

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) Handbook



PRAIRIE WATERS ELEMENTARY
IB WORLD SCHOOL

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WELCOME TO PRAIRIE WATERS

Our Mission

At Prairie Waters, we facilitate every learner's unique pursuit of understanding through engaging, purposeful, collaborative experiences which empowers each person to positively impact our diverse, ever-changing world.

Our Vision and Foundation Statements

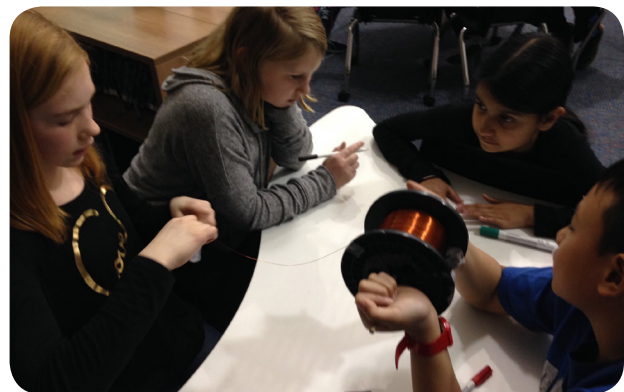
A place where we love to learn together.

The rigorous development of multiple literacies is at the heart of what we do as an elementary school.

We are all learners...

- We believe diversity should be honored and celebrated. A safe and inclusive environment is essential to learning. All learners have inherent value and make unique contributions to our community.
- We believe engagement leads to learning. We are engaged when our learning is connected, purposeful, personal and relevant. Learning is strengthened with choice, ownership and appropriate challenge.
- We believe collaboration is vital to our understanding and growth as learners. All learners are empowered to interact with experts and access the resources and tools required to enhance their learning. Enriched learning is the result of shared priorities between home, school and community.
- We believe learners construct understanding and knowledge through inquiry. Risk-taking, mistakes, reflection, and feedback are essential to the development of understanding.
- We believe we can all make a difference. Learners are empowered to take initiative, to solve problems and take action.

...Learning never ends.



International Baccalaureate Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate Organization aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through inter-cultural understanding and respect.

To this end, the IBO works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

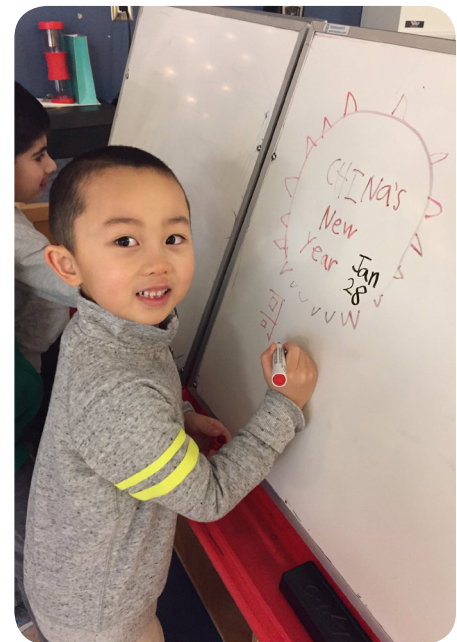
What is the PYP?

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) is the primary programme, for children aged 3-12, offered by the International Baccalaureate (IB). The PYP is an inclusive program, which means that every student that is registered in the school is engaged in the PYP. There are no special requirements or selection process involved. The PYP focuses on the development of the whole child as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside. Students are supported in developing 21st century skills, using a constructivist approach where students build on their prior knowledge in order to develop a deeper understanding of the world around them.

The aim of all IB programmes 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. They do this by demonstrating the IB Learner Profile.

International Mindedness at Prairie Waters

At Prairie Waters, we believe that global citizenship is an integral part of education. To be a global citizen is to understand and promote basic human rights, to know the nature of our physical and social world, and to be aware that our actions have an impact on others and our planet. This is best accomplished by knowing ourselves and knowing our place in the world through the cultural backgrounds of all members of our community. Through this knowledge, we strive for a level of empathy that will direct our actions and enable all of us to be positive contributing members, with a strong sense of service, to our local and global community.



Features of the PYP

Inquiry Based

The leading pedagogical approach of the PYP is recognized as allowing students to be actively involved in their own learning and to take responsibility for that learning. Inquiry is the process that moves the student to a new and deeper level of understanding. It involves the synthesis, analysis and manipulation of knowledge, whether through play or through more formally structured learning. Inquiry can take many forms including:

- Exploring, wondering & questioning
- Making connections between previous learning and current learning
- Collecting data and reporting findings
- Deepening understanding through the application of a concept
- Making & testing theories
- Researching & seeking information
- Taking & defending a position
- Solving problems in a variety of ways

Concept-Driven

In order for learning to be transferable across various disciplines and real-life contexts, the PYP places emphasis on a concept-driven curriculum. The PYP believes that a conceptual approach to learning:

- Provides an education with a focus on understanding significant ideas rather than memorization of isolated facts and the mastery of skills out of a real-world context.
- Starts with students' prior knowledge and develops their earlier conceptions and constructs to promote real understanding.
- Explores and re-explores concepts throughout the grade levels in order for students to appreciate that ideas transcend disciplinary boundaries.
- Assists students to construct meaning through improved critical thinking and transfer of knowledge.
- Increases coherence across the curriculum.

Expressed as open-ended questions, the seven key concepts in the PYP provide the initial momentum and underlying structure for exploration of content across all curricular subjects.

Form: What is it like?	Connection: How is it linked to other things?
Function: How does it work?	Perspective: What are the points of view?
Causation: Why is it as it is?	Responsibility: What are our obligations?
Change: How is it transforming?	

Transdisciplinary

The most significant and distinctive feature of the PYP is the six transdisciplinary themes which the curriculum content is taught under. These themes are about issues that have meaning for, and are important to all of us around the world. The programme offers a balance between learning about or through the subject areas, as well as learning beyond them. The six themes of global significance create a transdisciplinary framework that allows students to step beyond the confines of learning within subject areas. These themes are: Who We Are, Where we are in Place and Time, How We Express Ourselves, How the World Works, How We Organize Ourselves, and Sharing the Planet.

Approaches to Learning (Transdisciplinary Skills)

The search for understanding is central to the beliefs and practices of the PYP. However, the emphasis on the development of conceptual understanding is not complete without recognizing the importance of developing skills. These skills are best developed in the context of authentic situations such as those offered through the PYP units of inquiry. Within their learning throughout the programme, students acquire and apply a set of transdisciplinary skills. These skills are valuable, not only in the units of inquiry, but also for any teaching and learning that goes on within the classroom, and in life outside the school. These skills are grounded in the belief that learning *how* to learn is fundamental to a student's education. The five categories of interrelated skills aim to support students of all ages to become self-regulated learners who know how to ask good questions, set effective goals and pursue their aspirations with the determination to achieve them. These skills also help to support students' sense of agency, encouraging them to see their learning as an active and dynamic process

- Thinking skills
- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Self-management skills
- Research skills

Action and Agency

Action (learning by doing and experiencing) is an essential element of the IB. In the PYP, it is expected that a successful inquiry-based learning process will lead to responsible student-initiated action. The PYP Action Cycle facilitates students to choose, act, and reflect upon appropriate action that will extend their learning and/or have a wider social impact. This looks different at each grade.

Agency ensures that students use their own initiative and will, and take responsibility and ownership of their learning. They direct their learning with a strong sense of identity and self-belief. By developing a sense of agency, students take initiative, express interest and wonderings, make choices and are aware of their learning goals. Prairie Waters staff recognize students' capabilities through listening, respecting and responding to their ideas. They make thoughtful considerations and decisions with an emphasis on relationships, dialogue and respect for one another.



The IB Learner Profile

The aim of all IB Programmes 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. The result of the development of all of the elements of the PYP (mentioned in the previous pages) are the attributes of the IB Learner Profile. The IB Learner Profile permeates every aspect of what we do, and it defines what IB learners—both teachers and students—strive to be.

Inquirers	We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.
Knowledgeable	We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.
Thinkers	We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.
Communicators	We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.
Principled	We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.
Open-Minded	We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.
Caring	We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.
Risk-Taker/ Courageous	We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.
Balanced	We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives intellectual, physical, and emotional to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.
Reflective	We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

ASSESSMENT

The prime objective of assessment in the PYP is to provide feedback on the learning process. Teachers select assessment strategies and design assessment instruments to clearly reflect the particular learning outcomes on which they intend to report (generally the central idea and lines of inquiry from a unit of inquiry). Teachers employ a range of strategies for assessing student work that are differentiated to take into account the diverse ways that individual students understand their experiences. The PYP stresses the importance of both student and teacher self-assessment and reflection.

Parents need to familiarize themselves with two kinds of assessments; formative and summative. Essentially, formative assessments are about the process of learning, and summative assessments indicate the product of learning. Formative assessment results are not recorded as a grade. Instead, formative assessment is used as an opportunity to provide feedback (written or verbal), and to assess the next steps in learning for students. The pressure is off with the formative tasks. Making a mistake is not the end of the world, but part of healthy learning. Summative assessments are made following each unit and are reported with qualitative comments as well as an indicator from the report card. Strong work on formative assessments and tasks will directly impact the final summative results. It is much like being an athlete or performer: without serious attention to practice, ultimate success is difficult to achieve.



COMMUNICATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

At Prairie Waters, we strongly value open communication with our parent community. We take great strides to communicate the ongoing learning at our school in a variety of ways so that parents feel well-informed about what is happening in their child's classroom on a macro level, as well as how their individual child is doing on a more micro level.

Class Blogs

Each class at Prairie Waters has a class blog they use to communicate and share their learning with the wider world. This is your primary source for information about what is going on in the classroom on a daily basis. Blogs are also intended to be a form of two-way communication. When classes post in order to share their learning, they hope to receive comments from other classes, as well as parents in order to engage in further conversation about their learning. We encourage you to be active participants in the class blogs when you can.

Twitter

In order to further develop international mindedness, Prairie Waters staff understand that we have a duty to welcome the world into our classrooms, and expand our understanding of the world beyond the confines of the school walls in real and significant ways. Most teachers have a class Twitter account which they use with their students in order to connect, inquire and share with other classes in Prairie Waters, as well as with other schools around the globe. This is another source of real-time information for parents to access and engage with.

Three-Way Conferences

Arranged through the homeroom teachers, three-way conferences are a unique time for students to walk their parents or guardians through what they have been learning at school, and to highlight their personal growth, challenges and achievements. The student, parents or guardians and the teacher each play a crucial role in the three-way conference. Each will have time to indicate observations of student successes and areas for growth. Based on those conversations, goals are set collaboratively for the student to work on for the following term.

Report Cards

These formal documents are distributed at the end of each term, and report on student achievement and areas of growth in all subject areas. They also comment on the extent to which the student exhibits and practices the elements of the PYP.

Culminating Project: Exhibition



In their final year of the PYP, Grade 5 students participate in a culminating project: the PYP Exhibition. This requires that each student demonstrates engagement with the elements of the programme: knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes and action. It is both a transdisciplinary inquiry conducted in the spirit of personal and shared responsibility, as well as a summative assessment activity that is a celebration and rite of passage from the PYP.

This is an opportunity for individual students and groups to develop their own lines of inquiry on a problem or issue which they are personally interested in. For approximately 9 weeks, students are engaged in an independent inquiry on their chosen issue. They are supported through the process with the guidance and support of their classroom teacher, a mentor who has volunteered their time, other teachers in the school, the principal, the assistant principal, and the PYP coordinator.



DIGITAL LITERACY & CITIZENSHIP

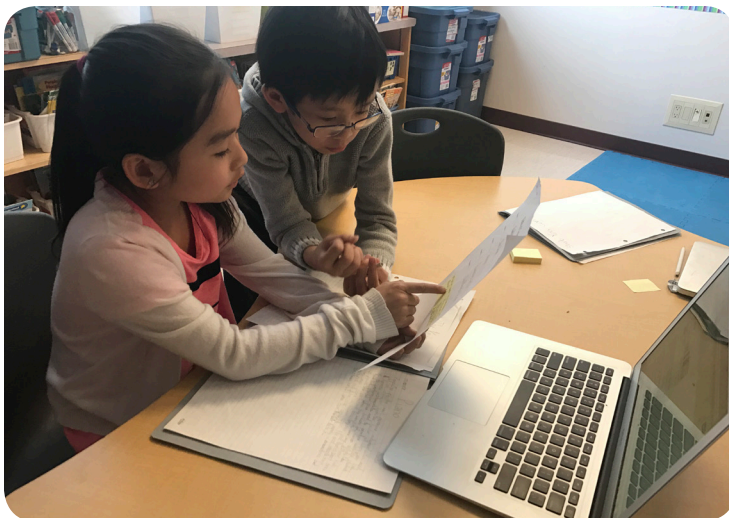
It is important that students begin to understand the architecture (the grammar and the strategies) of the Internet in order for them to navigate it safely and responsibly. Teaching digital literacy skills and exposing students to various digital learning tools aims to inspire creativity, enhance skills as writers, and encourage personal expression and innovation. Because digital technology is constantly evolving, the focus is not on teaching the tools themselves, but on teaching our students to critically assess the tools. Students are then better able to choose the appropriate tool (digital or not) to extend and transform their learning and share what they have learned more creatively.

Students learn about the concept of academic honesty and the importance of respecting the creative works of others by giving credit where due and asking permission to use the works of others when necessary. Themes of academic honesty and the appropriate use of technology are investigated under the umbrella of the Learner Profile in order to develop a deeper understanding of students' social and moral responsibilities online.



Digital citizenship is taught through the broader curriculum. We believe it is important to teach children to be aware of their digital footprint, and that computers and technology are tools for creation rather than just for consumption. Students will learn how to think when they use the Internet, and will learn the grammar and strategies of the web.

We also believe in sharing our learning and connecting with others around the globe. Students will learn about proper commenting etiquette and how to engage in meaningful, yet appropriate conversations with others through online sources (Twitter, Skype, Email, Blogs). Starting in our youngest grades, these practices are modeled and facilitated by the teachers. As students become more competent and comfortable with the use of some of these tools, a gradual release approach is used as students in grades 4 and 5 begin to use these tools independently with teacher mentoring.



UNITS OF INQUIRY

Each year in the PYP, students in grade 1 to 5 complete six units of inquiry. Students in Kindergarten engage in 4 units of inquiry. The program defines themes that identify areas of shared experience and have meaning for individuals from different cultures. These are commonly called the units of Inquiry (UoI's). These units are transdisciplinary in nature and build each year on the same six themes. This means wherever possible, curriculum subjects including science, social studies, language arts, math, fine arts, health and physical education are integrated into the focus of the units. While our Units of Inquiry are transdisciplinary in nature, the development of a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy remains a priority at Prairie Waters. The UoI's are organized according to the six transdisciplinary themes as follows:

Who We Are

An inquiry into the nature of the self, beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.

Where We Are In Place and Time

An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationship between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.

How We Organize Ourselves

An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.

How We Express Ourselves

An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity, our appreciation of the aesthetic.

How the World Works

An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.

Sharing the Planet

An inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution.

Mathematics / Numeracy

In the PYP, math is understood as a language that is intentionally developed during each year of the program. As with learning a language, fluency in mathematics is developed through repeated practice of specific skills and application of those skills in authentic situations. The skills developed include computation, problem-solving, reasoning and communication. All classes have time in their schedule devoted to mathematics during which the homeroom teacher works with students to develop the content knowledge specified in the Alberta curriculum standards. Mathematics concepts and skills are also integrated into the units of inquiry, allowing students to transfer what they have learned in a specific mathematics area to their work in other subject areas.



In keeping with the PYP philosophy, inquiry is at the heart of math instruction. As such, teachers employ a variety of approaches and tools. These include collaborative learning, hands-on centres, play-based learning, iPad apps, online practice platforms, and experiential learning through the use of manipulatives. Learning is solidified through exercises completed in class or at home.

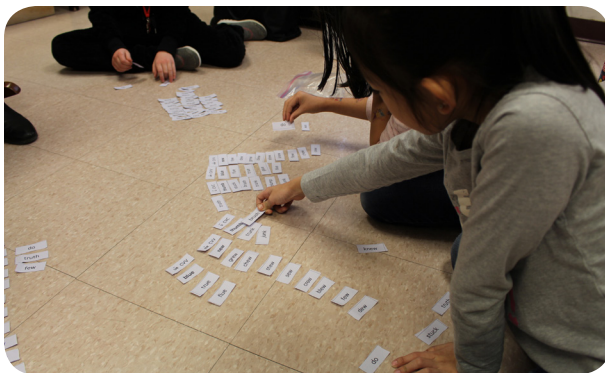


Language Arts / Literacy

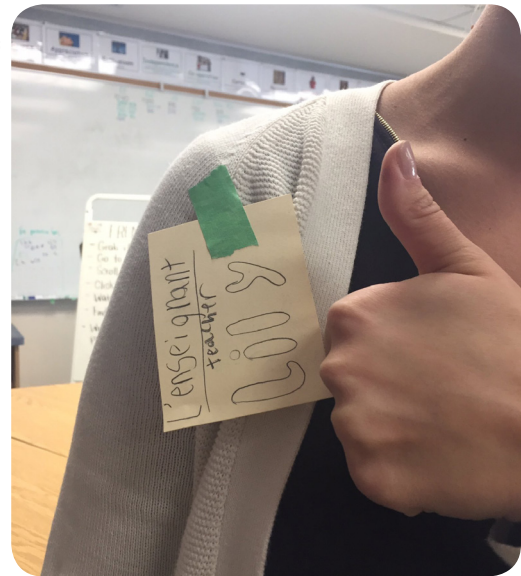
All learning engagements and unit of inquiry experiences in the PYP work to build a strong foundation of literacy skills with the goal of fostering a love of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Reading and viewing, writing and representing, and oral language (speaking and listening) are integrated in all subject areas in each year of the programme to ensure that students are taught a wide range of skills, including: grammar, spelling, reading comprehension, reading and writing fluency, speaking and responding, informational and visual literacy.

Students in the PYP experience a comprehensive literacy program that includes a balance of skills, strategies, tools, materials, resources, and types of interaction. Informed by student interest and ability, activities may be differentiated to include guided, independent, shared, and home reading; literature circles; discussion and presentation; as well as creative and formal writing. Time is set aside to allow for the development of these skills which are further honed as students apply them in meaningful and authentic tasks within their units of inquiry. Regular practice exercises in reading, writing and speaking are completed in class and are often continued at home.

There are a number of resources upon which teachers and students draw. Our library includes books and e-books covering a wide range of topics at a variety of reading levels. Students have regular opportunities to select materials appropriate to their reading level and interests, and are guided to extend their choices to more challenging options. Digital resources are available, including databases, articles, videos, and websites.



The IB values the development and acquisition of a second language within its schools starting at the age of 7. At Prairie Waters, that means that our students begin to explore our second language of French beginning in Grade 2. In Grade 2 and Grade 3, French acquisition exposes students to meaningful language experiences and encourages them to participate through play and exploration, without explicit grammar instruction. We have developed our own scope and sequence for Grade 2 and 3 to follow when incorporating French into instructional time. Please refer to our school website to find our Grade 2 and 3 French Scope and Sequence.

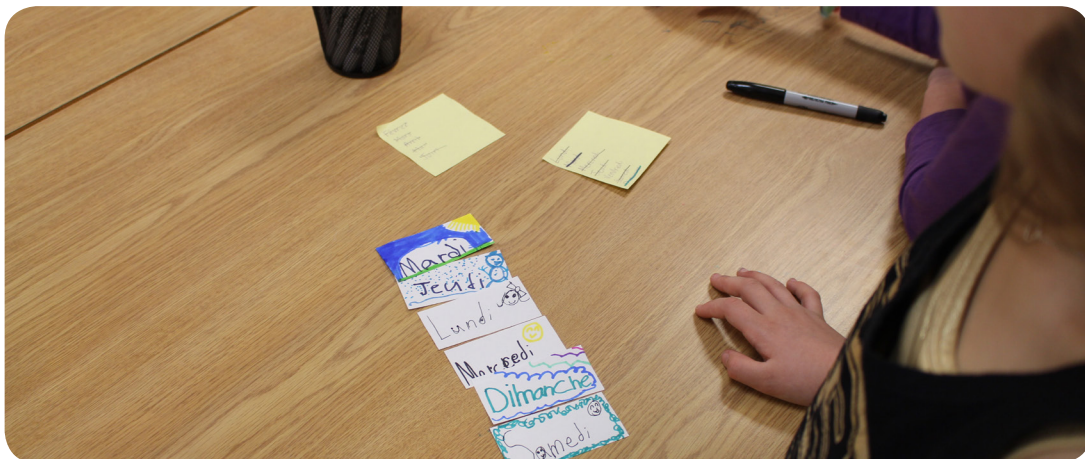


French learning in Grade 4 and 5 is part of the Alberta curriculum. It builds on the foundation of the earlier years as students begin to discover and apply language conventions; learners benefit from explicit focus on form (mechanics and grammar) linked to meaningful experiences.

Assessment

Assessment opportunities may include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Oral: song, dialogue, interview, skit, telephone conversation, report, play, infomercial.
- Written: Sentences, labels, poster, brochure.
- Visual: drawing, artifact, map, mask, self-portrait, comic strip, graphic organizer, chart.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I have my child be in the PYP?

The PYP is an inclusive program. Which means that as soon as your child is registered to attend Prairie Waters, they are a part of the Primary Years Programme. There are no special requirements or selection process involved. Every student at Prairie Waters is a PYP student!

How often is the PYP offered to the students each week?

The PYP is an all-compassing framework, which means all day, every day, students are engaged in the PYP. Approaching teaching and learning in an inquiry based, transdisciplinary manner, reflecting and assessing are embedded into everything we do.

Why do you do the PYP? What are the benefits?

IB teaching methods and curriculums are research-based and draw from the best educational practices from systems around the world. Students who are engaged in the PYP develop a sense of the world around them and their responsibility to it. It acknowledges that a well-rounded person isn't simply academically successful, but also prepared to live in, adapt to, and contribute to an ever-changing world. IB World Schools (the only schools authorized to offer IB programmes) are subject to a strict accreditation process monitored by the IB, ensuring that schools provide a high-quality education.

What type of training do the teachers have?

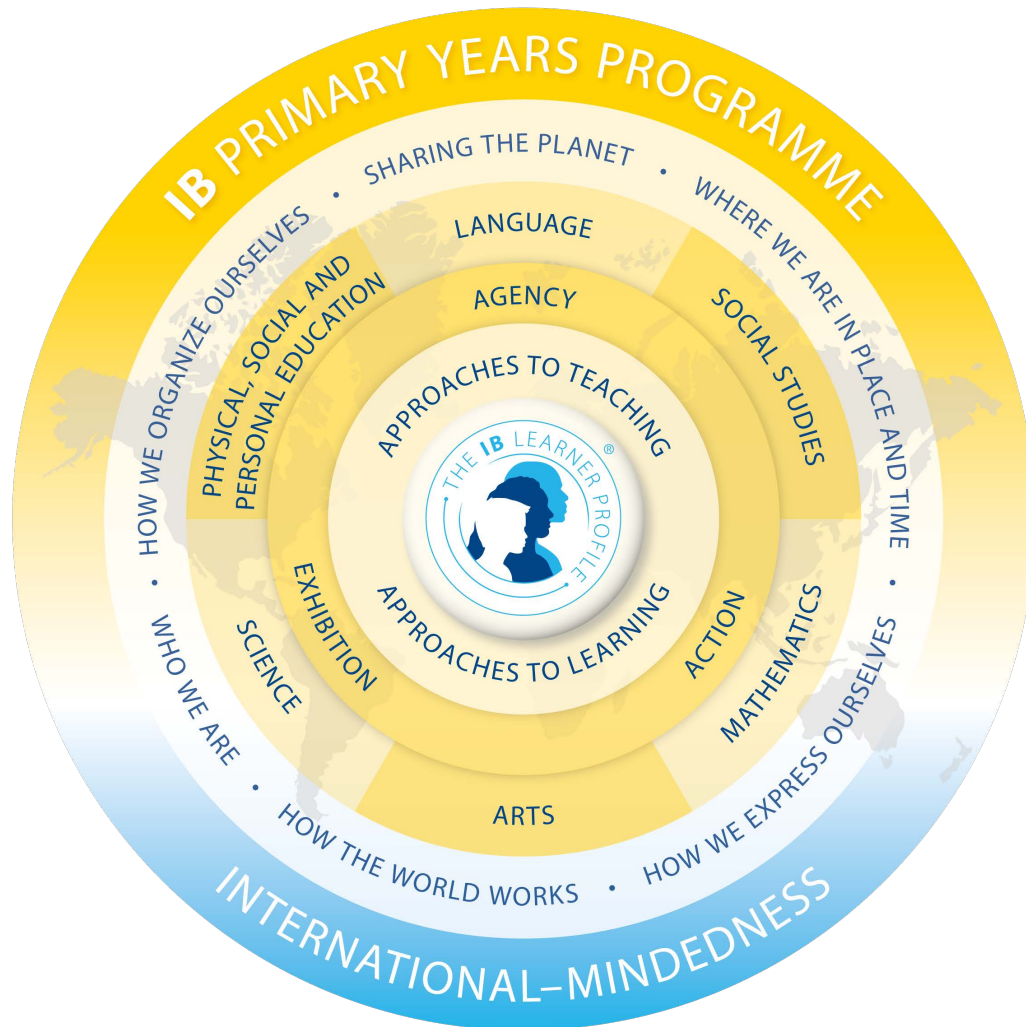
In order for teachers to be prepared to teach in the PYP, they are required to participate in professional development opportunities to continually promote their awareness of current educational practices and new thinking. Just like our students, IB educators are lifelong learners. Prairie Waters supports the professional development of its staff members, and continued IB training is encouraged to be included in Teacher Professional Growth Plans.

Do students still learn the Alberta Curriculum?

Yes. The IB is committed to making sure that students in IB programmes meet and exceed local standards. With the implementation of any IB programme, schools are required to examine their curriculum carefully to ensure that there is alignment with local standards. In our case, that is the Alberta Programs of Study. These curricula are the foundation of the planning that our teachers undertake in order to develop significant, relevant and challenging units of inquiry for our students.

How can I learn more?

Each year, we host parent information sessions early in the fall. We strongly encourage you to be aware of when these sessions are held, and attend in order to learn more about the PYP at Prairie Waters. Additionally, monthly updates are written in the school newsletter, you can speak to your child's teacher, the school's PYP Coordinator or visit the IB website at www.ibo.org.



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IB WORLD SCHOOL**

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