

PART III – EDUCATION INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO EACH LEVEL OF SCHOOLING

This part of the booklet contains information that is specific to each age-group or level of schooling. It covers specific terminology, structure, curriculum covered and special events for each level of schooling. It includes the following sections:

Section A – Early Education & Childcare

1. Terminology
2. Overview & Requirements
3. Early Education Options - Daycare / Preschool /Kindergarten /Montessori, /Co-operative Pre-schools / Reggio Emilio Programs
4. Other Childcare Options (Babysitters, Nannies)

Section B – Elementary School

1. Structure
2. Curriculum
3. Homework
4. Parent Communication & Involvement

Section C – Middle School / Junior High School

1. Terminology & Structure (Difference between Middle Schools & Junior Highs)
2. Curriculum
3. Extra-Curricular
4. Special Events
5. Challenges in Middle School

Section D – High School

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2. Curriculum & Course Levels
 - a. Differences between College Prep, Academic, Honors, AP/IB, CLEP
 - b. IB or AP – Which one should I choose
3. Requirements to Graduate
 - a. Core 40 / Core 40 with Honors
4. Requirements for College Admissions & further study
 - a. GPA & Student Transcripts
 - b. College Admission Standardized Testing - SAT / ACT
5. Other High School Alternatives
 - a. Early Graduation
 - b. Gap Year
 - c. Indiana University High School
6. Extra-curricular activities
7. Graduation / Commencement Activities
8. Other Social Events

**PART III - SECTION A
EARLY EDUCATION & CHILDCARE**

1) TERMINOLOGY:

Infant : Usually refers to newborn and very young babies.

Toddler : Refers to children approximately 2 to 5 years of age.

Licensing : All good programs are licensed by the State of Indiana. Always ask if the program you are considering is licensed.

Nursery School : Usually refers to schools/care for children below 3 years

Pre-School : This is normally for children 3-4 years of age

Kindergarten : The class just before grade school for children 5-6 years of age

2) OVERVIEW & REQUIREMENTS

NOTE: *In Indiana there may be trouble with the law for leaving children under the age of 12 alone in your home or vehicle even for a few minutes. It varies from county to county. Check with your county or residence.*

Early education is optional

One thing you must be aware of is that, although in some foreign countries school starts earlier in the life of a child, in the US however, **earlier education options (daycare and preschool) are optional and the cost of pre-school is paid by parents.** In Indiana, there is now some government funding for kindergarten but it is not mandatory. Check with your local school district/office for details. The law establishes the start of education at 7 years old. The law also requires certain immunizations (also known as vaccines or shots) before a child can be accepted into any program.

Safety & Quality Standards

In Indiana, day care centers and pre-schools vary widely in their standards of safety and quality of care. Licensing & accreditation may not as rigorous in the US as they are in some other countries. Take special care in the selection process for your child. Ask other international families for advice and make at least one inspection visit to any center you are considering.

Required Immunizations: All students entering Indiana schools will be required to provide a physician's record of immunizations (shots) which are required by state law. If your child does not have all the required vaccines, contact your physician or the school nurse for guidance.

| <u>From 3 to 5 years old</u> | <u>Kindergarten to 2nd grade</u> |
|--|---|
| 3 Hep B (Hepatitis B) | Hep B |
| 4 DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus & Pertussis) | 5 DTaP |
| 3 Polio (Inactivated Polio) | 4 Polio |
| 1 MMR (Measles, Mumps & Rubella) | 2 MMR |
| 1 Varicella | 2 Varicella |

3) EARLY EDUCATION OPTIONS

a) Daycare Centers

Usually provide all day year-round child care. Day care could be provided in homes or in business locations. Some companies provide a daycare center for their employees. **In all events, the daycare is paid for by the parents.**

The issue when finding a daycare is whether they are properly licensed. You may find it very hard to find a full-time day care for an infant. *Start by looking at places closer to home, in churches, and by contacting your neighbors, other international friends and/or the relocation company.* You may want to start looking even before your child is born!

Daycare centers may provide just play time or may work on children's skills as part of the daily activities.

b) Nursery Schools and Preschools:

Preschools are not free in the US. They are usually hard to find, so start looking early, asking for advice as soon as you can or even before arriving to the country and visiting each provider. These programs usually follow the school calendar (Aug. to May), offer half or full-day programs and are often closed for summer months. Some may offer a summer alternative. Most programs offer an academic component to their daily schedule. You will want to visit the school and find out what they provide routinely, the curriculum, the extracurricular activities, etc., before making a decision about which preschool to choose.

Most nursery schools / preschools accept children **two years or older** who:

- are considered ready for school. (A child must be ready to leave home for a short time and be happy to socialize in a group of children); *and*
- are toilet trained.

c) Kindergarten

While Kindergarten is **not** required nationwide, Indiana's Public schools offer it within the school system as do many private schools. There is a half day Kindergarten option and a full-day Kindergarten option. Check with your school (in your district) to make sure they provide a full-day option and about any fees. Most school districts offer free Kindergarten.

Note: Once a student is enrolled in Kindergarten, the parents are obligated to ensure the child attends school every day Kindergarten is available and for the full year. The process of registration is very much the same as for grades 1 – 12, as outlined in **Part 3, Section A** of this booklet.

A child may enter Kindergarten if he/she is the age of 5 by or before August 1st. For more information visit

<http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/full-day-kindergarten>

Note: It is advisable to teach children their name, address and phone number. Children should carry some form of identification in their pockets or bags/backpacks whenever they are outside of the home.

d) Montessori schools

The traditional Montessori teaching methods are designed to encourage each child's physical, intellectual, creative and social independence. Indiana has many Montessori schools in different areas of the city. For more information, visit www.montessoriconnections.com/

e) Co-Operative (Co-op) Preschools & Kindergartens

Parent run preschools and kindergartens, in which education is provided by either parents of the participants, or by hired teachers. Some of these extend all the way to the high school years, particularly for the participation of home schooled children. For more info visit <http://www.preschools.coop/v/school-province/Indiana/f/>

f) Reggio Emilia Early Childhood Programs

Indianapolis is fortunate to have several early childhood learning centers based on the Reggio Emilia Philosophy, which seeks to provide environments that honor the rights of children and families and provides experiences that help each child develop his/her full potential. The Indianapolis Reggio Collaborative is led by the College of Education at Butler University and the participants to date are the Early Learning Centers of Lawrence Township, St. Mary's Child Center, Warren Early Childhood Center and the Indianapolis Public Schools. For more information about this program visit: http://www.stmaryschildcenter.org/?page_id=28

4) OTHER CHILD CARE OPTIONS

Mother's Day Out (MDO)

These are daycare centers where you can leave your child for a few hours some mornings each week. Many churches offer this service. There is no particular structure, but most will offer a craft, a story and music time, with lots of play time in between, and there may be a religious component if the MDO is provided at a church.

Babysitting

Babysitting is usually provided by local people in your area of residence, particularly by teens/young adults. Make sure your babysitter has been trained to do the job - through experience with siblings or through the Safe Sitters® program, which provides very good training/CPR information to teens.

The best place to obtain information about the local babysitters are:

- ***Word of mouth*** - ask neighbors and friends who they could recommend. Particularly your friends with older children (11+ years of age) may be of great help in the search for a baby sitter.
- ***Neighborhood newsletters*** - usually lists the name of those providing some type of babysitting around your neighborhood.
- ***Associations or Organizations*** - if you belong to a particular ethnic, athletic, social or professional organization, ask your peers/friends to recommend a baby sitter for you.
- ***Care.com*** - a website that compiles information about babysitters in your area..

No matter who is being recommended to you, you should always:

- Interview the prospects to find out whether they have experience in the particular age group of your child(ren) and whether they have any type of training (Safe Sitter® or experience with siblings/others).
- Agree on a rate of pay (usually starting at \$6, \$8 or \$10 per hour) depending on the age and the amount of children you have.
- At the time the babysitter arrives, have a list with all your instructions regarding rules for the kids, for eating, for sleep times, for TV/gaming times, medications (very important) along with phone numbers and place where you can be reached in case of an emergency. Also, if possible, talk to a neighbor and ask them to be "on-call" in case of an emergency while you are gone. Go over all the instructions with the baby sitter and make sure he/she understands everything.
- It is not recommended to have a young baby sitter be responsible for giving baths to your kids. If a bath is necessary, it would be best that you provide one before leaving the children with the baby sitter.
- It's important that the babysitter maintains routines for your kids as much as possible.

- Provide a plan of action for any child misbehaving or acting up, and make sure the babysitter feels confident to call you if the situation is out of control.

Nannies

Some families wish to hire a nanny to take care of the children. Finding one may take a long time, so start working on this even before arriving in the country. The internet would be a good place to start. Some people find nannies through ads in the newspaper. A website we have heard about is **www.Care.com**. You may want to start inquiring with peers/friends at your place of work, other organizations you belong to, or with your relocation companies as well. Another option is an **AuPair**, a student from another country that would come to live with you for a year and provide babysitting services while practicing the English language and taking classes. More information at **www.AuPairCare.com**

As with babysitters, it is necessary to interview prospects, check previous references, and run a background check (check with the county clerk office as to how to run a background check in their county of residence). If possible, spend the day with the nanny at home to watch the way she/he manages your home, attends to your child(ren), and interacts with your child(ren), and/or to provide training in the duties you wish to assign him/her.

PART III - SECTION B ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

1) STRUCTURE:

U.S. children enter formal schooling around age 6 and most commonly go up to Grade 5. Elementary students are typically in one classroom with the same teacher most of the day. The number of students in each class varies between schools but there is often a teacher's aide (assistant teacher), in lower grades or larger classes. Check with your school the average teacher to child ratio.

The elementary students usually remain in the same room, known as home room, for the entire school year, with the same teacher. They will be able to store their supplies in an assigned place (locker or cubby hole). They may move around the school to attend special classes, such as art, music, physical education, but they will start and end their day at the home room location.

2) CURRICULUM:

Elementary school focuses on developing the three Rs – Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic. In addition, children will also learn Science and Social Studies and many schools have a second (foreign) language. Most elementary schools will have classes related to Art, Music, Gym and Computer Sciences. While children may not be involved in competitive inter-school sports at this level, they will generally be exposed to some games and sport at an introductory level.

3) HOMEWORK:

Homework in the lower grades is limited and children normally get sufficient time to complete their assignments. This may be in the form of worksheets or small assignments. In some schools, the homework for the week is given to the child at the beginning of the week and is to be submitted at the end of the week. Some schools might have homework sheets sent home daily. For parents of young children, it is important to remember that, in the US, homework forms part of the child's grade, increasingly so in the higher classes. It is therefore advisable to get children into a homework routine, from a very early age. This would involve setting aside a time and place for children to work on their homework and emphasize to them the need to submit it as scheduled.

4) COMMUNICATION & PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

Most home room teachers will have an e-mail list where a mass message can be sent to all the parents. Ask your teacher if you can participate in this as a way to stay informed.

Friday Folder: Teachers make use of a Friday folder (may be an e-folder placed on the website) to communicate with parents. Most teachers will recommend practicing certain skills at home or will require the students to bring specific materials, or work on specific projects at home. Always look for the Friday folder (or e-folder) to become informed about what is happening in your child's class.

Parent Involvement: Typically, the elementary grades provide a great deal of opportunity for parents to get involved, which is a great time to get to know other families in the child's classroom, and feel a greater sense of community through participation in the many activities that require volunteering/help from parents or by acting as a chaperone on in a field trip/activity outside the school. **Get involved!**

One opportunity for parents of Elementary children is to provide assistance to the teacher by volunteering to make copies, cut out materials for projects, provide snacks/drinks, or to organize other parents from the classroom to help with a class activity/party.

PART III - SECTION C MIDDLE SCHOOL / JUNIOR HIGH

1) STRUCTURE & TERMINOLOGY:

Middle Schools and Junior Highs were both established to focus on preparing adolescents for high school. A good middle school tries to achieve a balance between nurturing students as they move through the process of physical maturation and the associated emotional challenges, and helping students to become independent learners who are well organized and ready for high school.

There is a great deal of overlap between Junior Highs and Middle schools and different states and counties are structured differently. The typical differences are listed below but there is no set format and you should check with the school what the structure in that specific school is.

| | JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL | MIDDLE SCHOOL |
|------------------|---|--|
| Grades | Grades 7 – 8 or sometimes 7-9 | Grades 6 – 8 |
| Student Schedule | Students move from room to room for each class to subject teacher’s classrooms. Each student in the same grade may have a totally different schedule, depending on the choice of classes. | |
| Faculty | The faculty is organized into academic departments that operate more or less independently of one another. | This concept often involves a group of teachers from different disciplines working as a team with each teacher teaching a different subject. |
| Home Rooms | There is no concept of "home room", The students maintain their supplies and materials in assigned lockers | Though they move, students are often assigned a homeroom in order to foster as a sense of belonging. |

While many have moved to the Middle school concept, there are many places that still have a combination of Junior Highs and Middle schools.

2) CURRICULUM :

The classes are usually a set of four or five (if foreign language is included in the curriculum) core academic classes (English or "language arts," science, mathematics, history or "social studies," and in some schools, foreign language) with two to four other classes, either electives, supplementary, or remedial academic classes.

Some students also start taking a foreign language or advanced math and science classes in middle school. Typically schools will offer Spanish and French; and, often German; and, sometimes Latin; Chinese, Japanese, and/or Greek. In addition to Pre-Algebra and other high school mathematics prep courses, Algebra I and Geometry are both often available for higher achieving students. Schools also offer Earth Science, Life Science, or Physical Science classes. Physical education classes are usually mandatory for various periods. For social studies, some schools offer US History, Geography, and World History classes.

3) EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Most middle schools will have some form of inter-school sports. There are also likely to be lower number of “cut” sports (where only a limited number of children are selected on teams) as compared to High School and the endeavor is to get more children to participate at various levels.

Other extra-curricular activities, such as Band, Theatre, Speech, Academic Competitions etc. also start becoming more organized and formal, with many more opportunities to participate in competitive and non-competitive events.

4) IMPORTANT EVENTS:

a) Graduation: Some schools may have formal graduation programs for children at the end of their last year at middle school / junior high.

b) High School Planning: During the last semester of middle school, many schools have opportunities for students to meet high school counselors and/or teachers to set up a preliminary schedule for their 4 years at high school. This helps to ensure students are able to fit in all the compulsory courses required to graduate and also to schedule elective courses that they are interested in or are required for further study in a particular field.

5) CHALLENGES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL:

The transition between elementary school and middle school / junior high, may prove challenging to some students, mostly because this often involves attending a new school, with new friends, and higher level classes and expectations.

PART III - SECTION D HIGH SCHOOL

High School is one of the most challenging times of a student's school life. Rather than just focusing on yearly performance, students are encouraged to focus on "Graduation & College Admissions", from the time they enter high school. This is because colleges look at students' performance through all the high school years – not just the senior year or final examination grades, as is the norm in many countries. This puts the onus on students, not only to perform well academically but to get involved in extra-curricular activities that will make them attractive candidates for college.

This section covers the following areas:

1. Terminology & Grade Names
2. Structure
3. Curriculum & Course Levels
 - a. Levels of courses - College Prep, Academic, Honors, AP/IB, CLEP
 - b. IB or AP – Which one should you choose?
4. Requirements to Graduate
 - a. Core 40 / Core 40 with Honors
5. Requirements for College Admissions & further study
 - a. GPA & Student Transcripts
 - b. College Admission Standardized Testing - SAT / ACT
6. Other High School Alternatives
 - a. Early Graduation
 - b. Gap Year
 - c. Indiana University High School
7. Extra-curricular activities
8. Graduation / Commencement Activities
9. Other Social Events

1) TERMINOLOGY & GRADE 'NAMES'

- **Freshman:** Grade 9 - first year of high school and college
- **Sophomore:** Grade 10 - second year of high school and college
- **Junior:** Grade 11 - third year of high school and college
- **Senior:** Grade 12 - fourth or last year of high school and college

Most people refer to high school and college grades by grade name, not by grade number, for example, 'My daughter will be a senior next year' or 'My daughter is a junior'. Request clarification whenever you are not sure whether they mean "junior" at a high school or college.

2) STRUCTURE

In an American high school, students from more than one grade may be in the same room taking the same class for a particular subject.

In most high schools, the student's schedule covers a single day – and the schedule of subjects and classes is repeated in the exact same order for every day of the week. In other high schools the schedule may cover two days (and these two days are repeated). In large high schools (such as those with 3,000 to 4,000 students), it is likely that no two students will have the same schedule with the same subjects and the same classes and teachers.

2) LEVELS OF HIGH SCHOOL COURSES & CURRICULUM

As mentioned earlier, students are required to think "college admissions" from the moment they step into the Freshmen halls, as every class, every activity, and every requirement will put them closer to this goal. Their choice of courses and the level of rigor of the courses chosen are important criteria in securing admission to desired colleges.

Most High Schools offer 5 levels of courses:–

- **College Preparatory** – Basic Level of courses
- **Academic** – An intermediate level for students wanting a little more challenge but not as high as the Honors courses.
- **Honors** – which offer the same curriculum as regular classes but are tailored for higher achieving students. These courses cover additional topics or some topics in greater depth.
- **Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB)** - AP and IB courses are two separate programs with curriculums that differ greatly. But both are considered much more rigorous and demanding than even the Honors courses. Colleges are always interested to see how many of these more demanding courses a student has taken and these often prove advantageous during the college application & admission process. Attaining a prescribed score in these courses can also earn students college credit at a large number of colleges, though the policies differ from college to college. For information on the IB program, also refer [Part I – Section B \(International schooling related information\)](#)
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP)** - In addition to AP/IB courses, students can also 'test out' of college courses by taking the College Board's Level Examination Program (CLEP). These tests can earn college credit. They are available in a wide range of subjects. These are useful for students with native foreign language, as they can get credit for the language they already know well.

IB Or AP – Which One Should You Choose?

Both IB and AP programs are designed to provide opportunities and a more challenging curriculum for students willing and capable of taking higher level courses as well as offering the option of earning college credit. This means they may be excused from a similar class in college, which in turn, can reduce the cost of the college degree and free up the student's time to take other classes in college.

For the AP subjects, students take the external College Board run examinations and the results are graded 1-5. If the student obtains a 4 or a 5, this may qualify them for college credit. Students may choose not to take the external AP examination but still complete the course requirements and take internal school examinations. While they will NOT get college credit without the external examinations, this does help demonstrate their capability to complete higher level courses.

For the IB Diploma or Certificates, students must necessarily take the external AND internal examinations as the score awarded is a composite score. IB examinations are graded 1-7 and a score of 5+ may be considered by colleges for college credit – however, some colleges might give college credit only for IB courses taken at Higher Level (HL) rather than Standard Level (SL).

Both IB and AP have their merits and the choice whether to opt for AP courses rather than IB Diploma / Certificates should be based primarily on your child's learning style, preferences and capability. The following table lists a few of the issues you might want to consider before making this decision. However, it is strongly recommended that you discuss the options with your child's guidance counselor and the IB coordinator in the school.

| | ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) | INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB) |
|---|--|--|
| | US based program run by the College Board | An international program run by the IB Foundation Office based out of Geneva with regional offices across the globe |
| Mission Statements | “AP courses are college-level classes in a wide variety of subjects that you can take while still in high school. They offer you challenging course work and a taste of what college classes are like.” | “IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” |
| Focus | To <u>prepare students for college work</u> , while enabling them to earn college credit. These courses cover the <u>breadth of information, skills and assignments</u> found in corresponding college courses and are aligned to expectations of leading US colleges. | To go beyond college credit and <u>to prepare students, in a holistic manner, for global citizenship</u> . The goal is to inculcate in students an attitude of enquiry, intercultural understanding and continuous learning. The focus in each subject is on <u>depth of learning</u> , rather than breadth |
| Time commitment | AP courses are individual 1 year courses in the selected subject areas. | The IB Diploma is a comprehensive 2 year course and requires that time frame commitment. However Students also have the option of gaining an IB Certificate by taking individual IB courses and examinations in selected subjects. |
| Curriculum & Flexibility of choice | AP is very flexible as it allows students to enroll only in those courses in which they exhibit both ability and interest. | The <u>IB Certificate</u> is also flexible as students can choose to do an IB certificate course in any subject of their choice. In contrast, since the <u>IB Diploma program</u> focuses on developing the student holistically, the student must choose at least 1 subject in each of the 6 disciplines. 3 of these subject have to be taken at the Higher Level (HL) and 3 at Standard Level (SL). Additionally, each student is required to complete an Extended Essay, follow a Theory of Knowledge course and complete designated number of CAS (Creativity, Service & Action) hours. It is therefore less flexible but more comprehensive. |
| Recognition | Is widely accepted <u>in the US</u> . The | Is accepted in the <u>US and 146 countries</u> |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| | website states AP is recognized in the admission process in <u>60 countries</u> though it is unclear how many colleges give credit towards college courses. http://international.collegeboard.org/programs/ap-recognition | around the world. Not as widely accepted in the US as the AP but has become more popular and is recognized by a number of the top tier universities. For further details, refer to: http://www.ibo.org/recognition/university/ |
| | ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) | INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE (IB) |
| College credit | Colleges generally recognize AP and IB courses as being on a par, although US colleges are generally more familiar with the AP curriculum. The extent to which colleges will give credit or placement varies among colleges and it is advisable to check individual college policy. Usually <u>AP scores of at least 4+ (sometimes 3) and IB scores of at least 5</u> are the minimum scores required to earn credit but some colleges may have them higher, Further some colleges give credit while others might allow students to place out of lower level classes, but will not give credit. <i>Note: Some colleges are more likely to give credit only for higher level IB (HL) courses than for standard level.(SL) in the IB program</i> It is important to remember that even if colleges don't give actual credit, taking AP and IB courses, gives students a significant edge in the college admission process. | |
| Interchangeability | It is possible to take an IB course in SOME subject areas and take (and do well on) the AP exam in the same subject area. However, students may not take an IB examination unless they have taken the IB course. Review books for AP exams are commercially available; there are no commercially available IB exam review books. | |
| Examination | There is one AP examination taken at the end of the year which includes Multiple Choice and Essay type questions. | Internal examinations conducted by the school as well as external examinations that are graded internationally. May include written and oral testing. |
| | There is a possibility of taking AP exams without necessarily taking the subject in school. | Part of the student's final IB grade comes from work done in the classroom, so it is impossible to take an IB exam without having participated in the IB course in that subject. |
| Fees | Both AP and IB courses involves additional fees. | |
| Web Resource | https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/home | http://www.ibo.org/ |

Whether to take all or some AP courses, be an IB diploma student, be an IB certificate student, or take a mixture of AP and IB courses needs to be a matter of student preference, interest, and learning style. There is no simple answer to the question. Either AP or IB is likely to provide more advanced content and greater challenge than other courses, as well as the opportunity to earn college credit, and success in these programs is highly regarded

by college admissions offices. However, the true value of these learning opportunities depends on the fit between your child's learning style, motivation, and preparation for the challenges offered by AP and IB.

3) REQUIREMENTS TO GRADUATE

The ultimate purpose of high school is to prepare a young person with the necessary courses and abilities to be able to graduate and perform in a college arena.

Preparation for College begins in these high school years, starting with the formulation of a 4 year academic plan, which a student will have to complete in the 8th grade, working under a guidance counselor who will make sure that the student is indeed on the path to fulfill standard requirements, known as **CORE 40**, aiming higher towards an **Honors Degree**, or working towards an **IB diploma**. It is important for parents to participate in the course selection process. There are certain requirements of English, Math, Science and Languages which are non-negotiable for the student to be able to graduate. These graduation standards are explained in the following paragraphs.

Indiana's Core 40, Core 40 with Honors and IB Diplomas

In Indiana, all high school students need to complete the **Core 40 Graduate Requirements**- a set of courses that provides a student with a solid foundation for college, career and life.

For more information visit <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/core-40-general-information>

The number of credit courses are divided into:

- courses which all students must complete to qualify for graduation
- courses which students may choose. Students usually have a variety of courses available.

Your child's counselor will give you all the details on how this is arranged in your school. For more information visit: <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/indianas-diploma-requirements>

Core 40 with Academic Honors provides more options and better college admission opportunities. In order to obtain this Honor degree, a student must complete Honor courses, including Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The alternative **IB Diploma** program has already been discussed in depth in the preceding sub-section.

Technology & Trade School degrees:

Some students may choose to attend Technological Classes, which will graduate them with a Technology Degree. Others may choose to attend Beauty School or other types of trade skills instead of finishing with a Core 40 diploma.

Options in case of failure to graduate high school:

If a student fails to graduate, there are many options, including attending community colleges (Refer section on Colleges) to obtain the credits needed to enter college. Guidance counselors can suggest options to the student and families.

4) REQUIREMENTS FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION

Getting admission into a college of choice goes much beyond just the Core 40 requirement. Colleges look at

- GPA (Grade Point Average)
- Performance on **Standardized Tests** such as the **SAT and ACT**

These become pivotal for a student's admission to college. *(GPA & SAT/ACT have been discussed in detail in the following paragraphs)*

There is no written RULE about what colleges are looking for in a student. However, it is common knowledge that they consider a student not just through his/her grades, but also for what makes the student a "well-rounded person." Colleges look for a student who has taken the most challenging courses, participated and

undertook leadership roles in extracurricular activities, particularly in student council boards, participated in sports or clubs, if they held a job through high school, volunteered in various places, etc. They are not looking for variety, but for consistency. Therefore, high school years become a real challenge for students and their families, trying to balance academics with extracurricular activities.

While it is advisable to start thinking about colleges and college courses as early as possible – in 9th grade or before, the intense work involved in selecting and applying to colleges, starts in 11th grade and is discussed in [Part IV](#) in this booklet.

5) GPA and STUDENT TRANSCRIPTS

Student Transcripts: This is the official record of a student's educational progress; it may include the listings of classes, grades, and any AP, CLEP, SAT or ACT scores achieved by the student.

Grade Point Average (GPA): Grade point average (GPA) is the numerical average of a student's letter grades for courses taken to graduate from high school or university. Each letter grade is assigned a decimal score and the GPA is the average of these scores. Students are given their current GPA at the end of each semester.

A student's GPA is very important for college applications. All high school courses from Grades 9 to 12 contribute to the GPA. This puts constant pressure on high school students to perform well in class throughout the school years.

- 'Finals' are held in high school subjects; these are examinations which provide about 20% of the final grade for the subject. Many other school systems around the world place far greater importance on these final examinations – at the end of the school year and at the end of high school – and these examinations may contribute 100% of the student's final result. The pressure cycle in an American high school is constant and intense throughout the school year. This pressure continues throughout the four years of high school. However for some students the pressure in their final year – 12th grade or 'senior' year – decreases as they have already achieved acceptance into a college. In other systems, the pressure and anxiety may be more focused on the final end of year examinations.
- Other aspects contributing to a student's grade in a subject can include assignments, participation in class discussion, and scores in tests, quizzes, and quests (a combination of a test and a quiz). In some schools the results for all these assessments are available on a daily basis on the school web site. It is acceptable in an American classroom for a student on occasion to query the grade they have been given for a particular piece of work. The student should have a good case, with support and reasons, and, of course, be polite and respectful. In the younger grades, parental support in this process may be advisable.
- Some high schools use a weighted GPA system – That is, when students at these schools take honors classes, Advanced Placement or IB classes, they are given extra weightage for the difficulty of the courses. The rationale behind this is that a student scoring a A in an honors course is actually achieving a higher level than someone who scores an A in an academic level course. Not all colleges accept weighted GPAs or class rankings, so some high schools are now choosing not to provide these.

Some strategies for increasing GPA

- The basic strategy for students to attain higher GPAs is to ensure they are consistently performing at the highest levels in all academic areas – homework, assignments, class participation, quizzes, tests and examinations – as everything counts. Many teachers offer opportunities for "extra credit" by completing additional assignments or attending certain developmental programs. All these add up to a higher score and consequently a higher GPA.

For schools that have a weighted GPA:

- As mentioned earlier, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual credit and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses will help a student get a higher weighted GPA, while also possibly earning college credits while attending high school.
- If your child has an opportunity, while in middle school, to do high school courses for credit, this can give the student a major advantage in high school in achieving higher weighted GPAs, because he/she can take higher level courses.
- Similarly, tests in elementary school may sometimes have an impact in the final weighted GPA. For example in some public schools, in 5th grade, students may have an opportunity to do a math test to decide which level of math class they will be placed in for 6th grade in middle school. If a student scores well in this test, they will be placed in the most advanced math class which enables them in 8th grade to do a high school course for credit, say in Geometry. This gives the student the opportunity to achieve a higher weighted GPA, throughout high school.

Please remember that all colleges do not accept weighted GPAs – but the rigor and level of the course work do play a role in the college admission process.

6) STANDARDIZED TESTS - College Admission Standardized Tests – PSAT, SAT, PLAN & ACT

- a) **PSAT or NMSQT: The Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (or National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) :**
 Often international families are misled by the word “Preliminary” in the name of the test and assume it is only a practice for the all important SAT. But the PSAT, as its other name NMSQT suggests, is an important test as it gives the students the opportunity to qualify for the **National Merit Scholarship**. For students who achieve the status of National Merit Finalist, many colleges are likely to offer them additional scholarships and financial aid. The PSAT can be taken in 10th or 11th grade, however only 11th graders are eligible for the National Merit Scholarship. For international students, it is important to note that your child cannot qualify for the scholarship, unless they are citizens or permanent residents or the USA. More information on the College Board website. <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html>

The PLAN test is a preliminary test for the ACT and does not qualify for National Merit Scholarship.

b) **The SAT and ACT Tests:**

Students who plan to attend college or university usually need to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and/or the American College Test (ACT), preferably during 10th grade or before the end of the 11th grade. Most colleges will accept just the SAT; some may require both SAT and ACT and some may require SAT subject tests too. Check the university's or college's website before applying to inform yourself regarding this requirement before deciding to take the SAT or ACT. The test results for either one of these tests will be required to be part of school transcripts sent to the colleges to which a student is applying in the fall of the senior year. Some of the major differences between SAT and ACT are:

| | SAT (STUDENT APTITUDE TEST) (administered by College Board) | ACT COLLEGE ADMISSION TEST (administered by ACT) |
|----------------|--|--|
| FOCUS | The SAT is more of an aptitude test, testing reasoning and verbal abilities. | The ACT is an achievement test, measuring what a student has learned in school. |
| CONTENT | The SAT has only 3 components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Reading (including English Vocabulary) • Mathematics, and • a required English Writing Test (Essays and multiple-choice Grammar section) While actually taking the examination, the SAT is broken up into more sections, | The ACT has up to 5 components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Mathematics • Reading • Science and • an optional Writing Test. <i>The ACT Writing Test is optional on test day, but is often required by many</i> |

| | | |
|---------|---|---|
| | where you may start with a writing section, move to Math then to another writing section etc. | <i>colleges.</i> |
| | SAT has options for taking tests in specific subjects that are required by some colleges. | There are no subject ACT tests. |
| | The SAT has a stronger emphasis on vocabulary. | The ACT tests more advanced math concepts such as Trigonometry though this does not make it more difficult as the ACT questions tend to be more straightforward than the SAT. |
| SCORING | The highest SAT score is 2400. The national average SAT score is 1500 | The highest ACT score is 36 while the national average is between 20 and 21. |
| | The score on individual SAT sections can also be considered for college admissions. | On the ACT, only the composite score is considered. |
| | The SAT has a correction for guessing. That is, marks are taken off for wrong answers. | The ACT is scored based on the number of correct answers with no penalty for guessing. |
| TIME | 3 hours, 45 minutes. | 2 hours 55minutes + 30 minutes (with writing) |
| COST | \$50 | \$ 36.50 and \$52.20 (with Writing) |

Deciding between and Preparing for SAT and/or ACT:

Very often students are confused about which test to take. Most colleges accept either and will take the better score of the two, but both tests are structured differently and it would be beneficial to see which one your child is likely to prefer, based on his/her learning style, ability to focus, aptitude and interest. Additionally, test preparation companies offer free full-length practice tests for the ACT and SAT online (at Princetonreview.com, Kaplan.com, Petersons.com and Ivybound.net). Further, if your child takes the PSAT and PLAN tests in their sophomore year, you can compare and extrapolate scores they are likely to get on the SAT and ACT respectively. Experts recommend that if your school gives both options, your child should take both.

To obtain more information about these tests, visit the College Board website <http://www.collegeboard.org/> or the ACT website <http://www.actstudent.org/testprep/> and sign up to receive timely information regarding tests, preparation for college, ideas on how to prepare essays etc. It is suggested that the student sign up for "practice" tests in earlier years, even in the 8th grade.

It is highly advisable to have the student take SAT and/or ACT as practice tests as early as the 8th grade, and up to 2 more times before the senior year. Data shows that students tend to perform better the second time around. Only the highest scores achieved will be taken into consideration for college admission.

Preparation courses or tutoring can be helpful for many students, especially for those new to the US schools. High schools often have preparation classes for these tests. In addition, private tutoring is available as well as special practice books and computer software. Kaplan University and Princeton Review offer some high level but very expensive courses. We have listed some of the private tutoring agencies used by members of AIW, at the end of this booklet – however, we do not, in any way, endorse or recommend any particular one. This information is provided solely to indicate some of the options available in Indianapolis. Seek advice from counselors about the best strategy and preparation and check with them for information and feedback on all these or other preparation courses.

7) OTHER HIGH SCHOOL COURSE ALTERNATIVES

Early Graduation

It is possible in an American high school to complete high school and graduate in less than the normal four years. Some students complete high school in three years which allows them to start college earlier, or perhaps take time off before proceeding with college.

Gap Year

The concept of having a year off between high school and college is not as common in the US as it is in some other countries, but it is becoming more recognized. A "gap year" experience usually involves working and or travelling to broaden the student's life experience before moving on to college to study. Some colleges might provide a "deferred admission" to provide for this experience but you would need to check with individual colleges about their policies.

Indiana University High School

This is a distance education program available to high school students and adult learners. Students can achieve credit for these courses toward their high school graduation. It offers print and on-line courses. There is a fee involved in the course. High school students can either:

- 1) take courses in subjects not offered by their high school;
- 2) take courses during their own time to free up time in their school to pursue other courses
- 3) take courses at higher levels to help with their studies

Visit: <https://iuhighschool.iu.edu/>

Indiana Online Academy

This is a virtual high school which has partnerships with more than 90 traditional high schools. It offers core courses as well as AP courses. Visit: <https://indianaonlineacademy.org/default.aspx>

Other on-line high school courses

On-line high school courses offer flexibility in terms of anywhere, anytime learning. Some are free and offered through public school systems, and others require a fee. Some of the more expensive courses are offered by for-profit companies and need to be considered with caution. Other courses may be university affiliated and will have a better reputation and longer track record. An excellent example is Stanford University Education Program for Gifted Youth (EPGY). Visit: <http://epgy.stanford.edu/>.

Two other types of courses are available to high school students or adult learners:

MOOC- Massive Open Online Courses - these are free, university level courses - ([Part 5 – Ongoing Learning](#))

Digital Badge - Courses which provide a digital badge are offered by universities and IT companies - ([See Part 5](#))

8) OTHER HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

a) High school sports

Students in high school have opportunities to participate in a variety of sporting activities. Schools from throughout Indiana play in championship competitions for a wide variety of sports including: football, basketball, baseball, swimming, tennis, gymnastics, soccer, lacrosse, golf, athletics and hockey (both ice and field).

Sports are classified either *Fall or Winter Sports*. Some may offer a year round opportunity to stay in shape and work out as a team. Some school sports are 'cut' – where only a limited number of the best performers are selected, and others are 'non-cut', where all students attending are accepted.

Participating in school sports teams can be expensive in terms of coaching fees, equipment, and other requirements. It can also require a major time commitment from parents to provide transportation to/from practices and competitions, to volunteer, to support the running of the events, to raise funds for the teams, and to sell food in the concession stands.

International families can sometimes be shocked by the time and effort given by some US high school students to sport. Playing sport in high school can be a prestigious activity. In large schools, belonging to a sports team gives students a strong peer and friendship group. Some of the students see sport as a way of winning a partial or full scholarship to college. A stereotype of American high school sports players – such as football and basketball players – is that many of them are challenged academically. However, in many high school sports, the athletes are forced to keep a certain academic level to remain on the team. The prevailing thinking is that these students are so time pressed they are forced to be very focused and organized with their school work. For many sports, these students are surrounded by other high achieving students which also encourages them to succeed academically and in their sport. Sports often associated with high academic achievement are cross-country, running, and swimming.

Teams may be varsity or junior varsity (JV), depending on the level of skills of the individuals.

Varsity Team

- Top team in a sport
- Letter - award for varsity team athletes, which is usually in the form of a badge attached to a jacket.

Junior Varsity (JV) Team

- Second or substitute team in a sport – they may compete before or after the varsity team matches but their scores do not affect the season overall scores.
- Usually underclassmen or students just starting in the high school sport need to start in the Junior varsity team before entering the varsity team.

The students starting on a team are usually placed in the JV team to develop their skills. Some students may play in both varsity and JV. Most freshmen start in the JV team, or there may be a Freshmen team geared to this grade level. Most competitions will start with a JV game, followed by a varsity game.

Competition rounds

Students will compete in the regular round against other teams in their "conference" or a group of schools similar in size. Then they will compete in "play-offs" towards the state championship.

- **Sectional:** first round of competitions
- **Regional:** the winners from Sectionals compete
- **State:** the winners from Regionals compete against each other to provide 2 teams which will compete for the state championship.

b) Cheerleaders

During games a team of cheerleaders (teams of female and male students) perform dances and gymnastics routines and sing 'cheers' to encourage athletes and spectators. The cheerleaders will also have a Varsity and Junior Varsity group for which they will have to try out for a spot in the team.

c) Clubs and Organizations

High schools offer a wide variety of extracurricular activities for the students to develop their leadership qualities and serve the community and the school. Some of the activities include a Student Council (governing the student body), fundraising, music, language, and art groups, as well as a variety of groups including reading, gardening, chess, gaming, support groups, and other clubs. Students are encouraged to participate actively as

well as support these groups. All these activities provide an atmosphere of cooperation and allow students with similar interests from different grades to work together and learn from each other.

9) GRADUATION ACTIVITIES (ALSO KNOWN AS COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES)

a) Commencement

Formal graduation ceremonies take place annually at all high schools, universities and colleges. They are called "Commencement Exercises or Ceremonies" as the student will be "commencing" a new stage for the rest of their lives. Students who are graduating wear a cap and gown for the ceremony. Many families give gifts and hold parties to celebrate graduation.

To attend the Commencement of a large graduating class, family and friends may need an invitation (serves as a ticket) to attend. In large high schools several hundred students will be in the graduating class.

A graduating class is usually called by the graduating year: Example: Class of 2018, etc. These students are identified as the "Class of 20XX" from the moment they start in their freshman year, so they will be using this as their group designation for the entire high school experience.

b) Graduation open house

Graduating from high school in the US is a very big event – often bigger even than graduation from college. It is a celebration of students' accomplishment to obtain their very first diploma. Once they move to college the graduation event could well be hundreds of miles from home. The end of high school marks the start of the period when students will leave their home. Many of them will leave town and relocate to a college or university campus to study. Some students may move out the summer after their high school graduation if they have an earlier academic program that they are to start then, but most students will stay at home and work that summer and move out in the fall (August/Sept).

The '*graduation open house*' is the name given to the celebration which could be done before or after graduation. The student and their family invite friends, family, and teachers to visit during an afternoon or evening at the student's home or some other location. Some students even group together and rent a club house or church room for the event, to save time and money. Refreshments are served and guests bring a gifts for the student. It is a good idea to check with classmates or their family about the date of their parties to prevent double-booking. Some ideas available at *Pinterest* and other websites like:

<http://www.party411.com/PlanYourParty/Occasion/Graduation/OpenHouse.aspx>

Guests are served cake, drinks, and appetizers at the open house. A display featuring the graduate with a photo album or video of the graduate through the years (special occasions, awards, sports photos and other interests) may be featured.

c) Valedictorian and Salutatorian

The valedictorian of the graduating year is the student with the highest GPA (grade point average), and the salutatorian is the student with the next highest GPA.

10) OTHER SOCIAL EVENTS:

a) Homecoming

- Daytime celebrations center around a football game which is followed by a dance. Homecoming takes place in US high schools during the fall. There may be a whole week celebration called "spirit week" leading up to the big homecoming game and dance.

- Alumni (former students) often come 'home' to attend this event.
- A Homecoming King and Queen are chosen.
- You should check with your school about the dress code for this dance.

b) Senior and Junior Prom

- Take place in the spring and are important formal social events in US high schools. Usually the junior students will prepare this event for the seniors.
- Proms are formal dances in which girls wear evening dresses and boys wear tuxedos. It is customary for the couples to go out for dinner before the Prom, and they may attend a party after the prom. They may ride in a limousine, bus or other large transportation vehicle, not only for the enjoyment of being together but also because it would be easier than driving separately.
- Students are not required to go as couples – often groups of friends attend together.
- Students elect a Prom King and Queen. Smaller high schools have one dance for Junior and Senior Prom.
- After the prom most PTO's offer an *After-Prom Party* at the high school, providing food, games, prizes, and a safe environment for students to end their special night.

SECTION – E

GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT LINKS RELATED TO SCHOOLS IN INDIANA)

Learn More Indiana - Information for every year of schooling including college preparation

<http://www.in.gov/learnmoreindiana/>

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WEBSITE

Indiana Department of Education

<http://www.doe.in.gov/>

Indiana K-12 school websites : <http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/dg/schools/welcome.html>

Indiana K-12 School Data <http://www.doe.in.gov/improvement/accountability/data-center>

Indiana's academic standards. <https://learningconnection.doe.in.gov/Standards/About.aspx?art=11>

Immunizations:

<http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/health/2012-2013-school-requirements-reference-chart-and-faqs.pdf>

ISTEP+ - <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment>

Core 40 <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/curriculum/core-40-general-information>

Charter Schools <http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/charter-schools> and <http://www.in.gov/icsb/2408.htm>

Magnet Schools <http://imaps.indygov.org/schools/options.asp> and <http://www.magnet.ips.k12.in.us/>

PAROCHIAL/PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Office of Catholic Education www.archindy.org/oce/

Bureau of Jewish Education of Indianapolis www.bjeindy.org/

OTHER SCHOOLING OPTIONS

Home Schooling <http://www.iahe.net>

Virtual / Blended Online Schools <http://www.indianavirtual.com/>

INDEPENDENT SOURCES FOR COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS

greatschools.org -

<http://www.greatschools.org>

zillow.com –

http://www.zillow.com/indianapolis-in/schools/#/indianapolis-in/schools/s=name_up&type=public%2Cprivate%2Cpubcharter&p=1

trulia.com http://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Indianapolis-Indiana/schools/

schooldigger.com - Data available only for regular public schools

<http://www.schooldigger.com/go/IN/districtrank.aspx>

FINANCIAL AID

Choice Scholarship Website: <http://www.myschoolvoucher.com/> or

Indiana Dept of Education website - <http://www.doe.in.gov/improvement/school-choice/choice-scholarships>

<http://www.mytaxcreditscholarship.com/>

SPECIAL NEEDS - IDEA links (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

<http://idea.ed.gov/> or <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>

GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAM

The National Association for Gifted Children <http://www.nagc.org/>

The Association for the Gifted /TAG <http://www.cectag.org/>

SPAN Program at IUPUI www.iupui.edu/home/span

PRESCHOOLS

Goddard Schools <http://www.goddardschool.com/Default.gsp>

Primrose Schools <http://www.primroseschools.com>