

Worldly and wise

IB program offers students a global perspective



International Baccalaureate student Victoria Cope will major in international studies next year at an American university.

(Windsor, Ontario, Nov. 3, 2014) – Victoria Cope is headed off to Ohio next year with a great university scholarship, but she might never have received the offer if she'd chosen to go to a soccer practice on a fateful night back in Grade 8.

While still a student at St. Rose Catholic Elementary School, she was encouraged by a friend to attend an information night about the International Baccalaureate program at Assumption College Catholic High School.

"I didn't really want to go because I didn't want to miss soccer practice," she said.

As it turns out, going to that meeting might have been the best decision she's ever made. Now in her fourth year of the IB program, the Grade 12 student says it's where she really found herself.

"You really learn who you are as a person," Cope said of the program.

Founded in 1968, the IB program currently operates in almost 4,000 schools in 147 countries, offering challenging programs to more than 1.2 million students. Schools interested in becoming IB World Schools must successfully complete a rigorous authorization process, which typically takes about two to three years.

Now in its tenth year at Assumption, there are around 300 students – about half the school's enrolment – in the IB program. About 110 of those students are in Grade 9, making it the largest IB class ever according to Joseph Ibrahim, the school's principal.

More challenging academically, the program's emphasis is on providing students with a global perspective and better preparing them for university. Cope said she learned first-hand that it works from some university students who had graduated from the program and came back to her school for a visit.

"They said there were students sitting beside them pulling their hair out because they hadn't been adequately prepared for what university life is like," she said.

One common misconception about the open-boundary program is that it's only for an upper-crust breed of student, according to Michael Naicker, the vice-principal who oversees it. Nothing could be further from the truth, he said.

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**-Victoria Cope
IB Student**

"We have students from all walks of life and from every part of the city," he said.

Cope, a soccer player whose scholarship is for both athletics and academics, agreed.

"We're all friends with each other regardless of where you come from or what your financial situation is," she said. "It's all about your education and your desire to learn."

The reward of being in the program often comes in the form of scholarships for many students, Naicker added.

"The largest scholarships in Ontario are earned by students in IB programs," he said.

Cope, who will major in International Studies next year, said the reason so many students succeed is because of the atmosphere created by the program's teachers.

“Every single teacher is there to help you,” she said. “They’re always available and there for extra help and support. They understand the value of the program. They’re there to see us succeed.”

Looking back, Cope said she has no regrets about skipping that soccer practice.

“It lived up to everything they said it would be,” she said of the program, adding that it provided her with a wealth of knowledge in the areas of time management, coping with stress, and critical analysis. “You do make a lot of sacrifices, but it’s a lifestyle choice more than anything else. Of course the workload is heavier, but if you enjoy learning, it’s nothing you can’t handle.”

Note: An open house for the IB program and other programs offered at Assumption will take place in the school’s gymnasium on Dec. 1 at 6:30 p.m. For a complete list of high school open house nights for Grade 8 students, visit here: <http://www.wecdsb.on.ca/school-events.html>