

# Balance

A unit for students aged 11-12 years

## Introduction to the International Middle Years Curriculum: **Trial Unit**

## Introduction

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### **This is a trial unit of the International Middle Years Curriculum**

In its present form it is not yet complete. We are still working on and refining all of the units that will be available to schools for use with 11-12 year-olds in September 2011. However, it is complete enough to represent most of the learning-focused ideas the IMYC will be bringing to schools.

In addition to the units, schools will also receive:

- A complete Teachers' Manual
- A comprehensive Assessment for Learning Programme
- A supportive and interactive website
- Opportunities for professional development

The introductory pages that follow are extracted from the Teachers' Manual. Please read them before you read, use or talk about the unit.

### **Beliefs and principles**

The International Middle Years Curriculum is a practical tool for teachers to help students learn. Behind the practical components of the IMYC are a number of beliefs about education, learning, teaching, curriculum and education which govern both the look of the IMYC and what it contains.

#### **1. Learning**

Students' learning is the central purpose of everything connected with the IMYC. Helping students learn – academically, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and physically – is the only real purpose of schools.

#### **2. Teaching**

The purpose of teaching is to facilitate students' learning in appropriate ways. Whenever possible, teaching should also be enjoyable for teachers.

The ownership of 'good' teaching is rooted more in the highly developed learning of students than it is in highly enjoyable teaching or successful curriculum development.

#### **3. An International Middle Years Curriculum**

An effective curriculum is one which provides the most appropriate support for

teachers and others to develop students' learning.

A curriculum begins with a set of standards or learning outcomes which clearly defines what students should be capable of at certain important periods of their development.

These standards should be explicitly described in terms of the knowledge students should acquire, the skills they should be able to accomplish and the understandings they should develop.

Not all of these standards or learning outcomes are measurable. Some will require judgement. There is nothing wrong in this.

The curriculum must provide opportunities for teachers to assess or judge the quality of students' learning through a range of assessment or evaluative opportunities.

The curriculum must address the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in three key areas – subjects, personal development and international understanding. The last of these must be a component of any curriculum designed for international middle years schools.

Such a curriculum is respectful of teachers in that it provides them with most of the tools they will need to encourage effective learning, but it allows opportunity for teachers to bring these tools to life in the classroom and to develop school-specific tools for use in their own location.

The curriculum design is influenced by two ideas. The key concepts of independence and interdependence, which underpin our view of what it is to have an international mind-set and the lessons learnt as a result of a decade of research into the brain and the development of brain-friendly learning and teaching strategies.

#### **4. Partnerships**

The IMYC seeks to model its view of the importance of independence and interdependence in its relationships with other organisations and groups. To this end, whilst the IMYC is an independent curriculum with a very specific view about the development of learning, the organisation of teaching and the shape of the curriculum, it also:

- Seeks to work with other organisations;
- Does not claim to be the only appropriate curriculum for international middle years schools. (In fact, it expects a number of curriculums to exist which, whilst sharing the same overall aim, respond differently to the varying needs of schools.)
- Will involve other organisations in providing the quality control mechanisms necessary to ensure that the curriculum is internally consistent.

## The IMYC is a comprehensive curriculum

### The challenge to produce a curriculum for Middle Years students

Around 2004, schools began asking us to produce an exciting and dynamic curriculum for 11-14 year-olds. Two years later we accepted the challenge. We began to observe 11-14 year-olds learning and to talk to them in classrooms, talk to their teachers and think about and discuss the context of the schools they were in. Those discussions and observations carried on for four years, resulting in the development of the IMYC.

### What did teachers and students ask for?

Many different things, obviously, but three challenges have been consistently set before us. They are:

- To enable 11-14 year-olds to experience their version of the kinds of learning that are at the heart of the International Primary Curriculum
- To do so in a way that continues to engage 11-14 year-olds as they change and develop
- To do so in a way that works with the different structures of secondary and middle schools

We flesh out these challenges below.

### Experiencing the learning that is at the heart of the International Primary Curriculum

The IPC contains many elements that are common to all good curriculums. In preparing the IPC, we set out to make those elements as accessible and as trouble-free to teachers as possible.

But the IPC also has some elements that, taken together, set it apart. Together, they point clearly to the fact that the IPC is a curriculum that is focused foremost on student learning rather than on teacher and student activity. These elements are:

- *Rigorous and clearly articulated learning goals*  
Because knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects are learned differently, taught differently and assessed or evaluated differently, students, teachers and others need as much clarity as possible if activities are to be as learning-focused as possible.
- *International Mindedness*  
We live in an interconnected and global world. The IPC and IMYC begin with a strongly held view that the development of international mindedness is not more important than maths, language arts, history, music and other subjects but is as important. From the very beginning we built into the curriculum rigorous opportunities for

children and students to become aware of the parts of a bigger world that exist both independently of each other and interdependently with each other.

- *Independence and Interdependence*

As we developed the curriculum, the ideas of independence and interdependence became more important, beyond but connected with international mindedness. The result is that the curriculum is designed to ensure that children and students work on their own independently and in small groups and large groups interdependently. It has also been designed to ensure that students study individual subjects independently but in the context of the contribution those subjects can make to different themes and, therefore, their interdependence.

- *Assessment for Learning*

Summative assessment focuses on recording student performance. It is, at times, very useful. Because the IPC curriculum is learning-focused, we designed the assessment programme to help children and students take part in and reflect on their own learning and to help teachers help children and students learn better. We designed a programme of assessment for learning.

- *Best practice based on learning-focused research*

The past 25 years have seen an explosion of research into learning and the factors that affect learning. Much of that research is helpful to teachers, children and students. The curriculum is designed so that the activities and approaches to learning reflect research that has validity in the classroom and that are likely to improve learning.

## Engaging 11-14 year-olds

We have always known that many children and students around the ages of 9-14 require an approach to learning and schooling that responds to the changes they are going through. That's why different countries have created specific 'Middle Schools', why transition between primary and elementary school and secondary school is considered so important (and why some secondary schools have begun to use IPC material created for the oldest primary children in the first year of secondary school). There are many changes that 9 – 14 year-olds go through, including:

- Physical growth spurts
- The onset of puberty
- A change in the way their brains comprehend the world
- A struggle for identity – at home, at school and elsewhere
- Stronger identification with their peers
- Increasing demands on their attention and attention span, particularly outside school

A curriculum that is focused on helping middle years students learn and on helping students be excited by their learning has to respond to and take into account the particular nature of the students for whom it has been created. This is an important part of differentiated learning.

## **The structure of secondary schools**

Secondary schools are different from primary and elementary schools in a number of ways, even when both are focused on learning. This affects their culture, their ethos and their systems and structures. Secondary schools:

- Are usually significantly larger than primary schools
- Inevitably have a focus on important examinations which their students will take
- Arrange for far more teachers to help students learn during each day
- Are more subject-focused
- Are staffed by teachers who see themselves differently from many primary teachers – as specialists as opposed to generalists
- Are often departmentally organised
- Teach children who move from late childhood to emerging adulthood

## **The IMYC response to the challenge**

The IMYC responds to the challenges set to us by teachers, schools and students in specific ways:

*The IMYC creates a learning-focused curriculum that:*

- Helps students learn the subject knowledge, skills and understandings they a) need to become aware of in the world around them and b) need to develop throughout their lives. It does so by explicitly articulating the learning goals for students and teachers and ensuring that everything that students do is driven by its potential for learning.
- Helps students develop the personal skills they need to take an active part in the world throughout their lives. It does this by clearly articulating a key set of personal dispositions students should develop.
- Helps students develop an international mindset alongside their awareness of their own nationality. It does this by embedding into each unit the opportunity for students to learn about countries and cultures other than their own.
- Helps students develop the ability to think and behave independently and interdependently. It does this by providing opportunities for students to work in differently sized groups, to develop their own understandings and to reflect on them in the context of the understandings of others.

- Helps students learn. It does this by designing each unit so that students' brains can work most effectively.

*The IMYC responds to the changing nature of 11-14 year-olds by:*

- Putting rigorous skills at the heart of student learning. This means that day-to-day learning through the IMYC is active rather than passive.
- Creating themes built around 'Big Ideas' that respond to the drive of 11-14 year-olds to develop a sense of meaning in their lives.
- At the same time, making the links between tasks and the big ideas explicit so that middle school students (and especially boys) can create a pathway through their learning rather than confusion.
- Creating a series of units to which subjects contribute interdependently and which give students a less fractured and more coherent school experience.
- Providing opportunities for regular reflection that add to students' developing desire to make sense of their world and which make the key elements of their learning personal to them.
- Creating an organisational pattern to each unit so that middle school students can have a consistent and supportive learning experience.
- Providing extended end-point reflections that require students to create and deliver a range of media-related summaries of their learning.

*The IMYC responds to the particular structure of secondary schools and its impact on student learning by:*

- Supporting the continuation of the basic subject-based organisational nature of the timetable.
- Supporting specialist teachers by encouraging their opportunity to choose a significant amount of the specific content that will meet the learning goals.
- Requiring teachers to work interdependently in three ways: a) Developing an initial overview of the unit before students begin experiencing it; b) Committing to making the Big Idea of their unit a reference point and focus for student reflection, discussion and activity through their own work; c) Collaborating to support students in the extended exit activity at the end of the unit.

## **The IMYC provides comprehensive support for teachers and schools**

The IMYC has been developed to provide support to teachers and schools so that students learn well and enjoy their learning, teachers enjoy their part in facilitating learning and the school is able to ensure consistency. In order to help students reach these goals, teachers will have a full toolkit which provides:

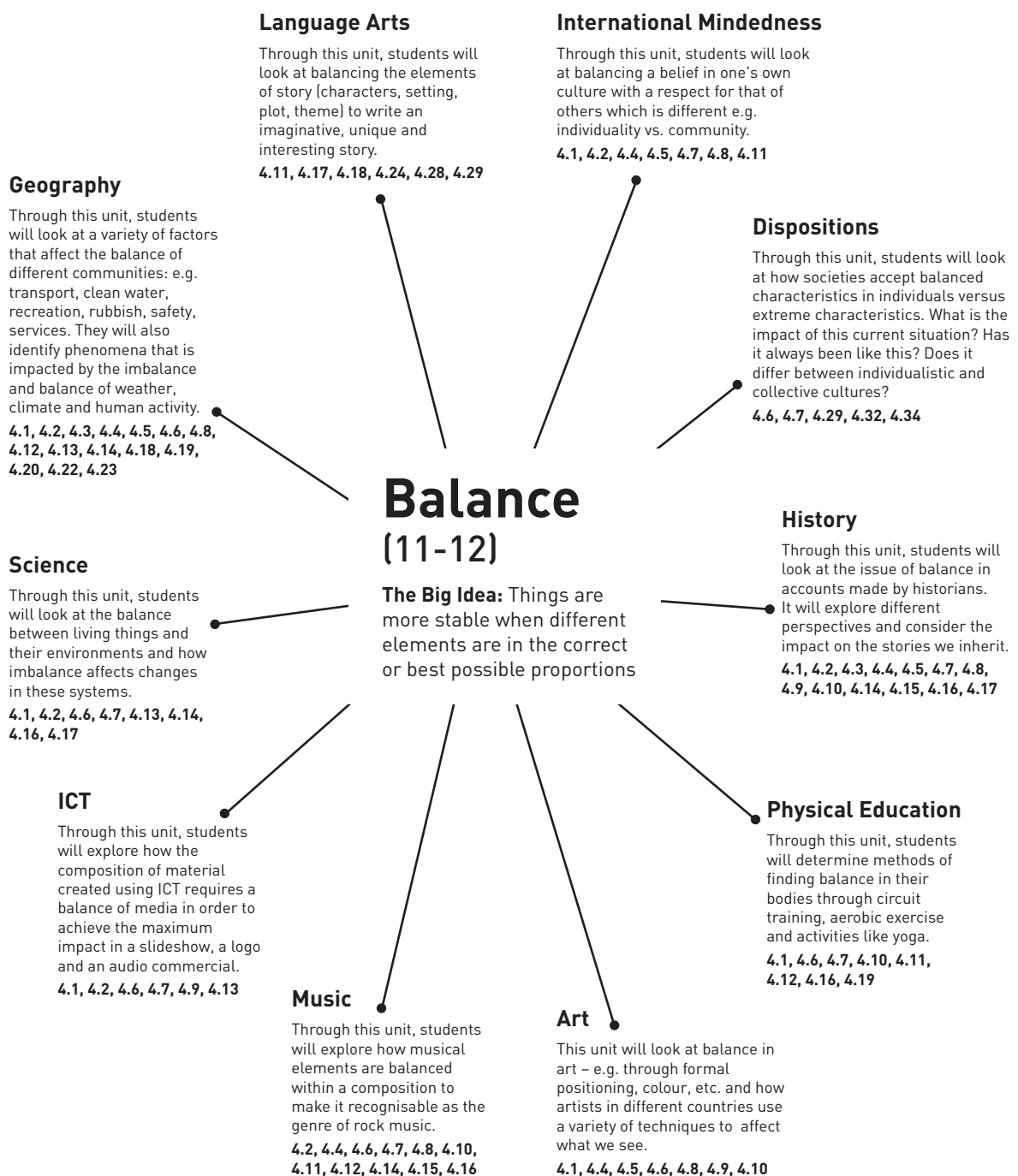
- A coherent view of what should be learned and what learning looks like.

# BALANCE

- Explicit learning goals for each subject area.
- Learning goals for internationalism.
- Big Ideas that link the work in different subjects.
- Explicit articulation of the links between the Big Ideas, the classroom activities and the learning goals.
- Opportunities for specific student personal development.
- A wealth of practical activities for work in the classroom.
- A choice of thematic units based on Big Ideas which encourage higher ordered thinking and multiple perspectival learning throughout subjects and international mindset.
- Opportunities for students to reflect and develop greater understanding.
- A significant amount of flexibility of content.
- Freedom to facilitate learning in appropriate and enjoyable ways.
- An Assessment for Learning programme that allows the assessment and improvement of key skills and the recording of student improvement through an on-line secure database.
- A Teachers' Manual filled with supportive information and explanations.
- Access to the online Route Planner to ensure that learning goals are covered as the school makes its choice of units.
- A membership programme that links schools to other IMYC schools and teachers and provides professional development and web-based support.



## The International Middle Years Curriculum Mindmap



## International Mindedness

Through this unit, students will look at balancing a belief in one's own culture with a respect for that of others which is different e.g. individuality vs. community

- 4.1 Know about the key features related to the different lives of people in their home country and, where appropriate, their parents' home countries
- 4.2 Know about the key features related to the different lives of people in the countries they have studied
- 4.4 Know about similarities and differences between the lives of people in different countries
- 4.5 Be able to explain how the lives of people in one country or group are affected by the activities of other countries or groups
- 4.7 Be able to develop an increasingly mature response to the 'other'
- 4.8 Be able to appreciate another country, culture, society while still valuing and taking pride in one's own
- 4.11 Develop an understanding that there is value in knowing and understanding both the similarities and the differences between different countries

## Dispositions

Through this unit, students will look at how societies accept balanced characteristics in individuals versus extreme characteristics. What is the impact of this current situation? Has it always been like this? Does it differ between individualistic and collective cultures?

- 4.6 Know about a range of views, cultures and traditions
- 4.7 Be able to consider and respect the views, cultures and traditions of other people
- 4.29 Be better able to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals, and reflect upon how their actions affect themselves and others
- 4.32 Be able to consider and respect alternative points of view
- 4.34 Be able to reflect on what they have learned and its implications for their own lives and the lives of other people

## History

Through this unit, students will look at the issue of balance in accounts made by historians. It will explore different perspectives and consider the impact on the stories we inherit.

- 4.1 Know the characteristic features of particular periods and societies

- 4.2 Know that the study of history is concerned with the past in relation to the present
- 4.3 Know the history of the periods being studied
- 4.4 Know about the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of people in the past
- 4.5 Know about the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the periods studied
- 4.7 Be able to enquire into historical questions
- 4.8 Be able to describe how the countries studied have responded to the conflicts, social changes, political changes and economic developments that represent their history
- 4.9 Be able to describe aspects of the past from a range of sources
- 4.10 Be able to describe and identify causes for and results of historical events, situations, and changes in the periods they have studied
- 4.14 Be able to select and record information relevant to an historical topic
- 4.15 Be able to place the events, people and changes in the periods they have studied into a chronological framework
- 4.16 Be able to describe how certain aspects of the past have been represented and interpreted in different ways
- 4.17 Develop an understanding of how historical sources can be different from and contradict one another and that they reflect their context of time, place and viewpoint

## Physical Education

Through this unit, students will determine methods of finding balance in their bodies through circuit training, aerobic exercise and activities like yoga.

- 4.1 Know that the study of physical education is concerned with healthy lifestyle choices and activity which lead to physical, emotional and mental balance
- 4.6 Be able to steadily improve performance with control, coordination, precision and consistency a range of physical skills and techniques whenever possible
- 4.7 Be able to select a physical activity they enjoy and decide how they will participate in their chosen activity
- 4.10 Be able to use safe and acceptable tactics to steadily improve their own performance and that of a team
- 4.11 Be able to identify the features of a good physical performance
- 4.12 Be able to evaluate their own performance objectively and make a plan of action

# BALANCE

- 4.16 Develop an understanding of how physical activity affects the body, mind, and emotions
- 4.19 Develop an understanding of how attitudes towards health, practices, and behaviours differ based on cultural values and beliefs

## Art

This unit will look at balance in art – e.g. through formal positioning, colour, etc. and how artists in different countries use a variety of techniques to affect what we see.

- 4.1 Know that the study of art is concerned with visual, tactile and personal expression used to share and express emotions, ideas and values
- 4.4 Be able to recognise influential artists from particular countries, genres or periods and the pieces of art they produced
- 4.5 Be able to evidence how artists, craftspeople and designers from a variety of traditions from around the world use materials, forms and techniques to express their feelings, observations and experiences
- 4.6 Be able to use the elements of art and principles of design to discuss and critique works of art showing understanding, respect and enjoyment as appropriate
- 4.8 Be able to create art to achieve a particular purpose so that the idea goes beyond art being exclusively for self-expression and creativity
- 4.9 Be able to evaluate their initial artistic products and adjust the work to better suit their expression
- 4.10 Be able to describe works of art in terms of meaning, design, materials, technique, place and time

## Music

Through this unit, students will explore how musical elements are balanced within a composition to make it recognisable as the genre of rock music.

- 4.2 Know the uses of the elements of music
- 4.4 Know characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures
- 4.6 Be able to use music vocabulary and apply the elements of music to analyse and describe musical forms
- 4.7 Be able to interpret standard notation symbols
- 4.8 Be able to sing and/or play a melody with accompaniment

# BALANCE

- 4.10 Be able to create or compose short pieces within specified parameters
- 4.11 Be able to perform a repertoire of music, alone or with others, with attention to performance practice, breath -control, posture, and tone quality
- 4.12 Be able to make judgments about pieces of music, showing understanding, appreciation, respect and enjoyment as appropriate
- 4.14 Be able to improvise, extend or create music to express emotion, ideas, creativity and imagination
- 4.15 Be able to perform as part of an ensemble and contribute to the overall experience of the collaboration
- 4.16 Be able to consider pieces of music in terms of meaning, mood, structure, place and time

## ICT

Through this unit students will explore how the composition of material created using ICT requires a balance of media in order to achieve the maximum impact in a slideshow, a logo and an audio commercial.

- 4.1 Know that the study of ICT is concerned with applying technology to gather, use and exchange information
- 4.2 Know about an increasing number of applications of ICT for work, communication and leisure
- 4.6 Be able to manipulate and combine different forms of information from different sources in an organised and efficient way
- 4.7 Be able to use ICT to present information in a variety of forms
- 4.9 Be able to use ICT to plan and control events
- 4.13 Understand the importance of considering audience and purpose when presenting information

## Science

Through this unit, students will look at the balance between living things and their environments and how imbalance affects changes in these systems.

- 4.1 Know that the study of science is concerned with investigating and understanding the animate and inanimate world around them
- 4.2 Be able to conduct scientific investigations with increasing rigor
- 4.6 Know about taxonomy: the classifications of living things

# BALANCE

- 4.7 Know that living things benefit and suffer due to internal and external influences in their environments
- 4.13 Know about the energy flow in a food chain, pyramid or web and describe its process node
- 4.14 Develop an understanding of the relationship between living things and the environment in which they live
- 4.16 Develop an understand of how the gradual and sudden changes in the environment affect organisms and the overall environment
- 4.17 Develop an understanding of the diversity of living things

## Geography

Through this unit, students will look a variety of factors that affect the balance of different communities: e.g. transport, clean water, recreation, rubbish, safety, services. They will also identify phenomena that is impacted by the imbalance and balance of weather, climate and human activity.

- 4.1 Know that the study of geography is concerned with places and environments in the world
- 4.2 Know about the main physical and human features and environmental issues in particular localities
- 4.3 Know about varying geographical patterns and physical processes of different places
- 4.4 Know about the geography, weather and climate of particular localities
- 4.5 Know about similarities and differences between particular localities
- 4.6 Know how the features of particular localities influence the nature of human activities within theme
- 4.8 Know how people and their actions affect the environment and physical features of a place
- 4.12 Know how the combination of geographical, environmental and economic features of a region impact human distribution patterns
- 4.13 Be able to use and interpret globes, maps, atlases, photographs, computer models, and satellite images in a variety of scales
- 4.14 Be able to make plans and maps using a variety of scales, symbols and keys
- 4.18 Be able to explain the relationships between physical characteristics and human behaviours that shape a region
- 4.19 Be able to use maps in a variety of scales to locate the position, geographical

# BALANCE

features and social environments of other countries and continents to gain understanding of daily life

- 4.20 Be able to explain how physical and human processes lead to similarities and differences between places
- 4.22 Develop an understanding of how localities are affected by natural features and processes
- 4.23 Develop an understanding of how and why people seek to manage and sustain their environment

## Language Arts

Through this unit, students will look at balancing the elements of story (characters, setting, plot, theme) to write an imaginative, unique and interesting story.

- 4.11 Be able to determine the theme of a text and its relationship to plot, setting and characters
- 4.17 Be able to write in a range of different forms appropriate for their purpose and readers
- 4.18 Be able to write narratives to communicate real or imagined events using descriptive details and event sequences
- 4.24 Be able to write neatly and legibly
- 4.28 Be able to recognise different forms, genres and themes
- 4.29 Be able to explain and describe the main features, ideas, themes, events, information and characters in a text