



THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

AT

HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL



The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course is an important component of the IB Program as it provides a chance for students to reflect on the nature of knowledge and how they come to know what they claim to know. TOK is both a requirement for Diploma candidates and is central tenet of the educational philosophy of the Diploma Program.

TOK at HHS is structured as an every-other-day course that Diploma candidates take throughout their Junior and Senior years. It is structured as a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry into different ways of knowing and into different kinds of knowledge – it is heavily grounded in asking questions, the most central is “How do we know what we know?” Other associated questions deal with what counts as evidence, how do deduce best solutions and how do academic and/or theoretical ideas interact with real world scenarios. Through discussions of these topics, students gain a greater appreciation of their personal and ideological assumptions while also developing a greater awareness of the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives.

The IB assesses student achievement in TOK through an oral presentation and a 1,600-word essay. The presentation assesses the ability of the student to apply TOK thinking to a real-life situation, while the essay takes a more conceptual approach.

TOK attempts to make students aware of the interpretative and subjective nature of knowledge, including personal ideological biases – whether these biases are retained, revised or rejected. The course offers students an opportunity to reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and on areas of knowledge while considering the role and nature of knowledge in their own culture, in the cultures of others and in the wider world. In addition, TOK challenges students to be aware of themselves as thinkers and encourages them to be more familiar with the complexity of knowledge while recognizing the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected by uncertain world. Furthermore, TOK also provides coherence for the student, by linking academic subject areas – demonstrating ways in which students can apply their academic knowledge with greater awareness and credibility.