



IBDP & SCHOLARS

Parent Learning Packet

Douglas County High School • Castle Rock, Colorado

A practical guide to pathways, expectations, assessment, planning and family support.

The message to remember

IBDP and Scholars are different pathways with different levels of structure and flexibility. The goal is not to choose the “most impressive” label; it is to choose a pathway that fits the student’s goals, interests, habits and capacity.

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All resources linked in this document can be found on the DCHS IB Website

1. IB at DCHS: the big picture

Douglas County High School offers the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) and the IB Diploma Programme (DP). In grades 11–12, students can pursue the full IB Diploma or participate in DCHS’s locally designed IB Scholars pathway.

- Inquiry and conceptual understanding
- Critical and reflective thinking
- Communication and collaboration
- Research and information literacy
- Self-management and organization
- International-mindedness and the IB Learner Profile

Important distinction

The IB Diploma Programme is an official International Baccalaureate programme with internationally established requirements. Scholars is a DCHS-designed pathway that uses IB coursework within school-defined requirements. Always use the current DCHS guidance packet for official Scholars requirements.

Group	Classes offered at DCHS
Group 1: Language & Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Language & Literature HL
Group 2: Language Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Spanish SL • IB French SL
Group 3: Individuals & Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Psychology SL/HL • IB Global Politics SL/HL • IB Philosophy SL/HL • IB Business SL/HL • IB History SL/HL
Group 4: Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Biology HL • IB Chemistry SL • IB Physics HL • IB Environmental SL • IB Sports Exercise SL
Group 5: Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Applications & Interpretation SL • IB Analysis and Approaches HL
Group 6: The Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Visual Art SL/HL • IB Music SL/HL • IB Theatre SL/HL

2. Full IB Diploma at a glance

Component	What it means
Six DP subjects	<p>Study across the DP subject groups; full Diploma students take at least 3 and no more than 4 at Higher Level (HL).</p> <p>Two options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 HL, 3 SL • 4 HL, 2 SL
Theory of Knowledge (TOK)	Students examine how knowledge is constructed and justified; TOK includes an exhibition and a 1,600-word essay.
Extended Essay (EE)	Independent research culminating in a 4,000-word paper, supported by a supervisor.
Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS)	Experiential learning across creativity, physical activity and service.
Assessment	A combination of course assessment, internal/oral components and external assessment/exams, depending on the subject.

3. How the IB Diploma is earned

Each of the six subjects receives a final IB grade from 1–7. TOK and the Extended Essay can contribute up to three additional core points. The maximum Diploma score is 45.

Students must take an exam from each of the six groups.

- Group 6 Exception: If a student does not want to take an art (visual arts, theatre, music), they can choose a second course and exam from Group 3 or Group 4.

The 24-point rule

A student must earn at least 24 points AND meet all other IB passing conditions and core requirements. Reaching 24 points by itself does not guarantee the Diploma.

- Completion of all core elements
- Completion of all subject requirements (internal/external assessments, internal orals, etc.)
- No more of 2 scores of a 2 on exams
- No more than 3 scores of a 3 or lower on exams
- At least 12 points from HL exams
 - Note: 4HL/2SL Split - three highest HL exams are counted
- At least 9 points from SL exams
 - Note: 4HL/2SL Split - 5 points from SL exams are required

4. HL vs. SL

	Higher Level (HL)	Standard Level (SL)
Purpose	Greater depth and instructional time	Breadth with full IB course expectations
Duration	Two year curriculum (exam taken senior year)	One or two year curriculum (exam taken junior or senior year)
Full Diploma	At least 3, no more than 4 HL subjects	Remaining subjects are typically SL
Planning lens	Strengths, interests, future study	Balance, breadth, schedule and goals
IB points	1–7 subject grade	1–7 subject grade

5. The DCHS IB Scholars pathway

IB Scholars gives students a way to build a plan around selected IB coursework without assuming the complete set of full-Diploma requirements. Because IB Scholars is locally designed, families should use DCHS's current guidance packet for the exact requirements, course flow charts, sample schedules and checklist.

- Which IB courses best fit my student's goals?
- Which Scholars requirements apply to this plan?
- Which exams or core components will my student register for?
- How will the plan fit graduation requirements, electives and outside commitments?

6. IBDP vs. Scholars: programme comparison

Question	Full IB Diploma	DCHS IB Scholars
Course structure	Six DP subjects	Three DP subjects
Core	TOK + EE + CAS required	Choice of two Core elements
HL/SL	3–4 HL; remaining subjects at SL	Depends on selected courses/pathway
Primary outcome	Eligibility to earn the IB Diploma	Earn the Scholar distinction, engage in a program that develops the full student
Flexibility	More structured	More individualized
Best question	Do I want the complete Diploma experience?	Which IB experiences best support my goals?

Avoid this comparison

Do not reduce the choice to “Diploma = smart/hard” and “Scholars = easy.” A better comparison is structured comprehensive programme vs. more individualized pathway.

7. What IB assessment feels like

Course learning: Classwork, writing, labs, projects, discussion, inquiry and feedback build the knowledge and skills students need.

Internal/oral assessment: Many subjects include investigations, performances, portfolios, oral work or other components completed during the course.

- IA = Internal Assessment
- IO = Internal Oral

External assessment (Exams): Most DP courses include written examinations at the end of the programme; some also use externally assessed coursework.

- Paper 1 (SL, HL)
- Paper 2 (SL, HL)
- Paper 3 (HL)

Juniors can take a maximum of two SL exams. Seniors can take any number of SL and HL exams.

Failure to complete any of the components of a class/exam will result in a failure of that exam, and therefore the IB diploma.

Long-term planning: Students often manage several significant deadlines at once, so backward planning and early help-seeking matter.

8. College admissions, credit & scholarships

IB coursework can demonstrate academic rigor and can prepare students for university-level reading, writing, research and time management. However, admissions, credit, placement and scholarship policies are set by individual colleges and universities.

- Do not assume every IB course automatically earns college credit.
- Check each university's current IB recognition/credit table.
- Look at required IB scores, subject, and whether HL/SL distinctions apply.
- Treat scholarship eligibility as institution-specific; IB participation is not a guarantee of scholarship money.

A useful research question

For each college on my student's list: Which IB subjects and scores earn credit, placement or advanced standing, and how would that credit apply to the intended major?

9. Fees and registration

DCHS posts current IB exam registration information and fees on its Exams & Fees page. Fees and deadlines can change from year to year, so use the current school page rather than an older handout.

- [DCHS IB Website: Exams & Fees](#)
- [Google Doc: May 2027 Exam Fee Schedule](#)

Junior and senior Diploma candidates do not pay the core (TOK, CAS, EE) fees, while senior Scholar candidates pay applicable core fees.

- [May 2027 MySchoolBucks Exam Payment](#)

10. Parent survival guide

Helpful support	Less helpful support
Ask students to show you their upcoming calendar.	Tracking every assignment for them.
Help protect sleep, meals and sustainable routines.	Treating exhaustion as proof that the programme is working.
Encourage early communication with teachers.	Emailing a teacher before the student has tried to communicate.
Ask what feedback they received and how they will use it.	Focusing only on the number/grade.
Help them break a large task into milestones.	Editing, rewriting or completing assessed work for them.
Celebrate growth, curiosity and persistence.	Making the Diploma/Scholars label part of the student's identity.

Questions that build independence

- What are your three biggest deadlines in the next two weeks?
- Which task needs to start before it feels urgent?
- Where are you stuck, and who can help?
- What feedback did you receive? What will you do with it?
- What needs to change this week so you can protect sleep and balance?

11. Family pathway reflection

INTEREST Which subjects does my student genuinely want to study deeply?

GOALS What colleges, majors, careers or experiences are currently interesting?

CAPACITY What sports, arts, jobs, family responsibilities or other commitments need protected time?

HABITS How consistently does my student plan, meet deadlines, use feedback and ask for help?

FLEXIBILITY How important is room for electives, specialized courses or other programmes?

OWNERSHIP Can my student explain why they want this pathway in their own words?

Our current thinking

☐ Full IB Diploma ☐ DCHS Scholars ☐ We need more information

Our top three questions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

12. Four-year planning worksheet

View the flowcharts on the [Program Guidance Packet](#), paying close attention to the exams outlined in blue.

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12

Courses/questions to discuss with the IB Coordinator or counselor:

13. IB vocabulary cheat sheet

DP	Diploma Programme
HL	Higher Level
SL	Standard Level
TOK	Theory of Knowledge
EE	Extended Essay
CAS	Creativity, Activity, Service
IA	Internal Assessment / internally assessed component
IO	Individual Oral / oral assessment in applicable subjects
ATLs	Approaches to Learning skills
Moderation	IB quality-assurance process used for applicable internally assessed work

14. Myth or fact?

Only straight-A students belong in IB.

MYTH. Fit, curiosity, habits, willingness to grow and appropriate challenge matter.

Every student taking IB classes must pursue the full Diploma.

MYTH. DCHS also offers its Scholars pathway.

HL always earns more college credit than SL.

MYTH. College recognition policies vary.

The IB Diploma is earned just by getting 24 points.

MYTH. Students need at least 24 points and must satisfy the other IB passing conditions and core requirements.

Parents should manage all IB deadlines.

MYTH. Families can support planning systems, but student ownership is a major part of preparation for life after high school.

15. Next steps

1. Review the current DCHS IB Program Guidance Packet together.
2. Create a tentative four-year plan.
3. Bring pathway/course questions to the IB Coordinator and counselor.
4. As college interests become clearer, check current university IB credit/recognition policies.
5. Revisit the plan as goals and interests change.

Sources & current resources

- [DCHS IB Programme website](#)
- [2026–27 IB Program Guidance Packet](#)
- [DCHS Exams & Fees page](#)

School-specific policies, fees, course offerings and Scholars requirements may change. Use the current DCHS guidance materials when making registration decisions.