**THE IB DIPLOMA PROGRAM AT MONARCH PARK COLLEGIATE: A PARENTAL PERSPECTIVE**

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Monarch Park offers rigorous academics that adhere to international standards. As parents of three IB students (two former and one current), we can say that this program will challenge your child to grow both academically and personally. The program is designed to engage your child to be an active participant in his/her own learning, the school community and the greater global community. It fosters independence, respect and resourcefulness as the students learn to balance the demands of their academics while serving others. This skill has proven to be very helpful for our children as they entered the Ontario university system. They were ready to manage a heavy academic load while also focusing their attention on other adjustments necessary to be successful university students.

The program has grown and developed significantly since our first daughter started in 2007. Relevant and mindful changes have been made to both the course delivery and offerings. This has included, but is not limited to, de-semestering some courses to spread the learning over a full year, which also reduces the interval between courses, as well as delivering the entire SL French course in grade 11 with the exam in May.

Students are required to complete courses in all six (6) areas of study, so it will require your child to take courses that may be outside their current comfort zone. While daunting at first, it’s a great opportunity for our children to grow. Also, since the IB course material is delivered over two (2) years in grade 11 & 12, your child will be choosing their path in the spring of grade 10. This can be early for your child, as some do not yet know what they would like to study in the future. While there is some flexibility with moving between HL (Higher Level) and SL (Standard Level) within a subject, once the path is chosen and the courses are underway in grade 11, it is not possible to switch subjects. In our experience, the HL subjects offer curriculum material beyond that covered in the standard academic classroom. Many universities recognize this depth of study, and they provide advanced standing and/or credits for these courses. For children opting not to take the advance standing, the HL courses provide an excellent foundation that allows them a greater depth & breadth of understanding in these first year courses.

It is fair to say that there have been bumps along the way. Over the last eight years there have been many late nights putting the finishing touches on a lab or studying for a calculus test, summers researching and writing extended essays, Sunday afternoons spent at the reference library, group chats on Facebook to arrange a time for group project work, and yes, a few tears when some days just seemed to be too much. That said, it’s all worth it – after all, we’ve done it three times!

The IB team at Monarch, led by Jacqueline Allen, has been excellent. They are a group of concerned, compassionate and dedicated teachers who want every child to succeed.

Good luck to both you and your children as you work through this important decision.

Regards,

Susan and Ian Plummer