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Before applying to offer the IB Diploma Programme, Minnetonka Public School District #276's school board had been interested in the IB program for some time. The district began with the diploma programme for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is its strength as a cohesive program for high school students. The connections that students make within and among their courses—often through, but not completely spurred on by, Theory of Knowledge—excited the teachers who volunteered to be a part of the genesis of this important new venture at the high school.

Minnetonka High School began the diploma programme application process in February of 2003, sending a core group of teachers and administrators to level 1 training. This group then wrote the application largely together. We submitted our application in May of 2003, hosted our site visit in March of 2004, were approved to offer the program in July of 2004, and began to teach the program in the fall of 2004.

Our IB program has grown geometrically. This being our fifth year, we currently have 41 diploma program seniors, 51 diploma program juniors, and about 210 other students taking one or more IB classes. In addition to ToK, we currently offer the following twenty courses: English A1 HL, French B SL and HL, German B SL and HL, Mandarin B SL and HL, Spanish SL and HL, economics SL, European history HL, psychology SL, biology SL and HL, physics SL, math studies SL, mathematics SL, math HL, and visual arts SL and HL.

The most exciting aspect of the application process is pausing to ask the question, "Since we're creating a school, who do we want to be?" The attendant conversations and application writing then codify a philosophy which governs virtually every aspect of the school's IB program and its on-going development. This philosophy also is a prime factor in attracting students, as they can easily see how this program is different from other opportunities that their high school and PSEO afford them.

The success of our application process revolved around many factors. A core group of teachers and administrators wrote the application, which required two days of release time for the entire group as well as daily, part-time work on the part of the application coordinator. The teachers' intelligence and dedication were evident to the site visitors, who were especially impressed with their determination to make this new program work within a short timeframe. Another equally key factor has been an immensely supportive school board and cadre of district and building administrators all of whom have been dedicated to the success and growth of this program. They have seen to it that the staff is supported in every way possible within their power. Along with the strength of the entire program and each of its courses, the teachers' intelligence, dedication, and reputations attract students and have caused our program to grow quickly and substantially. The students themselves attract other students to the program, as IB students are generally known around school for their tenacity, good humor, dedication, and gentle quirkiness.