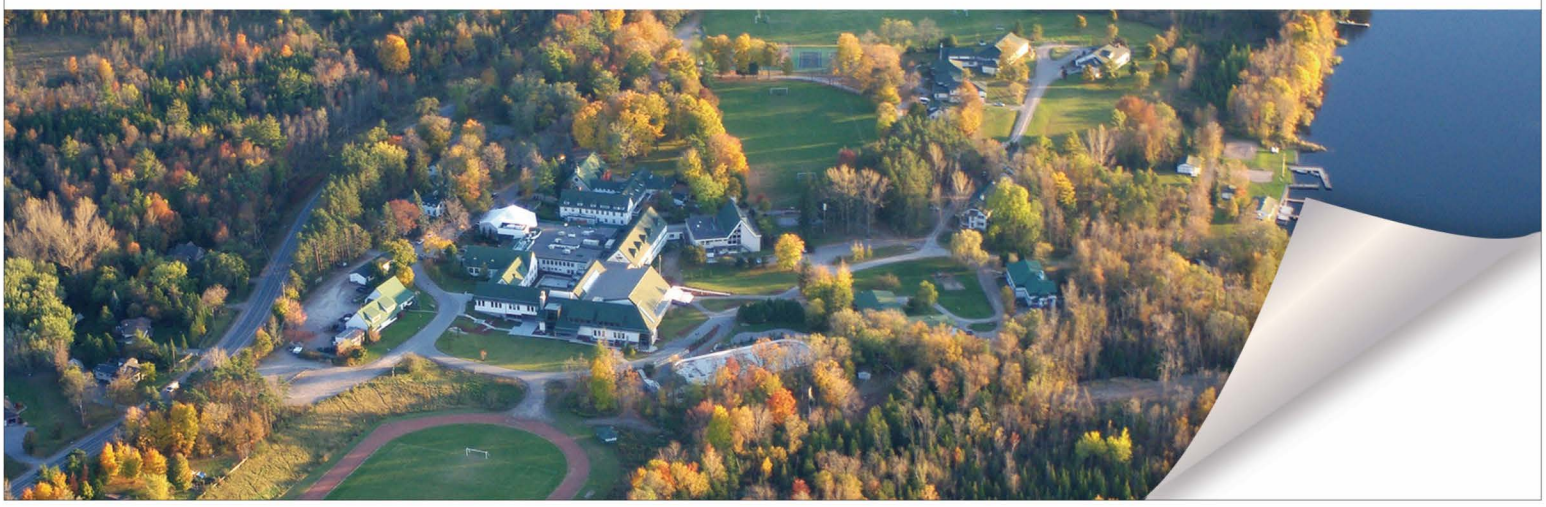
# Selecting the Best Educational Environment for your Child: Understanding Educational Options and Curriculum Types in Ontario Private Schools

*A Free Guide to help you become better acquainted with approaches to curriculum.*

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# Selecting the Best Educational Environment for your Child: Understanding Educational Options and Curriculum Types in Ontario Private Schools

Investigating independent schools can feel like a full time job. On the surface, there can appear to be only subtle nuances between schools that can make it difficult to select a school with confidence. In addition, within Ontario and around the world, there are a number of different educational programs to learn more about and choose from. Selecting the Best Educational Environment for your Child has been developed to provide a snapshot of some of the high level differences between a few of the more prominent academic curriculums offered in Ontario. For a more comprehensive outline of each approach to education, ask about the curriculum options available at the schools you're exploring.

## Advanced Placement (AP) Versus International Baccalaureate (IB)

Two common curriculums found in Ontario independent schools include the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB). Both programs of study are known worldwide for their enrichment opportunities and are recognized for providing an enhanced standard of educational excellence. Within Ontario, both the AP and IB programmes are linked to the Ontario curriculum and are credit-granting. This guarantees that each method provides students with the education, knowledge and skill development to progress to top tier post-secondary institutions around the world. Due to the academic rigour of these programs, many universities and colleges will recognize a student's achievement by granting them first year university or college credit for work completed in high school. Given the comprehensive nature of these programs, many post secondary institutions prioritize admission to students that have performed well in AP and IB courses.

Upon the successful completion of the full AP Capstone or IB programme students in Ontario earn a diploma, which they receive alongside their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). At Lakefield College School (LCS), for example, a student completing the AP Capstone Programme would graduate with an AP Capstone Diploma, as well as their OSSD and LCS Diploma. Depending on a school's academic approach, students may also choose to take one or more select AP or IB courses, and in this case, would earn a certificate for each course completed.

## While both The AP and IB programs are rooted in academic excellence, there are a number of differentiating features:

| Advanced Placement | International Baccalaureate |
|---|---|
| **Duration of Program** | |
| Depending upon the prerequisites taken, AP studies can begin when students enter Grade 10 and can be taken throughout grades 11 and 12. | IB has three programs of study (Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme). In Ontario, the Diploma Programme (DP) begins in Grade 11 and continues until the end of Grade 12. It is a two year course of study. |
| **Selection of Courses** | |
| Students studying AP courses can select from a wide range of classes depending upon their individual areas of interest. In this way, they can take as few as one or two AP courses in specific areas of interest, or immerse themselves in the full AP Capstone program, which necessitates that they take both the AP Research and Seminar courses and four additional AP courses of their choice. For students who do not opt for the full AP Capstone program, they can complement their timetable with classes with offerings from the provincial curriculum. Within Ontario, the OSSD and associated curriculum is recognized to be a leading educational approach. | In the IB Diploma Programme, students engage in six courses of study over a two year period, along with a Theory of Knowledge and Extended Essay course. One of the six classes taken must be a second language. Students can choose courses from subjects including: studies in language and literature; language acquisition; individuals and societies; sciences; mathematics; and the arts. Students may opt to study an additional sciences, individuals and societies, or languages course, instead of a course in the arts. |
| **Assessment**<br>***While each program of study has its own unique assessment scale, schools in Ontario typically use equivalency charts to convert a student's course score into a mark out of 100 percent.*** | |
| Formal AP scores are based solely on the AP exam, while the Ontario equivalency is based upon internal classroom assessments that take place throughout the year. Final examinations resemble those found in university and are based on in-depth mastery of specific concepts within a given subject. | IB scores are based on both classroom work and on IB exams. Some assessments are also marked by an external evaluator. IB exams are all short answer or essay questions and are based on broad general understanding of concepts and fundamental themes. |
| **Co-Curricular Expectations** | |
| Independent schools around the world provide robust co-curricular programming that involve students in activities across a range of disciplines, including but not limited to competitive and recreational arts and athletics, culture building, environmental and community service. In fact, many schools encourage students to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh program in order to fulfill the criteria to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award. | The IB program requires students to complete a set number of "community, action and service" hours, or CAS, for short. CAS ensures that students are involved in activities that involve them in the arts, athletics, and community service. |

The information provided in the table above presents just a snapshot of each of these world class educational programs. To help you as you explore further, consider asking schools that are part of your search some of the following questions to learn more about each approach:

- How much time is devoted to after school athletics, arts, and community service?
- Does the school offer national or international service learning or exchange opportunities?
- What academic support services are available and where have recent graduates gone to college or university?
- How much flexibility in course selection is there and what happens if I change my mind about my course selection?
- How does the school's academic schedule set students up for challenge, success, and allow time to build community and discover their passions?
- Do I need to take additional hours of classroom instruction, above the OSSD requirement of 110 hours per course?
- Does the school offer online learning opportunities to take niche courses that may not be available for in-person instruction?
- Is the school a member of professional organizations that demonstrate a commitment to continual improvement? Examples include: Canadian Accredited Independent Schools, The Association of Boarding Schools, or The National Association of Independent Schools

That's all for now. We hope that this guide helps you feel even more prepared to start exploring schools and inspires you to consider many more questions. It would be our pleasure to welcome you to campus for an in-person or virtual visit to answer all of your questions personally.

Schedule your tour of LCS today by emailing: admissions@lcs.on.ca.

If you have any questions about the admission process at LCS or the school in general, and we hope that you do, please contact us at admissions@lcs.on.ca.

Have fun as you explore independent schools!

*The LCS Admissions Team*

# Bonus!

## Quick Facts About The Harkness Method

The Harkness Method is a world-recognized teaching and learning approach used at top independent schools. It strongly aligns with other university-style forms of educational instruction.

The Harkness method is a form of collaborative learning that doesn't typically involve lectures. It is founded on an approach designed to prompt students to learn and think for themselves, and then to share their preliminary understandings for critical review among their peers. Harkness discussions inspire collaboration, commitment, creativity, curiosity, and the ability to make connections beyond the classroom.Teachers and students come prepared to discuss, share, and discover relevant classroom content with one another on the basis of pre-assigned texts and course materials.

Harkness discussions usually occur around a Harkness Table, which seats students around a large oval table, inspires preparation and commitment and ensures no student is left out of the discussion. During a Harkness discussion, the teacher facilitates conversation and challenges students to sit at the centre of education, making meaning of new information together as they talk, listen, and reflect on what they learn. Harkness leads to deep understanding and independence of thought. At the core of the Harkness method is the belief that it is important to make room for the authentic voice of the student, to provide encouragement, build confidence, and to embed positive attitudes to learning.