2019	2019 -2020	2020 -2021	2021 -2022	2022 -2023	2023 -2024	2024 -2025
# of Grade 9 students accepted	124	137	193	195	209	164	164	135
# of students on waitlist	8	39	77	38	102	107	88	115

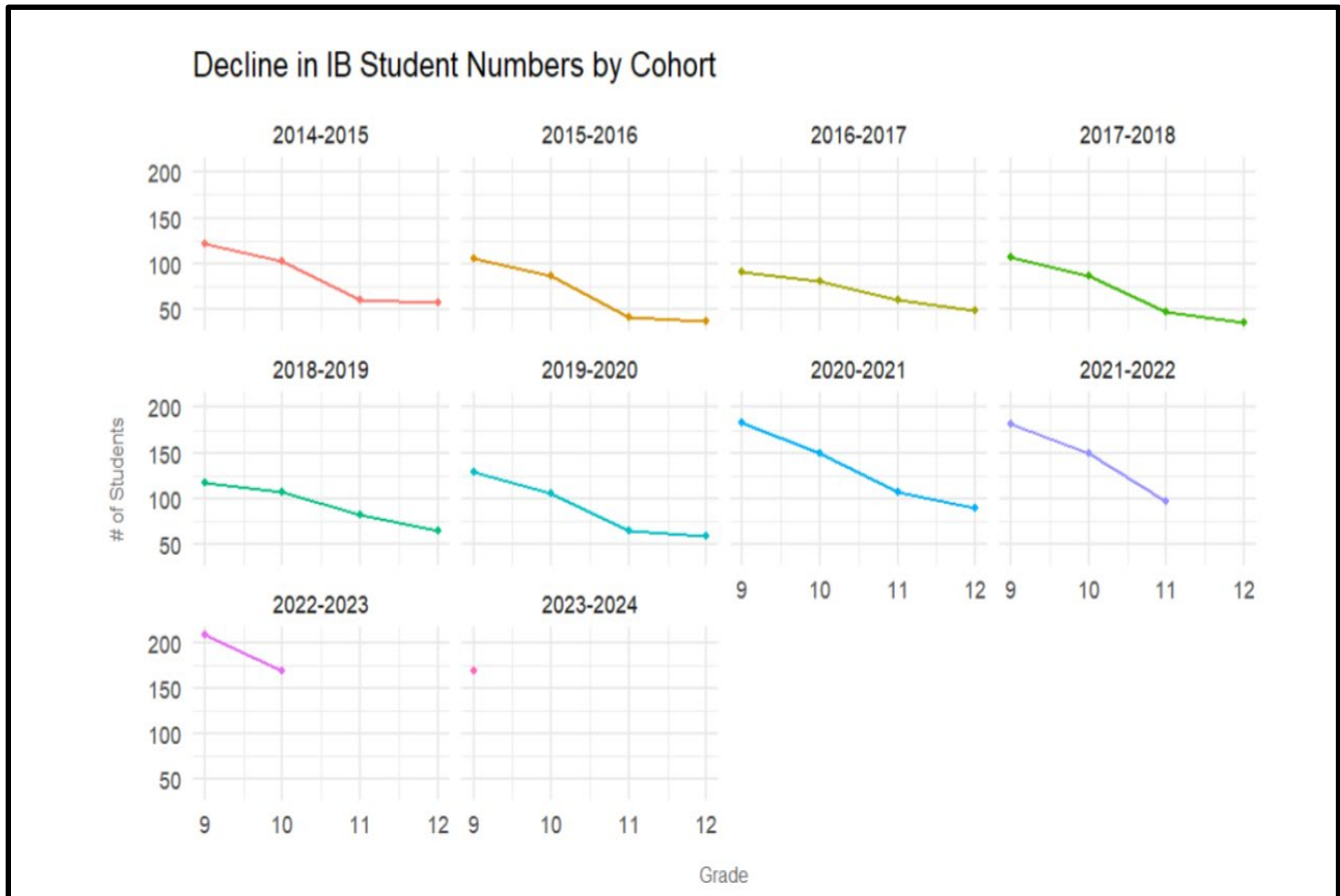
Destreaming

When the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced the destreamed Grade 9 Program, there was an increase in applications to the IB program, as families and students sought to preserve a streamed Grade 9 curriculum. Ontario's plan to destream Grade 9 is based on extensive research conducted worldwide, which demonstrates that early streaming in secondary school has significant negative and long-term effects on students placed in "lower" streams, while providing minimal benefits to "higher achieving" students (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2012). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development recommends the elimination of streaming for students under the age of 15 to ensure that students have ample experience before making decisions about their future paths.

Enrolment Trends and Retention Challenges over 4 Years

GCVI staff have made significant efforts to boost enrolment since the program's inception. As a result, the number of students applying to enter the IB program has steadily increased each year, along with the waitlists of students seeking admission. Applications to the program exceed the capacity to support a larger program, and space continues to be a challenge at GCVI.

While the IB program has seen success, a notable challenge is retaining students over four years, with approximately 50% leaving the program before earning their IB Diploma. As shown in the graphs below, for each cohort of the IB program, most students leave after the end of Grade 10. This can be attributed to several factors, including the significant increase in workload in the Diploma Program, the difficulty of Mathematics, and students choosing different pathways.



Feedback Survey

An online survey was conducted from March 8 to 29, 2024, for students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and teaching staff involved in the IB program at GCVI. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, and included an introduction to the survey and its connection to a review of the IB program. The survey was designed to understand reasons for choosing IB and perspectives on the benefits and challenges of the IB program. Questions were open text to allow respondents to have flexibility in what they chose to share. Individual responses were read and general themes were pulled from the perspectives of each group to reflect overall trends. A survey allowed opportunities for individual voice and perspectives, while keeping responses anonymous to gather open and honest responses from those who wanted to share.

Overall, survey responses were positive, highlighting the value, benefits and successes of the IB program at GCVI. A summary from each group is described below.

1. Perspective from students currently enrolled in IB

Student responses to the survey had many similarities with each other and with their parents/guardians/caregivers. Most students chose the IB program for three main reasons: their desire for academic challenge and rigor; the perceived advantage for post-secondary opportunities, especially university acceptance and scholarships; and the opportunity to be with academically driven and like-minded peers.

The main benefits they identified included learning better study and work habits and improving time management. Some students also mentioned feeling safer and happier in the IB cohort because teachers and peers shared their value for education.

The challenges of the IB program highlighted several themes, most often citing the workload, pacing and content of the program, and the negative impact on students' mental health. Several students noted the difficulty of Math, the lack of choice for electives and other courses, and the hard adjustment to the expectations of IB.

Students offered thoughtful advice for others considering the IB program, emphasizing the need for good work and study habits, understanding what IB is and isn't before choosing it, and that the effort is very much worth it.

2. Perspectives from parents of students currently enrolled in IB

Parent/guardian/caregiver responses about reasons for choosing IB mirrored those of their students. Parents focussed on the importance of academic challenge and a perception of a better education through IB for high achieving students. They frequently commented how IB would better prepare students for university and studying outside of Canada. Some mentioned family members completed the program and they saw value in it. A smaller number indicated that their child chose IB and they supported the choice once they heard about the program.

Parents saw many benefits of the program and some spoke glowingly about the difference it made for their children. They expected academic challenge and preparation for university and were pleasantly surprised by the community building within the student cohort and friends their child made. Other benefits were the quality of teaching and the increase in confidence and skills.

Challenges identified by parents were somewhat similar to students, including workload, stress and the lack of time for students to enjoy or engage in other aspects of school and adolescent life outside academics. A few parents spoke negatively about the impact

on their child's mental health. Other challenges identified were the adjustment to the IB program, the lack of choice for electives and other courses, and transportation.

3. Perspectives of GCVI staff

A large number of teaching staff responded comprehensively to the survey questions. Responses came from teachers of IB courses, as well as teachers who do not teach IB. Overall themes are that most teachers spoke very positively about the program and were passionate about the benefits they see for students. Many mentioned how gratifying it is to work with high achieving and driven students, to challenge them and to see them succeed. Many teachers enjoy teaching their speciality in depth in IB and networking with teachers around the world.

A small number of responses alluded to the elite nature of the IB program and whether that is a stereotype or truly exists. Some responses shared observations about the extra advantages the IB program receives. Staff wanted to share advice about next steps for IB and expressed skepticism about the review process and stated their preference that the program remain as is.

Rationale for Recommendations

- #1 *THAT the 'Refresh of International Baccalaureate (IB) Program in UGDSB' report be received;*
- #2 *THAT the IB Diploma Program at Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute (GCVI) continue, with admissions starting in Grade 11 from September 2026.*

The success and achievement demonstrated by students graduating from the GCVI IB DP is an accomplishment to be recognized, celebrated and continued. There are IB schools and organizations that offer the IB DP on its own and students have also demonstrated that they can be successful in IB courses that include two years of the IB DP.

There are a few considerations related to the recommendation to begin IB programming in Grade 11, including the following:

- The Ministry of Education introduced destreaming in Grade 9, partially to allow time for students to successfully transition into secondary school and to identify and follow a pathway of their choosing, without being limited by choices made before they are ready or aware of what is available to them.
- Students who have attended French Immersion (FI) during their elementary grades are not able to continue in FI programming if they are accepted into IB programming for Grade 9.

- Students interested in completing the IB DP must apply to the IB Program in the fall of their Grade 8 year, more than two and a half years before beginning the IB DP. Applications include considerations of their Grade 7 and 8 report cards, which may not accurately reflect student potential or interest in a Diploma Program that begins in Grade 11.
- With approximately 50% of students leaving IB programming before they begin the IB DP, this may suggest that students were not ready to make such a long term commitment or understanding how this choice would impact other options for their secondary years. With the increasing number of students on a waitlist for entry to Grade 9 each year, it's possible that the graduation rate for the IB DP could be higher if students entered IB programming later, allowing students more time and experience in secondary school to make this important decision.
- The UGDSB has a number of specialized programs for students to consider, but the entry point is later, with no other secondary programs that include streaming of students before Grade 10 (e.g. SHSM, CELP, MADE).

#3 *THAT staff explore the expansion of the IB Diploma Program to the County of Dufferin and North Wellington.*

Students are clearly benefiting from the learning opportunities provided by the IB program at GCVI and an expansion of the IB DP in the UGDSB would allow other students within our system to also benefit from accessing the program. When IB programming was first introduced and recommendations to establish an IB DP were approved, there were also recommendations made and discussions to expand the IB DP once the initial IB program had been established.

Conclusion

In summary, the report recommendations include continuing the IB Diploma Program at Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute (GCVI) with admissions starting in Grade 11 from September 2026, and exploring the expansion of the IB Diploma Program to the County of Dufferin and North Wellington.

These recommendations follow a recent program review, which highlighted the program's success in fostering academic excellence and personal growth among students. Starting the IB program in Grade 11 aligns with the Ontario Ministry of Education's destreaming efforts, allowing students more time to explore and solidify their academic interests in secondary school. Additionally, this change addresses the high attrition rate before Grade 11, suggesting that students may benefit from making the IB commitment later in their academic journey.

Expanding the program to new regions will increase equitable access to the IB's rigorous curriculum, ensuring more students benefit from its enriching educational opportunities. This also aligns with our goal of providing exceptional, adaptable and inclusive learning experiences for all students.