



Key findings from research on the Primary Years Programme

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Research department collaborates with universities and independent research institutions around the world to produce rigorous studies examining the impact and outcomes of the IB’s four programmes—the Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), Diploma Programme (DP) and Career-related Programme (CP). This resource provides an overview of key findings from recent studies relating to the PYP.

A mixed methods study examined the **PYP’s impact on school climate** within public elementary schools in **the United States (US)** (California). The study found numerous improvements to school climate that most participants attributed to the PYP. Participants at every school reported increased attention to social-emotional learning and the whole child, as well as greater use of transdisciplinary instruction and teacher collaboration due to the PYP. Additionally, the quantitative data showed statistically significant improvements post-authorization on six school climate outcomes: perceived safety, caring relationships, fairness, parent involvement, bullying and victimization (table 1) (Boal and Nakamoto 2020).

School climate outcome	Improved post-authorization	Statistically significant improvement
Perceived safety	✓	✓
Caring relationships	✓	✓
Fairness	✓	✓
Parent involvement	✓	✓
Bullying	✓	✓
Victimization	✓	✓
School connectedness	✓	
Meaningful participation	✓	
Schoolwork		

Table 1. Changes in PYP schools’ climate outcomes post-authorization

A study was conducted across five countries (**China, Kenya, Mexico, Russia and the United Kingdom**) to understand the **impacts of the PYP exhibition**, a culminating project in which students investigate and present their learnings on a chosen topic. The study found overwhelming support from parents, students and teachers for the exhibition as an activity, and a deep conviction that this was not only a good use of curriculum time, but also the pinnacle of PYP achievement. Study participants believed that the exhibition helped to develop students’ critical thinking, international-mindedness and learner profile attributes (Medwell et al 2017).

In **Australia**, researchers investigated **student well-being in PYP schools** as well as the relationship between the **PYP curriculum and student well-being**. The study found PYP curriculum and programmatic elements to include many activities and practices that promote well-being. PYP schools with strong implementation consistently showed more positive school climates and higher levels of teacher engagement, student participation, and student well-being, attributable to the PYP. Lastly, quantitative analysis of PYP and similar non-PYP schools offered substantial evidence that the PYP encourages student well-being above and beyond other well-being activities undertaken by schools (Dix and Sniedze-Gregory 2020).

Researchers conducted an audit of IB curriculum materials as part of a **global study on computational and design thinking within IB programmes**. After reviewing PYP materials, the researchers concluded that, “The PYP Learning and Teaching Guide is exceptional in its depth of treatment of teaching practices, providing guidance for transdisciplinary approaches and specific practices that support student agency and foster skills development ... The emphasis on child development and teaching and assessment practices are exemplary” (Slotta et al 2020).

A study in **Australia** explored the **impacts of PYP implementation** on 13 Victorian government primary schools as well as **student outcomes on a national assessment** for reading and numeracy¹. Students at PYP government schools performed at higher levels in both reading and numeracy, for years 3 and 5, when compared to similar schools and Australian schools generally. Additionally, school staff believed that the PYP had contributed to student learning, academic achievement, development of learner profile attributes and motivation (Gough et al 2014).

A **global** study in eight schools examined the **assessment literacy** of PYP teachers as well as the **assessment cultures** within these schools. Interviews with PYP teachers and administrators demonstrated a holistic and ongoing approach to assessment within the schools. Researchers also found a rich array of assessment activities and strategies, showing a strong grasp of the evidence required to assess student growth in knowledge, understanding and skills (Toe et al 2016).

¹ National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for Year 3 and Year 5 students.

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A mixed-methods case study in **Colombia** explored the **perceptions of administrators, teachers and students** within four PYP schools. In interviews, students identified teachers as the primary drivers of their positive learning experiences. An accompanying survey revealed that the overwhelming majority of PYP students enjoyed being a student at their school (89.3%) and were proud to be a student of their school (90%) (Lester and Lochmiller 2015).

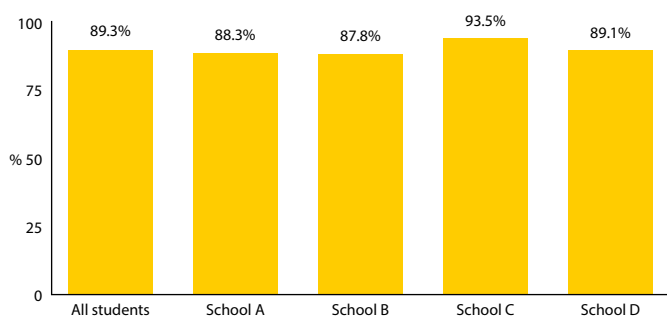
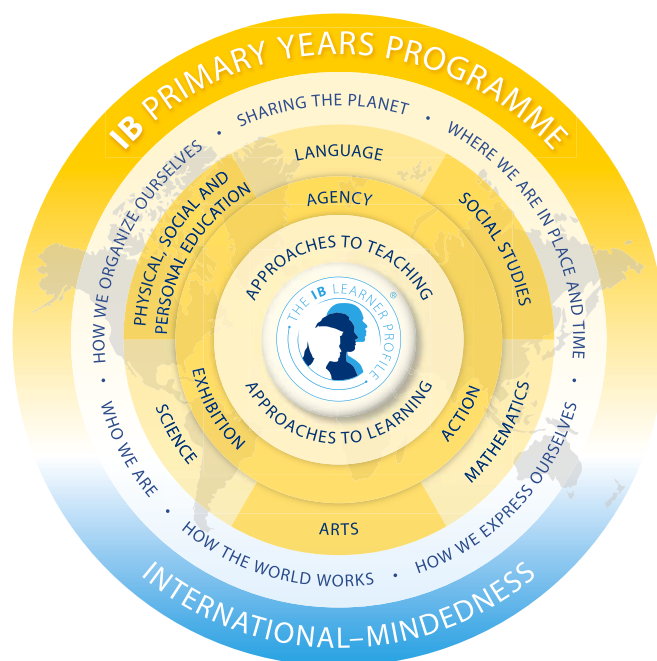


Figure 1. Percentage of students who indicated that they enjoyed school

Researchers examined **student achievement** within 14 state and private PYP schools in **New Zealand** and also explored **curriculum alignment** between the PYP and the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). Standardized test analysis indicated that achievement within the PYP schools generally exceeded achievement among schools with similar student populations in New Zealand. Additionally, while the NZC and PYP were largely compatible, there were a few points of difference, specifically an emphasis on international-mindedness, inquiry and action in the PYP (Kushner et al 2016).

A study in six European countries (**Austria, England, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden**) examined the links between **school leadership** (PYP principals and coordinators) and the **implementation of the PYP**. Based on staff surveys and interviews, PYP principals and coordinators exhibited a firm and passionate commitment to IB values. Responses also indicated that PYP leaders generally reflected the qualities of the learner profile (Day et al 2016).



References

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