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## **FORMER STUDENTS' RECOMMENDATIONS ON INCLUSIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH AT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HILVERSUM**

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Dear staff of the International School Hilversum,

The tragic death of George Floyd inciting worldwide support for the Black Lives Matter movement has reminded us of the power of our voices and our ability to inspire change. Living during the COVID-19 pandemic, as graduates from ISH, has given us the time to reflect on our experiences and the social injustices happening around the world. We acknowledge the privilege we have had of learning under the broad spectrum of the International Baccalaureate program. Yet, due to constant modern hardships, we feel as though we must structure an improved, more inclusive schooling system for current and future students. In this letter, we recommend a clear outline of possible adjustments to several courses that can be implemented with the help of the staff and students, all while adhering to the IB curriculum.

### **SECTION I: SEX EDUCATION**

#### **Recommended to include in the curriculum from 7th grade onwards**

To implement real change, schools have the advantage of shaping young minds. Through conversations during mentor hour, individuals can be educated regarding the experiences of their classmates and the appropriate measures that can be taken to fight feelings of unsafety. Through educating every student about the dangers of catcalling, harassment, and gaze, schools can achieve real change within the safety of students. It becomes our job not only to protect but to educate and consequently avoid future incidents. Sex education should be a continuous subject in which students extend their knowledge every year from seventh grade onwards.

#### **1. SEX EDUCATION**

- 1.1. Teach empathy, rape culture, and sexual harassment seriously to prevent problems in the future. We highly encourage creating an environment where boundaries are clearly defined and discussed. There have been many students who have experienced sexual harassment.
- 1.2. Normalizing and not having set punishments for harassment allows students to feel like they can get away with similar actions again in the future and disregard

the severity of their actions. Apart from suffering real consequences, students who have been accused of harassment should not be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities as victims might have to face them, causing further psychological harm.

- 1.3. Furthermore, teenagers begin to experiment with substances such as alcohol and drugs. Under no circumstances does this waive the need for consent. Only yes means yes. Respect should be in place at all times, despite intoxication. Being drunk is no excuse. No means no. Silence means no. This is an important lesson that should be taken seriously and repeated often. Students should develop open communication skills with partners.
- 1.4. Another aspect that should be taught at school is that female-bodied people should not be taught to cover up, males should be taught not to gaze. This also relates to the current dress code at ISH. The dress code should be a non-gender specific dress code. This means the length of skirts, ripped jeans, crop tops, etc should not be judged. This way clothes are still a way a student can express themselves, however, t-shirts may not have offensive texts on them, etc. ISH can denormalize and deconstruct negative societal attitudes towards sex and gender. Our previous experiences with teachers range from blaming and policing bodies for the action of the male gaze. This contributes to rape culture, leading to victim-blaming, slut-shaming, and sexual objectification.
- 1.5. Normalizing conversations about sex and self-pleasure - destroying taboos. Teenagers tend to feel stigma around issues of sexuality and sexual pleasure - The TV shows **Sex Education** and **Sputten en Slikken** are an accurate representation of how teenagers view sex and have serious topics embedded in it. We recommend teachers to watch this to know relevant topics to discuss during sex ed at school or to help when an individual is facing difficulties.
- 1.6. Destroy conventional stereotypes around virginity. Virginity is rather conceptual, it is a product of social construction. When individuals have sex for the first time they do not actually lose anything. It does not change anyone's identity, it is not life-altering and it does not affect our worth. It is simply a new experience.
- 1.7. Distinguish between sex and gender. A person's genetically assigned sex does not always align with their gender identity.
- 1.8. Teaching about asexuality, demisexuality, aromanticism, and other sexualities so that those who do not experience attraction in the conventional sense are allowed to feel validated and safe to express sexuality and romance in their own way.
- 1.9. Have open conversations regarding gender identities, introducing the different types such as non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, bigender, etc. Confirm their validity.
- 1.10. Teaching openly about all forms of sex. A large percentage of the International School of Hilversum is part of the LGBTQ+ community. Individuals would consequently have the societal pressure of learning all vital knowledge on their own. Equal education should be provided for all sexual expressions. Not only is it

important to inform about STDs, but the manner in which they are transferred and how individuals can protect themselves in all forms of sex. I.e. the lack of education outside of traditional vaginal penetration (i.e. oral, anal, dental dams, gloves).

- 1.11. Having open conversations that deal with internalized homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and fatphobia. How do we deconstruct from our implicit and explicit biases? Through extended interaction with stigmatized individuals, and the active work of destroying stereotypes and taboos. Looking at these topics from an ethnocentrism framework can help understand why these biases come into place. Stereotypes + Prejudice → Discrimination. Once that equation is dismantled, equality will prevail.

## SECTION II: INCLUSIVITY & ANTI-RACISM

### 2. HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

#### 2.1. Study and analyze the causes for **Black Lives Matter Movement**

- 2.1.1. Police brutality (also in Europe). A more narrow focus on the history of protests in the west is recommended. In the United States, the race has been one of the main points of civil unrest. In the 1950s white people were marching against desegregation, in Alabama and Mississippi. It got to the point where president JFK had to send in the national guard to enforce desegregation. This history of civil unrest continues through the civil rights movement, briefly explores following the murder of MLK (which does result in the civil rights act a year later), and most following protests have been in relation to police brutality.
  - 2.1.2. Protesting as an effective manner of change, as it is a fundamental right.
  - 2.1.3. Systemic racism, reflecting on hidden inequalities, recognizing privileges.
  - 2.1.4. Stop demonizing Malcolm X. The idea of portraying Malcolm as bad and MLK as good, while MLK was good, belittles the value of Malcolm's struggle, and the struggle of the movement. It changes the narrative from the oppression of black americans to the "oppression" of white americans. It also carries the inherent problem of sending the message; only peaceful protests work. While the history of civil unrest shows that that is not true. We are not recommending that the school promotes violent protesting over peaceful; a balance needs to be struck. The two exist together, and instead of demonizing the violent we should instead focus on understanding why and how they have been pushed to this point, and what the value of such violent means of protest are.
  - 2.1.5. Juneteenth, educating about the holiday which celebrates the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States.
- 2.2. (Intersectional) study of the LGBTQ+ Movement

- 2.2.1. AIDS epidemic.
- 2.2.2. Protesting works, as well as riots. Informing about riots should be done in a manner that does not incite or encourage violence. It is important to understand that some violent actions are a response to trauma and years of oppression. Consequently, students will be able to construct balanced perspectives on historical events; understanding the inequalities which have led to violence. Violence is never the answer, however, it did bring about undeniable results.
- 2.2.3. The causes and consequences of the **Stonewall uprising**.
- 2.2.4. The 1960s in Europe and the New Left movement: This movement tells a very different story; one where protests led to nothing substantial for many years, but still laid the groundwork for many LGBT rights we have in Europe today. The goal is to emphasize the importance of protesting in the context of representative parliamentary democracies. Make sure that the message is clear: your vote is as powerful as your protest.
- 2.3. Study the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-apartheid movement
- 2.4. Move away from eurocentric history. Include more units on **minorities** (especially outside of colonialism) where students could study the following topics:
  - 2.4.1. **Black history:** *The Kingdom of Kush, The Land of Punt, Carthage, The Zulu, The Mali Empire, Abyssinia, etc.*
    - 2.4.1.1. Harriet Tubman → helped slaves escape through tunnels
    - 2.4.1.2. John Agard → wrote poem: *Checking Out Me History*
  - 2.4.2. **Latin America:** *The Conquest of the Aztec and Inca Empires, Independence from Spain and Portugal, The Mexican Revolution, The Cuban revolution, Operation Condor*
  - 2.4.3. **Asia:** *India's Caste System, the Indian independence movement, Nanjing Massacre, Boxer Rebellion, Opium wars, Korean war, Division of Korea, etc.*
  - 2.4.4. **Oceania:** *Bougainville Civil War, The Battle of the Coral Sea, Māori, Aboriginal Australia, Samoan Crisis, etc.*
  - 2.4.5. **Middle East:** *Assyrian empires, Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires, Islamic caliphate, colonization of the territories of Arabia, etc*
- 2.5. Many history teachers have the extra time of picking out documentaries for DP classes, this privilege can be used to teach about the history of slavery, white supremacy, capitalism, institutionalized and systemic racism, the difference between systematic and systemic racism, white saviorism and consequently teach different perspectives to prevent repeating history.
- 2.6. ISH's history program can be eurocentric and tends to downplay the horrors committed by people throughout the ages.
  - 2.6.1. The Grade 10 project Scramble for Africa is an example of a project that could be changed. As we are former students we are not aware if this assignment is still in place. However in grade 10, instead of learning about colonialism and the effects it had (and continues to have) on

society, we did a role play. This involved us role-playing European countries splitting Africa and voting on a map.

2.7. Awareness is power.

### **Potential Study Materials for History:**

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#### Non-Fiction Books:

1. *Natives by Akala*
2. *The Blood of Emmett Till by Timothy B. Tyson*
3. *No Name in the Street by James Baldwin*
4. *I am Malala by Malala Yousafzai*
5. *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle by Lillian Faderman*
6. *Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom by Park Yeon-mi*
7. *Born a Crime by Trevor Noah*
8. *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition, Emancipation by Kwame Nimako (interview on the book available on Youtube)*

#### \*Documentaries:

9. *Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement*
10. *13th*
11. *16 Shots*
12. *Rest in Power: The Trayvon Martin Story*
13. *Time: The Kalief Browder Story*
14. *Who Killed Malcolm X?*
15. *I'm Not Your Negro*
16. *Stonewall Uprising*
17. *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson*

### 3. ENGLISH

3.1. The English curriculum already includes the study of female writers and feminist ideologies in literature. However, there is still room for improvement. Reading literature by authors who are part of minorities, for example, black artists, disabled artists, LGBTQ+, etc. Having more inclusive literature is important to make the environment more welcoming and having works that can relate to minority students as well as allow a platform for voices which are not heard often.

### **Potential Study Materials for English:**

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#### Non-Fiction:

1. *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou*
2. *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Faces by Wes Moore*
3. *The Devil Finds Work by James Baldwin*
4. *Born a Crime by Trevor Noah*

Fiction:

1. *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio
2. *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera
3. *The Plague of Doves* by Louise Erdrich
4. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
5. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
6. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
7. *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Poets/ Poems:

1. Audre Lorde
2. Danez Smith
3. Adrienne Rich
4. "Adrenaline Rush", "Your God" by Rudy Francisco
5. "To Cis Transphobic White Gay Men at Pride" by Golden

4. GEOGRAPHY/ SOCIAL STUDIES

- 4.1. Educate students on the positives of non-western countries (not solely their poverty).
- 4.2. Educate students into individual cases exploring a diverse caste of reasons for poverty in African countries or other non-western countries, for example:
  - 4.2.1. South Sudan's poverty is rooted in a civil war
  - 4.2.2. Niger's poverty is because of its river delta being colonized by oil company; Shell.
- 4.3. Encourage teachers to use non-offensive terminology. E.g. Instead of saying "Third world countries", say Developing Nations.
- 4.4. Educate on the difference between cultural appropriation and appreciation, systemic vs systematic oppression, institutionalized racism, racial microaggressions, white privilege and supremacy, neocolonialism, and ecofascism.
- 4.5. Teach about discrimination against minorities (case study examples: Poland, Russia vs LGBTQ+, China, and Muslim concentration camps) and highlight its social, political, and economical consequences on a country.
  - 4.5.1. Gay conversion therapy is still legal in the Netherlands. How is this possible, when the Netherlands claims such tolerance? This question could serve as the central focus of one week within a larger study of LGBT rights. The point should be clear; we have made progress, but there is much more to be made.
- 4.6. Highlight the role of media in creating prejudice views on minorities and its inability to cover urgent world crises for example:
  - 4.6.1.1. The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen

- 4.6.1.2. Uygur Concentration Camps
- 4.6.1.3. Slave Trade in Libya
- 4.6.1.4. Rohingya Crisis
- 4.6.1.5. Anti-Black Lives Matter protest and the English Defence League
- 4.6.1.6. Hunger & Economic Crisis in Syria
- 4.6.1.7. Slave trade in Saudia Arabia
- 4.6.1.8. Human trafficking & Slavery in the Muslim World

### **Potential Study Materials for Geography**

- 1. *Netflix → Explained: The Racial Wealth Gap*
- 2. *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic by Randy Shilts (Book)*
- 3. *Race and Power: Global Racism in the 21st Century by Gargi Bhattacharyya, John Gabriel, et al. (Book)*

## **5. PERFORMING ARTS**

- 5.1. In regards to Drama, we suggest eradicating or positively changing the “tribal ritual” project in grade 8, however, this might have already been changed since our time at ISH.
- 5.1.1. In 8th grade, students had to create a fake “tribal ritual” and perform a play around it, where native people were made into savages and cannibals. A performance such as this is degrading towards the culture of the natives.

## **6. VISUAL ARTS**

- 6.1. In art, the main focus tended to be on famous European artists and there was very little recognition of international art and politics. For example, Vanitas art is a movement that solely profited off of the slave trade that was ongoing at the time. To improve in this aspect, when talking about Vanitas artworks it would be beneficial to look at both the positives and negatives of its history. Furthermore, in DP there were classes about fresco paintings which are renowned for being in the Vatican, again profiting from the exploitation of slave workers. These projects should not be taken out of the curriculum but added on to. Art teachers should be striving to educate students on the context of art and the social implications it has had as well. The list of artists we have compiled below is through our own research.
- 6.2. Something to consider for all school grades is the idea that “skin color” art supplies are light pink tones. Art teachers should make an effort to remind

students that there are more skin color tones and that our language should be inclusive.

### **Potential Study Materials for Visual Arts**

1. *Jean-Michel Basquiat*: originally a graffiti artist who focused on his identity as a mixed-race man in America.
2. *Keith Haring*: known to many people for his cute little figures however he did a lot of work around racial issues as well as the AIDS pandemic which was detrimental to the lgbtq+ society.
3. *Black Arts Movement (BAM)*: Formed in the 60s branched out into art and literature too.
4. *Kara Walker*: Current artist who focuses on the slave trade.
5. The looting of art and artifacts from the Global South.

### 7. CAS & TOK

- 7.1. CAS and TOK are perfect examples of areas that could be used to champion inclusivity. As TOK tries to answer the question “how do we know?”, it could be a place to reflect on our biases in our learning processes and compare differences between cultures. This could, in turn, be tied more into CAS (e.g. Support Group led by DP students: see SECTION III: MENTAL HEALTH)
- 7.2. ISH should reflect, as an institution, on how privileged a large percentage of its students are and work on that awareness collectively. Privilege comes in many shapes and forms and it is beneficial to create awareness on how individuals can put that benefit into society. An example of this would be the financial privilege of most students. Expensive CAS trips and other trips were the norms, and for the few students whose families were not wealthy, these were not a possibility. Discussing this type of privilege can highlight the type of disparity between students and be extremely useful in realizing one's own privilege. A possible solution for this type of problem could be to create a fund by the privileged for the less privileged.
- 7.3. An important topic to cover in CAS is the White Saviour Complex. “Helping” or “developing” countries can be problematic and disrespectful when the relationship is asymmetrical. CAS can risk reinforcing neo-colonial stereotypes and relationships. It's important for students to realize locals' needs and demands before trying to make a change. Kayley Gould gave a Ted Talk named *The White Saviour Complex: The Dark Side of Volunteering*, which might be worth showing students.

### 8. CULTURE COMMITTEE



- 8.1. The culture committee should ensure all minorities are represented.
- 8.2. It should create moments of celebration for small communities and show that our school cares that its students are well informed.
- 8.3. The culture committee students could also make posters to promote peaceful protests and different organizations that people can work with.
- 8.4. We recommend the culture committee to reach out to the minority groups in the community and invite guest speakers to educate the students.

**Examples of communities to be more inclusive to:**

1. *Muslim community*
2. *Black community*
3. *Indian community*
4. *Jewish community*
5. *LGBTQ+ community (Make sure transgender women and men are respected)*

9. ZWARTE PIET

- 9.1. Zwarte Piet is a portrayal of racism. The character itself originated from depicting black people in the 19th century. This links to the Dutch colonialism and The Netherlands' involvement in slavery. There are many variations to the origin of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet. However, for Zwarte Piet to have its current appearance, its basis in slavery is the only plausible explanation. As part of an international community, ISH should have discussions about why it is racist, as it is, and understand the oppression and invalidation of people's experiences. As black individuals are offended, the tradition needs to be changed, not merely debated on. If Dutch classes want to talk about this yearly tradition, the conversation should focus its goal on how to adjust Zwarte Piet as a character and strive to celebrate togetherness without the racist aspect. The ideal Piet is a Piet without the stereotyped blackface, the fake afro-wig, exaggerated big red lips, and big hoops.

10. SOGIE (SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION)

Since we are former students we are unaware how much the school system has changed since we left. Therefore, below are questions we would like the staff to consider and take inspiration from to create change at the environment of ISH.

- 10.1. What are the current policies on bullying/discrimination in terms of SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression)?
- 10.2. Are the changing rooms still gender-specific only (gym)?
- 10.3. What are the options for nonbinary individuals in regards to changing rooms, bathrooms, registration, etc?

- 10.4. Are teachers educated on pronouns and their importance? Do they know how to open the conversation on this?
- 10.5. How do teachers apply gender-inclusive language?

## 11. FILM CLUB: FILMS AND SERIES THAT CAN HELP START THE CONVERSATION

### **FILMS:**

1. *The Hate U Give*
2. *Bienvenue à Marly-Gomont*
3. *The Help*
4. *Hidden Figures*
5. *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*
6. *Selma*
7. *Moonlight*
8. *Boy Erased*
9. *Paris is Burning*
10. *The Professor and The Madman*
11. *Freedom Writer*
12. *Do The Right Thing*
13. *Fruitvale Station*
14. *If Beale Street Could Talk*

### **SERIES:**

1. *Pose*
2. *Dear White People*
3. *Euphoria*
4. *When They See Us*
5. *Black-ish*
6. *Feel Good*
7. *Queer Eye*
8. *Sex Education*
9. *I May Destroy You*
10. *Please Like Me*
11. *Noughts + Crosses*
12. *Normal People*

## 12. THE LIBRARY

- 12.1. The library at ISH is very well equipped and always very helpful. A possible addition could be that every month the library chooses a theme and displays books to feature authors from minorities (e.g. black month, pride month, Asian month, latinx month, etc.) For suggestions of the monthly theme they could contact students from the Culture Committee and work together.

## 13. EDUCATING STAFF ON DIVERSITY AND ACTIVELY BEING ANTI-RACIST

We hope to achieve learning through diversity and a vital step would be educating staff members and collaborating with organizations that encourage the decolonizing and diversifying of education. It is important that as an international school, the staff becomes reflective of that. Below we have listed organizations and resources that are worth looking at.

### Organizations

1. *Erasmus Training Courses → Diversity in the classroom: teaching tolerance and overcoming prejudice.*
2. *ERIF - European Race & Imagery Foundation*
3. *NUC - New Urban Collective*

#### 4. OCAN - Overlegorgaan Caribische Nederlanders

##### Resources

1. *Out of Home* (podcast)
2. *Voices from South Africa* (podcast)
3. *STS Talks- Episode 6: "Cultural Appropriation"* (podcast)
4. *Unconscious Bias and Creating a Culture of Inclusion* by Vernā Myers (Youtube)
5. *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man* by Emmanuel Acho (mini-videos)
6. *What If I Say the Wrong Thing: 25 Habits for Culturally Effective People* by Vernā Myers (Book)
7. *How To Be an Inclusive Leader* by Jennifer Brown (Book)
8. *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo (Book)
9. *White Like Me* by Tim Wise (Book)
10. *We Can't Talk About That at Work!* By Mary-Frances Winters (Book)
11. *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us* by Claude Steele (Book)
12. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin Diangelo (Book)
13. *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge (Book)

ISH should look even more critically at its curriculum, role patterns, international relations, and fight against the inequalities that often still remain. We recommend for ISH to also reach out on a local level to the different communities and start the conversation.

### **SECTION III: MENTAL HEALTH**

As former students, we have personally experienced and witnessed how labor-intensive the IB program is, specifically from year 10 to DP2. We believe there should be a very stable support system to help students in need. Mental instability and illnesses are very common and extremely difficult to tackle on your own. Thus, there should be a specific framework in place to help those in need and its availability should be known to all students.

#### 14. ADDITION TO THE CURRICULUM (POSSIBLY MENTOR HOUR):

- 14.1. Teach ways students can recognize and help each other who have mental illnesses. Encourage students to reach out for help and listen to one another. For example, what to do when someone has a panic attack, how to talk about mental illness, break taboos, and make it an open conversation.
- 14.2. Degrading comments about people with mental health or their mental health should have severe consequences.
- 14.3. Invite a mental health specialist to have regular talks at school.
- 14.4. Discuss mental health in mentor hour:
  - 14.4.1. Myths about mental health
  - 14.4.2. How to cope with mental health, as mental health is a journey and won't disappear overnight.

- 14.4.3. Discuss different types of mental illnesses; it's hard to start a conversation without understanding the topic.
- 14.5. Encourage discussions about mental health with students, teachers, and families.

## 15. SCHOOL COUNSELOR

- 15.1. It should be announced that there is a school counselor and make sure everyone knows that their door is open at all times. This should be mentioned in the same mental health assemblies.
- 15.2. ISH is in dire need of certified mental health professionals, who can help students that are struggling with study pressure, workload, growing up, and finding their identity. This counselor (or counselors) should also be able to refer or guide a student to further professional help if needed outside of school (e.g GGz Mental Health Clinic Hilversum).
- 15.3. ISH should take a proactive approach in breaking the taboo that is mental illness.
- 15.4. If the door is not open at all times, reflect on why that is and why it is so difficult for a student to reach out for help. Ask for anonymous feedback from students on their experiences with the counselors.
- 15.5. It is also important to highlight that mental health care is also mediated by topics like gender, sexuality, and race. It should be a given that the counselor has demonstrated empathy and knowledgeability of these topics.
- 15.6. Anonymity should be available
  - 15.6.1. Students have the right to attend counselor meetings in complete privacy. Privacy laws should ensure anonymity and safety.
- 15.7. Teachers and counselors should be held to the same confidentiality standard as a professional psychologist.

## 16. SUPPORT GROUP FOR GRADES 7-10.

- 16.1. It would be beneficial for students from grade 7 onwards to be able to attend a support group led by older students. The goal of this support group should be to guide a conversation on topics that are troubling younger students.
- 16.2. There are programs aimed at peer to peer support i.e. Mental Health First Aiders. We highly recommend equipping the support group leaders with the tools to provide the best possible guidance. The support group could be led by a group of two to three DP students that can be the first step for younger students to go to when not wanting to go talk to a teacher or higher authority because they feel unheard.
- 16.3. These meetings should be informal and held in a classroom or outside. This group should be mentioned in mental health assemblies. Hang up posters about meeting times with emails of the students leading their group. Students can then reach out more easily and feel more comfortable talking to someone who can relate.

- 16.4. The leaders of this group should be selected for being caring, empathetic, and understanding.
- 16.5. To add more leaders, interviews should be held and selection is done on the character profile mentioned above.
- 16.6. This support group is voluntary and available for students who need mental support.

## 17. STUDY GROUP

- 17.1. It would be beneficial for students from grade 7 onwards to be able to attend a study group led by older students. The goal of this study group is to provide younger students with the right tools to study effectively and efficiently. This should be led by older students (Grade 10 onwards). The leaders could help with time management and scheduling.
- 17.2. An incentive could be given to the leaders of this study group as a means of motivation, considering their high workload. E.g. a CAS project.

## 18. DP STUDENTS

- 18.1. *Implement an optional mental health period as this will help destigmatize seeking help and make it readily available:*
  - 18.1.1. Students could discuss the topics mentioned in point 14.
  - 18.1.2. It could also be treated as group therapy. This could help students see they're not alone, especially because a lot of students' mental health deteriorated in DP2.
  - 18.1.3. Include a little break in all the stress, for instance, 5-minute breathing exercises in class to help distress.
  - 18.1.4. Encourage parents to join the conversation, so that we can continue such conversations outside of school.
- 18.2. *Student Schedules:*
  - 18.2.1. Have a staff member to help with managing students schedules better
  - 18.2.2. Teachers should coordinate better with scheduling so that students don't have a test, 2 IA's (whether it's a draft or final version), and/or an essay due on the same day.
- 18.3. *Time table of available teachers:*
  - 18.3.1. Create a weekly schedule of times specific teachers are free (teachers can decide who wants to volunteer for this). Hang this printed schedule on a wall in the C Building. Students can then reach out if they want to talk to that specific teacher in private about school work, their life when they just need a quick chat.
  - 18.3.2. This requires announcements in assemblies too so it reaches all students as messages on ManageBac are sometimes overlooked.
- 18.4. *Students' Grades:*

- 18.4.1. Often students are made to feel as though the DP years are the years that make or break their futures. This idea places stress on the minds of students and may contribute to feelings of anxiety, anger, or depression. A healthier culture is one that sends the message: Happiness does not come in a grade, the ISH is not going to bear down on you for years after your graduation. At graduation ceremonies, it might be an option to present former students who followed different paths than merely the conventional university approach. Advocating for different life goals and successes.
- 18.4.1.1. Discuss inspirational success stories about students who have failed or barely passed but made something of themselves.
- 18.4.1.2. Failing does not constitute the end of the world, for example, some UK institutions accept just the IB certificate for a foundation year.

#### HOW IS ISH GOING TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

When ISH receives these suggestions positively, there should be a way to check the improvements made along the line. We recommend a staff meeting at the end of each school year wherein the teachers discuss what has been embedded into the curriculum and school system and where there is still room for improvement. Student representatives should be included in the meeting to provide the students' perspective and further suggestions. We think it would be beneficial to have a multiyear plan and track progress. To do this, ISH should have a list of goals, and when they want to achieve them by (e.g ISH 2030). This action plan should be sent to students and parents so that ISH can be held accountable.

The above-mentioned points are aimed to better the school and we recommend for ISH to analyze its structures for additional potential inequality. We hope you take our recommendations seriously and implement our suggestions to the school's curriculum soon.

In closing, we would like to emphasize our gratitude for the level of education we have received and we are thankful to all our teachers.

We are open to further discuss our recommendations.

Kind regards,

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