



The International School
of The Hague

Co-constructing units of learning through Pathfinder

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*Curious, connected and
compassionate!*



What is Pathfinder?



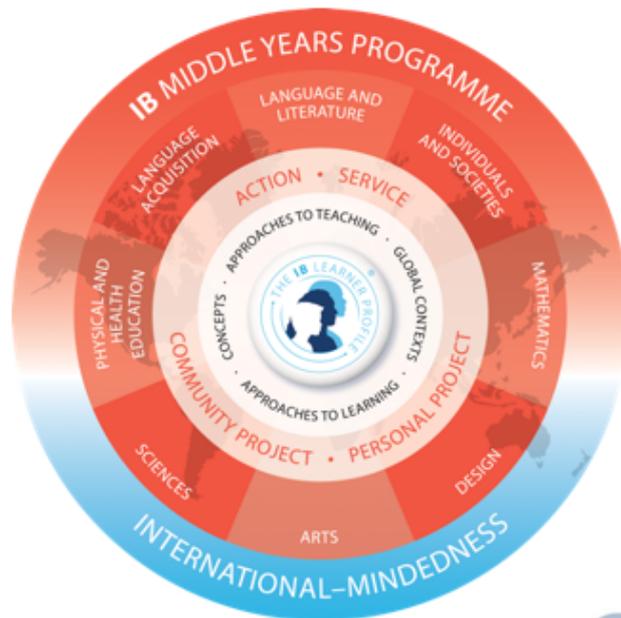
“The expression of opinions or attitudes.”

“The act of choosing between one or more options.”

As you may know, Pathfinder aims to give MYP students more voice and choice over their learning. Our aim in doing so is first to harness a student’s intrinsic motivation for learning - that is, either learning for the joy of it or at least understanding it’s significance. And second, to help students create their own “story and mission”. By this we mean an account of the choices they’ve made about their learning and ambitions for the future.

We’re often asked how we manage to balance this choice and voice with the need for students to learn certain things. The aim of this presentation is to give you a better idea of how we do this.

A curriculum framework



First, it's essential to know that the IB Middle Years Programme is a curriculum *framework*. It sets out the structure, objectives and standards of teaching and learning, but leaves it to schools to construct a curriculum relevant to their students. To put it another way, schools add flesh to the bones of the MYP structure.

This means that although some aspects of the MYP are set and non-negotiable, much of the MYP curricula seen in schools around the world are the result of choices made by schools.

In Pathfinder, we seek to make these choices wherever possible with students, and the first step is to identify what is non-negotiable, what is flexible and what is completely open to choice in each subject.

To better understand how this is possible, let's take a look at an example in more detail...

Parts of a unit

Red - non-negotiable
Orange - flexible
Green - open to choice



Example unit

Concept (the big idea): **Change**

Topic/case-studies: **The French Revolution**

Assessment criteria: **A (Knowledge & understanding), D (Critical thinking)**

Form of assessment: **Essay**

★ These are standards set by the IB.

This is an example of a humanities unit about change.

The parts highlighted in red are non-negotiable. Here, you can see it's the assessment standards set by the IB. We can't change these as they define the standard of knowledge, understanding and skills required by an MYP student.

Parts of a unit

Red - non-negotiable
Orange - flexible
Green - open to choice



Example unit

Concept (the big idea): **Change**

Topic/case-studies: **The French Revolution**

Assessment criteria: **A (Knowledge & understanding), D (Critical thinking)**

Form of assessment: **Essay**

- ★ Presentation
- ★ Report
- ★ Drama performance
- ★ Painting
- ★ Cartoon
- ★ Speech
- ★ Test

However, we do have some flexibility over the form of the assessment - or the way that students will demonstrate their learning to us. After all, there are many ways for students to show us their knowledge, understanding and critical thinking. Perhaps orally through a presentation, speech or debate, or more creatively through a work of art. Of course, learning to write a good essay is an important skill, but if there is a more interesting and equally valid alternative, this might just as well be done in a later unit. So here, the teacher will be able to take into account student voice and maybe offer them a choice.

Parts of a unit

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Example unit

Concept (the big idea): **Change**

Topic/case-studies: **The French Revolution**

Assessment criteria: **A (Knowledge & understanding), D (Critical thinking)**

Form of assessment: **Essay**

Other possible conceptual foci:

- ★ Systems
- ★ Time, place, space
- ★ Global interactions

Likewise, the conceptual focus of the unit may be flexible. Change is one key concept that students should explore at some point in humanities. However, it could be just as valuable to explore how the system of government contributed to the French Revolution or how it was affected by interactions between people in France and neighbouring countries.

Parts of a unit

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Example unit

Concept (the big idea): **Change**

Topic/case-studies: **The French Revolution**

Assessment criteria: **A** (Knowledge & understanding), **D** (Critical thinking)

Form of assessment: **Essay**

- ★ How do things change?
- ★ Why is change sometimes peaceful and sometimes violent?
- ★ Why do some things never change?!
- ★ ...

Equally, students might identify their own line of inquiry about the concept, perhaps asking how do things change, why does the nature of change vary or even why do some things never change!

Parts of a unit

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Example unit

Concept (the big idea): **Change**

Topic/case-studies: **The French Revolution**

Assessment criteria: **A (Knowledge & understanding), D (Critical thinking)**

Form of assessment: **Essay**

- ★ The Chinese Revolution
- ★ Abolition of the slave trade
- ★ Women getting the vote
- ★ Climate change
- ★ Plate tectonics
- ★ The downfall of the Roman Empire
- ★ The creation of the internet
- ★ ...

Finally, some aspects of the unit are completely open to choice. In this example, the topic of the unit - The French Revolution - might've been chosen by teachers because it's an interesting example of change. However, there are lots of other topics or case-studies that might be more interesting to students - other revolutions, social changes, maybe even changes to the physical environment. Here, the students could have a broader choice and maybe even investigate and compare different cases according to their interests and abilities.

It's important to note that unit topics might not always be open to choice. In some subjects, teachers might have identified content that should be covered by the end of the year. For example, in science it might be important to visit the periodic table or cell biology. If that's the case, the teacher might explain to students why this is a non-negotiable part of a unit and how they might exercise their voice and a choice in other parts of the curriculum.