2026 IB Info Night -- FAQ

1. **What is the catchment area for STA IB Programme? School Bus availability?**
   Students living within Oakville are eligible to apply and attend the STA IB Programme. Families residing north of the 407 (Milton and Halton Hills) are not eligible to apply to St. Thomas Aquinas' IB Programme and are encouraged to apply to St Kateri Tekakwitha. Students from Burlington may choose either option, pending the distance and convenience of where they reside within the city. Students residing out of district and applying for cross-boundary entrance, for instance Brampton, Wellington and North Mississauga will apply to St. Kateri. Students from Niagara, Hamilton and South Mississauga will apply to St. Thomas Aquinas. School bus eligibility is only available to IB students living within the STA bussing catchment.
2. **How many students apply vs. how many are admitted?**
   The number of student applications vary from year to year. Typically, we admit 100 to 150 students.
3. **What is the website to review this presentation again?**
   https://secondary.hcdsb.org/sta
4. **What are the minimum grades to get into IB?**
   There are no minimum grades. Acceptance into the programme is dependent on the number of applicants.
5. **Does IB have a lot of homework?**
   There generally is more homework for IB students in comparison to students in the academic programme.
6. **How many students in each class on average in the IB programme?**
   There are 25-30 students in each class.
7. **Will students with an IB background since grade 2 have priority to enter STA if they live in the boundaries?**
   The same application process and review criteria is applied to students from all pathways.
8. **Is religion mandatory?**
   Religion courses are mandatory. The IB student will take religion courses in grade 9 and 10 and will transition to Theory of Knowledge in grade 12 by taking a philosophy course.

9. **What are the differences between AP and IB?**

Advance Placement (AP)	IB Diploma Programme
Opportunity for advance standing in university	Opportunity for advance standing in university
Taken on a course-by-course basis	Offers a complete program and with an internationally recognized diploma
Only receives an OSSD	Receives OSSD and IB Diploma
Mark is based solely on an end of term AP exam	Marks determined by both internal assessment and final IB exams
Ontario marks are bumped by 5% to reflect AP results	All grade 12 marks are converted from IB final results to Ontario marks

10. **Is French mandatory to be enrolled into the IB programme?**
    A second language is required in the IB programme. Currently students can choose from either French or Italian.
11. **What would be the opinion of a university admission officer when he compares one application from an IB student and one application from a regular track student? Would he be impressed and will consider that IB student worked harder to get the same marks? I'm afraid that allowing my child to choose IB would be something against him to get a spot in a top Canadian University. Do you have any data about that?**
    We are unable to comment on university admission processes. Families will need to independently research universities.
12. **What's the difference between pre-IB and IB programme?**
    The IB Diploma Programme is a four-year commitment. Grades 9 and 10 are preparatory years for the Diploma Programme, which starts in grade 11 and ends in grade 12.
13. **Does the IB Diploma Programme prepare students for university? What if your math grades are not the best but you are still interested in the program?**
    Yes, the IB Diploma Programme provides many skills necessary to transition to university. Students can be successful in the Diploma Programme even if math is not a strength.
14. **How is the IB programme comparable to the British and French education programmes and how does it better prepare our kids to compete for spaces in international universities?**
    The IB Diploma Programme is internationally recognized by universities world-wide, with a challenging curriculum assessed to an international standard.
15. **Is IB only for students who want to pursue science or engineering? Do IB students have to write exams in Grade 11 and/or 12?**
    No, the IB Diploma Programme is not only for STEM programmes. We have many students that also pursue the Arts in post-secondary programmes.
    IB students write IB exams in both grade 11 and in grade 12.

16. **Are students from the IB programme able to continue practising competitive sports?**
    Currently, we have in our programme students that participate on many athletic teams at STA, as well as competitive athletic teams outside of school.
17. **If the programme is for grade 11/12 students, what is the benefit to reaching out to grade 7/8 students?**
    Even though the IB Diploma Programme does not begin until the grade 11 year, in preparation for the IB Diploma Programme, grade 8 students must apply to our Pre-IB Programme for grades 9 and 10. For grade 7 families, our presentation is for information purposes.
18. **What are the requirements for getting accepted into the IB programme? Academic minimum on report cards and extra curricular activities etc. And when should we start applying? Which report card year should we attach to the application?**
    A committee reviews the applications and decides on each candidate. The committee reviews and evaluates the students' learning skills, grades in Math, English and French for both grades 7 and 8, and a 150-word essay.
    The grade 9 pre-IB programme application will be available on-line on **November 30th, 2026**. Applications are due by **Friday, December 18th, 2026.** Please attach Grade 7 Final Report Card, Grade 8 Progress Report Card and the teacher references.
19. **What is the drop out rate?**
    Our IB DP has a 50% retention rate, which is comparable to other IB programmes within Ontario.
20. **Does St. Thomas Aquinas CSS offer IB Diploma Courses?**
    If at the end of the Pre-IB Programme students decide they are unable to complete the full IB Diploma Programme, they may continue with IB Programming by completing one or more Diploma Programme Courses. To pursue Diploma Programme Courses, students **must** complete the Pre-IB Programme.
21. **Are French courses core or extended French?**
    We offer both core and extended French.
22. **Is co-op available for IB students?**
    No co-op is not available on the students' timetable. Co-op opportunities may exist outside of day school, either at night school or summer school.
23. **Based on the curriculum shown in the last slide I assume that there are no electives? Is it mandatory to take languages, social studies, sciences etc. in grades 11 and 12?**
    In the IB Diploma programme, which takes place during Grade 11 and 12, students are required to study six subjects and a curriculum core. The program is designed to equip students with the basic academic skills needed for post-secondary study, post graduate studies, and their chosen profession. The areas of study include:

    Group 1 – Language & Literature (English)
    Group 2 – Second Language (French, Italian)
    Group 3 – Individuals and Society (Economics, Business Management)
    Group 4 – Experimental Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics)
    Group 5 – Mathematics
    Group 6 – The Arts

Given that Group 6 is not offered in our programme, students must take an additional Group 3 or Group 4 subject. Opportunities to take electives outside of the diploma programme exist in the student's grade 9 and 10 year.

24. **Why is the program not considering changing Italian language to more widely used languages as Spanish, Mandarin or others?**
    Courses change based on enrolment and needs of the programme. With the growth of our programme we will be able to offer a wider range of subjects.
25. **Will students require to take any tests to get into IB programme?**
    There is no test as part of the application process.
26. **Can you be in the SHSM program and IB at the same time?**
    Currently, IB students can pursue the Health Care SHSM or the Sports SHSM in addition to the IBDP.
27. **Can a child join the IB programme in grades 11 and 12 from other schools?**
    Students can enter in grade 11 if they are coming to STA from another IB school that has a programme that aligns with STA's IBDP.
28. **Is it true that most IB students drop out of the program after a couple of weeks?**
    No, this is not the case.
29. **Grade 7 students can't apply yet?**
    Students in grade 8 may apply for September 2027. Students currently in grade 7 may apply for September 2029.
30. **How are grade 12 marks converted from IB final exams to Ontario marks? What's the typical mark-up?**
    IB grades on a scale of 1-7, 1 being the lowest and 7 being the highest. The IB Schools of Ontario (IBSO) our governing body, provides us with an IB Conversion Chart. For example, an IB Level 7 is equivalent to an Ontario mark of 97-100.
31. **How does it work with students in Early French Immersion?**
    A student coming from French Immersion or Extended French can continue in the Extended French program offered at STA. Within the IB Programme, students will take seven courses in French, and graduate with an Extended French Certificate. Students wishing to receive bilingual status, may write the DELF Exam.
32. **Would the students within STA school boundary be considered and accepted before the students applying from outside of the STA boundary?**
    No, all students are provided the same opportunity.
33. **Can I take dual credit in grade 11 if I take the IB programme?**
    No.
34. **What does a current grade 7 need to do to join the program after grade 8?**
    We encourage Grade 7's to keep up their studies in order to have a successful application into STA's Pre-IB Programme.
35. **Is there a ranking list for all IB schools across Ontario? Is STA ranked among the top?**
    We are unaware of a ranking list for IB schools in Ontario. Please refer to our presentation for STA Worldwide Comparison Statistics by Subject.
36. **Where is the program taking place?**
    At St. Thomas Aquinas CSS in Oakville.

37. **In my understanding, Grade 11 and Grade 12 students will study the 6 groups of courses, and at the same time, complete the IB core project: EE, CAS, Theory of Knowledge. Is my understanding correct?**
    Yes.
38. **Is there any plan to make St. Thomas Aquinas a full IB school?**
    Not at the moment.
39. **Is computer science available as an elective at St Thomas?**
    Yes, computer science is available as an elective to students at STA but unfortunately it does not fit into an IB students timetable.
40. **Can IB students get an athletic scholarship in the USA while being in this programme?**
    Yes. There are IB graduates currently attending universities on athletic scholarships.
41. **Are there other IB schools closer to Milton?**
    Yes, St. Kateri Tekakwitha began offering a grade 9 Pre-IB Programme in September 2024. As such, families residing north of the 407 (Milton and Halton Hills) are not eligible to apply to St. Thomas Aquinas' IB Programme and are encouraged to apply to St Kateri. Students from Burlington may choose either option, pending the distance and convenience of where they reside within the city. Students residing out of district and applying for cross-boundary entrance, for instance Brampton, Wellington and North Mississauga will apply to St. Kateri. Students from Niagara, Hamilton and South Mississauga will apply to St. Thomas Aquinas. Check the St. Kateri Tekakwitha website for information on their Gr. 8 Parent IB Information Night
42. **Do we need to be Catholic to be considered for the IB program?**
    No.
43. **Do they require reference letters from teachers?**
    Yes, part of the application will require a reference letter from teachers.
44. **Do you offer Math HL?**
    We offer Mathematics Analysis & Approaches SL at STA.
45. **How many courses are students required to take in grades 9, 10 11 and 12?**
    Within the IB Programme, students take 8 courses per year (4 per semester).
46. **Does the STA school provide all IB, AP, and regular track programs?**
    STA offers the Ontario and the IB Programme. It does not offer the AP Programme. HCDSB AP Programmes are currently being offered at Holy Trinity (Oakville), Assumption (Burlington), Corpus Christi (Burlington), Bishop Reding (Milton), and Christ the King (Georgetown), while IB is offered at STA and St Kateri Tekakwitha.
47. **Do you have a University Advisor?**
    We have an IB department and Guidance Counsellor dedicated to IB students.
48. **Some schools have weak French programs. How much do French marks weigh in the acceptance process?**
    Even though we focus on the student's Math, English, Science and French grades, we also look at the student's overall performance in Grades 7 and 8.
49. **If my child decides to leave the IB programme, will they be able to return to a high school with the gifted program?**
    HCDSB does not have a gifted program at the secondary level.

50. **What percentage of graduating IB students have been involved in competitive extra-curriculars?**
    We don't have exact data; however, many of our students are involved in competitive extra-curriculars (rowing, sailing, fencing, soccer, hockey, baseball, swimming, rugby, musical instruments, etc.)
51. **What is the school timing?**
    Please see STA website for daily schedule.
52. **How do the rules for IB students differ from academic ones? Are their rules of a higher standard or the same rules just more strictly enforced?**
    STA has the same expectations and rules for all students – Ontario and IB students.
53. **Does the student have to choose between French and Italian? or can both be selected?**
    In the Diploma Programme, students are only able to complete one second language; therefore, they must choose between French and Italian.
54. **Do you have a Film Program or Film Club?**
    STA does not have a film program or club.
55. **Other than academic marks, will volunteer and extra activities be considered as part of the application?**
    Volunteer and extra-curricular activities are not part of the application process.
56. **If the student doesn't reach the required marks at the end of the school year, will the student be kicked out of the program?**
    Leaving the IB programme is a family decision.
57. **Are there any other fees apart from the registration and exam fees?**
    No.
58. **If they fail to get the required amount of marks, will they still receive an IB diploma?**
    In order to successfully complete the IB Diploma, students must be successful in 6 IB subjects and successfully complete the core components – Extended Essay (EE), Theory of Knowledge (TOK), and Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS).
59. **What is the scope for music in IB programme?**
    We currently do not have IB music courses in grades 11 and 12.
60. **Could you please elaborate on HL and SL?**
    HL stands for Higher Level. The course content in HL is covered over three courses and grants three Ontario credits. SL stands for Standard Level. The course content in SL is covered over two courses and grants two Ontario credits.
61. **Are students allowed to create new extracurricular clubs?**
    Students can create new extracurricular clubs provided that a teacher mentor is available to supervise the club.
62. **Can you apply for AP and IB for grade 9 and then choose?**
    Students will apply to their home school for the Ontario program. Students can apply to various specialized programs and then choose.
63. **Do you have a volleyball team?**
    Yes, both junior/senior girls and junior/senior boys.
64. **Will you be adding more HL & SL Courses within the coming years?**
    The hope is always to grow the IB Programme at STA which will allow us to add more HL and SL courses.

65. **What type of sports and clubs do you offer?**
    Please refer to the STA website Clubs & Activities | St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School, Oakville (hcdsb.org)
66. **Are there any scholarships being offered for IB?**
    There are no entrance scholarships offered entry into the grade 9 pre-IB programme. We do offer a variety of graduation awards to our graduates.
67. **Can you get college credits?**
    Transfer credits for HL courses vary from school to school. Our recommendation is to reach out to universities/colleges for their policy on transfer credits.
68. **Can you please confirm if we need to be Catholic in order to join the IB programme?**
    We accept students of all religious denominations at STA.
69. **Can a student get the bilingual status without the extended French?**
    Please see DELF website Alliance Française Toronto - DELF (alliance-francaise.ca) for more information.
70. **If the student wants to learn Math HL, can they take it in other schools or online?**
    No, this is not possible at STA.
71. **Are the Pre-IB students integrated with other non-IB stream students at school?**
    Pre-IB students are clustered for core subjects. For elective courses, Pre-IB students are integrated with other non-IB stream students.
72. **What is the total cost of the programme?**

    Grade 9: **$300**, non-refundable.

    Grade 10: **$400**, non-refundable.

    Grade 11: **$850** (includes the cost of 2 IB Exams), Non-refundable.

    Grade 12: **$1,350** (includes the cost of 4 IB Exams), Non-refundable.

73. **Why is the retention rate at 50%?**
    There are a variety of reasons why students leave the IB Programme. This is the beauty of the grade 9 and 10 pre-IB programme at STA: it provides students with two years of discernment to help them decide if the IBDP is the right programme for them.
74. **If you are in the IB programme but you decide to drop out, do you go back to your public homeschool or could you remain at STA for regular stream because you were in the catchment area?**
    Students that leave the IB Programme and do not live within the STA catchment must return to their home school.
75. **Does the application have to be submitted in grade 7 or grade 8?**
    The application must be submitted in grade 8.
76. **Is the admission conditional on the Midterm grade 8 report card? What grades would you be looking for?**
    Yes, admission is conditional on the grade 8 mid-term report card. Emphasis is placed on Math, English, and French grades.
77. **If the student lives in the STA catchment areas, should we apply to the regular program as well?**
    Yes, you must apply to the regular program.

78. **How soon would you know the status of the application for Grade 9?**
    Conditional offers are sent **at the end of January 2027.**
79. **What if you get high grades in all academic subjects, excluding one? Would you be accepted?**
    Even though we focus on the student's Math, English and French grades, we also look at the student's overall performance in Grades 7 and 8 and their teacher recommendation.
80. **Do you have career guidance programme for IB students?**
    Our programme has a guidance counsellor dedicated solely to IB Students.
81. **What happens if a student moves during the school year?**
    The student could move to another IB school or pursue the Ontario curriculum at their new school.
82. **Can you give an example of what a regular school day would be for an IB student?**

Grade 9 Semester 1	Grade 9 Semester 2
Pre – IB English	Pre – IB Mathematics
Pre- IB French	Pre – IB Science
Pre – IB Geography	Religion
Music/Drama/ Art	Phys Ed

83. **Can a student transfer to STA IB programme from another IB program like the French IB programme at Sainte Trinite?**
    Yes, grade 9 students can transfer to STA's Pre-IB Programme.
84. **Percentage of girls vs boys electing for IB program?**
    Approximately 50% girls and 50% boys.
85. **What would be the benefits of attending IB if I would choose an Art Program in university?**
    The IB Programme contributes to a student's personal development, thus preparing them for any post-secondary pathway. The programme focuses on inquiry, research, writing, analytical and critical thinking skills, all of which are required for any post-secondary programme. The programme also strengthens a student's organization and time-management skills, introduces university content to students, and prepares students for the rigors of university.
86. **If a student moves out of Halton Region, can they finish the IB Programme?**
    Yes, the student will be able to finish the IB Programme at STA upon the Superintendent's approval of the Cross-Boundary/Non-Resident Form.

87. **Does the IB accommodate students who must leave school early for high performance sport training and away weeks at a time for competitions?**
    We will do our best to accommodate a student's schedule. We have in the past accommodated students in high performance sports training.
88. **Can you comment on how IB students can go on exchange to other countries?**
    Within the IB Programme, exchanges are not recommended.
89. **How does the programme prepare students that apply to a post-secondary medical programme?**
    Many of our IB graduates are accepted into Health Science programmes at top Ontario universities, and Medical School programs in Ireland, UK, and Australia.
90. **Is this a more suitable program for a student looking to study to be a veterinarian?**
    With the IBDP, your student will be able to complete all program prerequisites for a post-secondary veterinary program.
91. **For IB marks out of 7 in a subject, what would a 7 out of 7 be in Ontario percentage marks?**
    An IB level 7 is equivalent to an Ontario 97-100%.
92. **What's the catchment area for STA?**
    St. Thomas Aquinas boundaries cover a large catchment area stretching the entire length of Oakville, from the QEW Highway in the north, to the shores of Lake Ontario in the south, and from Burlington border in the west, to the Mississauga border in the east.
93. **Do any of the credits transfer over to University?**
    Transfer credits for HL courses vary from school to school. Our recommendation is to reach out to universities/colleges for their policy on transfer credits.
94. **If the student wants to learn Math HL and Physics HL, is there any chance?**
    Not with our programme.
95. **If my child is in French Immersion, do they have to take Italian?**
    No, your student does not have to take Italian unless they wanted their second language course to be Italian.
96. **Is there a difference between an IB programme offered by Catholic vs Public school?**
    We suggest that you reach out to the IB schools in the public system to learn more about their IB Programme.