Desert Academy Curriculum Guide 2011-12

Mission Statement

Desert Academy is dedicated to academic and personal excellence. We provide a quality college preparatory education in a diverse school community, which values individuality and character, promotes self-confidence, and fosters global understanding.

Educational Philosophy Statement

Desert Academy's emphasis on the concurrent study of humanities, science, mathematics, physical education, and the arts provides continuity of scholarship and cultivates critical thinking skills. Through experiential learning, discussion, investigation, independent research, and writing across the curriculum, students gain competence that will sustain a lifetime of learning. Students are encouraged to acknowledge their responsibility to themselves, their classmates, and the global community. Learning at Desert is not a means to an end, but rather, a bridge to further engagement with the world at large, and as a result, a more meaningful, thoughtful life.

Diversity Statement

Desert Academy at Santa Fe is a diverse community with a conviction that successful education develops basic human values such as respect and integrity. Our curriculum, advisory program, and school activities foster tolerance for differences in, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic group and sexual orientation. We affirm that varying perspectives enrich the life of our school community and the world around us.

Desert Academy Learner Profile Traits

Inquirers
Knowledgeable
Thinkers
Communicators
Principled
Open-Minded
Caring
Risk-Takers
Balanced
Reflective

Middle Years Programme Overview: Grades 7-10

The International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP) at Desert Academy is designed to help students develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills necessary to participate actively and responsibly in a changing world.

Early puberty and mid-adolescence is a particularly critical phase of personal and intellectual development and requires a programme that helps students participate actively and responsibly in a changing and increasingly interrelated world. Learning how to learn and how to evaluate information critically is as important as learning facts.

The IB Middle Years Programme at Desert Academy provides a framework of academic challenge that encourages students to embrace and understand the connections between traditional subjects and the real world, and to become critical and reflective thinkers.

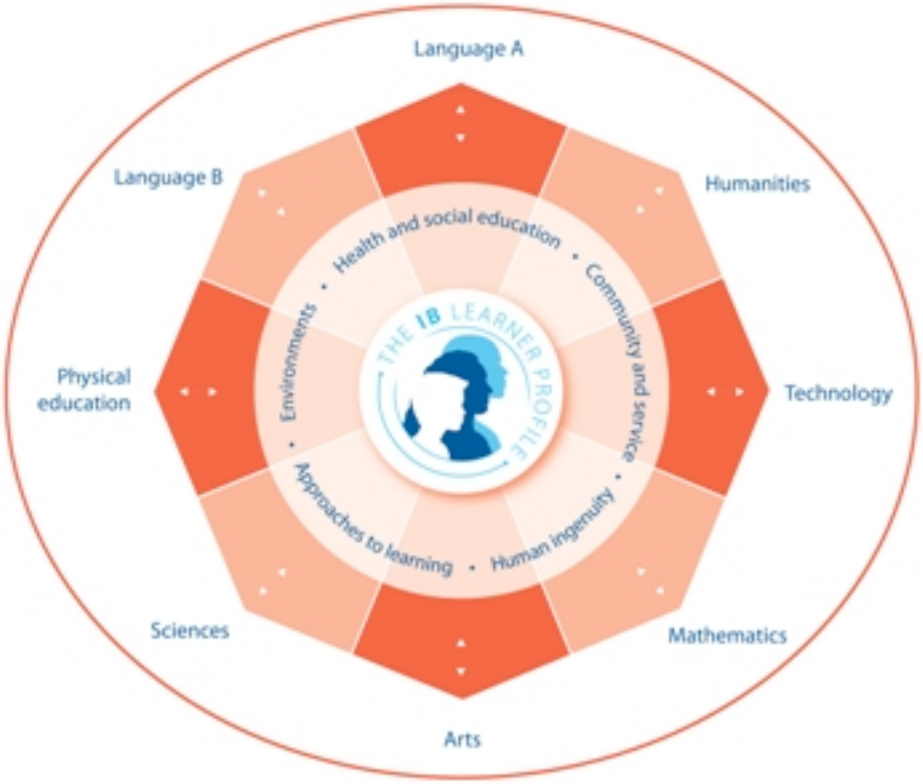
All students in grades 7-10 participate in the full Middle Years Programme.

The Programme

- Encourages international-mindedness in IB students, starting with a foundation in their own language and culture.
- Encourages a positive attitude to learning by challenging students to solve problems, show creativity and resourcefulness, and participate actively in their communities.
- Reflects real life by providing a framework that allows students to see the connections among the subjects themselves, and between the subjects and real issues.
- Supports the development of communication skills to encourage inquiry, understanding, language acquisition, and to allow student reflection and expression.
- Emphasizes, through the learner profile, the development of the whole student–physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically.

For more information, contact Karen Lindeen, IB Middle Years Programme Coordinator: klindeen@desertacademy.org

The MYP curriculum is illustrated by an octagon with eight academic areas or subject groups surrounding the five areas of interaction. The personal project appears at the centre.



The emphasis is on the fluidity of the curricular framework and the interrelatedness of the subjects. Aspects of the areas of interaction are addressed naturally through the distinct disciplines. In particular, the framework is flexible enough to allow a school to include other subjects not determined by the IB but which may be required by state or national authorities.

The overall philosophy of the programme is expressed through three fundamental concepts that support and strengthen all areas of the curriculum. These concepts are based on:

- intercultural awareness
- holistic learning
- communication.

The Areas of Interaction

The MYP curriculum is designed around the areas of interaction. The five areas of interaction are:

1. approaches to learning
2. community and service
3. human ingenuity
4. environments
5. health and social education.

These provide the main focus for developing the connections between the disciplines, so that students will learn to see knowledge as an interrelated, coherent whole.

More particularly, the five areas of interaction:

- are embedded in the subjects and developed naturally through them
- provide both an organization and an extension of learning within and across the subjects, through the exploration of real-life issues
- inspire special activities and interdisciplinary projects
- form part of the framework for student inquiry and take investigative learning further than subject boundaries
- are a vehicle for refining conceptual understanding through different perspectives
- guide reflection and lead from knowledge to thoughtful action.

Areas of Study:

Language A: English
Students in Desert Academy's MYP English program experience the major genres of literature as readers, writers, and sometimes performers in an effort to encourage their understanding of the gamut of literary tradition. In addition, students are introduced to the concept of a "text" as it relates to visual and object based communication. The writing process, including outlining, drafting, and revision, is given precedence over a final product; thereby defining writing as a mode of thought. Emphasis is placed on using the conventions and vocabulary of English usage and grammar to articulate one's meaning. Most importantly, we hope that students leave Middle School loving to read, confident in their ability to write, and stimulated by passionate and respectful classroom discussion.
Required Courses
Class Seven English: Coming of Age
Class Eight English: An Investigation into Human Nature
Class Nine English: Cultural Building Blocks
Class Ten English: The Individual and Society

Humanities
Desert Academy's Humanities program is designed to introduce students to a broad survey of the important aspects of a study of humanity. Beginning in Class Seven, students consider World Geography with an emphasis on the way geography affects a society's culture and customs. As a part of this course, they study New Mexico History, Geography, and culture. The Class Eight Social Studies curriculum focuses on American culture. Students study Civics, asking the question, "What is it to be an American Citizen?" Eighth grade students also have the opportunity for cultural study in the Core Knowledge course, investigating the myriad of historical and contemporary elements that make up the American culture.
Required Courses
Class Seven World Geography/New Mexico History
Class Eight Global Citizenship
Class Nine: World History
Class Ten: US History (the 9th grade class of 2011-12 will take World History as well since they had US History in grade nine.)

Language B: Spanish, French or Chinese
At Desert Academy, language is a framework that facilitates access to culture. Learning a foreign language is more than verb conjugation and sentence construction; it is a tool to explore the art, culture, and mode of thinking of the people whose language is studied. Consequently, we view the opportunity to learn a foreign language not only as a way to communicate, but more broadly, as a way to see things from another point of view.

Required Courses
Spanish, French or Chinese I, II, III, IV

Mathematics

Desert Academy's mathematics program emphasizes developing reason and problem-solving skills that will be applied throughout a student's lifetime. The math department strives to reach this goal by providing a variety of critical thinking activities, interactive investigations, and classroom lessons that motivate and challenge each student according to his/her individual needs.

Middle school marks the beginning of formal study of abstract mathematics. Pre-Algebra, in particular, is fundamental and success therein provides a foundation for future progress in mathematical studies. The math curriculum aims to enrich each student's knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts, encourage students to investigate patterns found within sets of numbers, improve each student's ability to communicate mathematical ideas, and to teach students to reflect on a variety of problem solving strategies.

Required Courses

Pre-Algebra
Algebra I
Geometry
Algebra II
Pre-Diploma Programme Mathematics (for those students who begin with Algebra I or beyond in their seventh grade year)

Science

Desert Academy's student-centered science program engages in an inquiry-based, hands-on program. The ultimate goal of the science program is to develop science literacy in all students. This is accomplished by providing students with opportunities to expand, enhance, and modify the ways in which they view the world. Students are empowered to express and share points of view, solve problems, and make decisions based on evidence. An environment which encourages students' thinking, honesty, curiosity, and questioning is provided to produce students who are lifelong learners, and literate in the world around them.

Our science program allows for the acquisition of knowledge and utilization of the scientific processes appropriate to the level of the student. The students are encouraged to "think scientifically" and "globally" as they discover science. Our curriculum is built around hands-on and minds-on instruction. This instruction motivates and empowers our students to delve further into their own questions about the world around them. As a human endeavor, science seeks to provide an explanation of the phenomena occurring in the natural world. In order to attain this, students must be trained in two areas: scientific inquiry and scientific knowledge. Our curriculum lends to both of these components throughout our students' science education. If students are unable to ask questions and find solutions, they are at a disadvantage in our world. We strive to inspire scientific, informed, and science literate citizens in our global community.

One way in which Middle School Science engages students in thinking like scientists, solving local problems and helping the community is through the 7th grade Life Science course. In this course, students learn and understand concepts in Life Science through the eyes of the Santa Fe and Rio Grande river systems. In collaboration with New Mexico Fish and Game and Riversource's Watershed Watch program, our students study a site on the Santa Fe River throughout the year. The students collect data on several parameters, analyze the data and submit the data to an on-line database for the community to access. Students ask questions about the area, and through collecting data they are able to find an answer. In addition, the 7th grade history course teaches history and geography through the eyes of the New Mexico river systems simultaneously. In this way, connections between history and science are made evident to the students.

Required Courses
Life Science 7
Earth Science 8
Physics 9
Chemistry 10

Design Technology

Design Technology at Desert Academy is essentially concerned with solving problems in an effort to stimulate students' ingenuity and to encourage them to combine intellectual talents and practical skills.

Each technology course provides a balance between three key areas: systems, information, and materials.

In particular, students are encouraged to display ingenuity and creativity in devising practical solutions to given tasks. Students use the design cycle to:

- Investigate
- Design
- Plan
- Create
- Evaluate

This subject area is valuable for reinforcing and integrating skills learned in other disciplines, especially in the presentation and handling of data and the processes involved in the design and manufacture of a product. At the same time, it fosters awareness of the social and ethical implications of technological development.

Required Courses

Design 7

Tech 8

Design Tech I and II or

Computer Tech I and II

Visual Arts

The Desert Academy Visual Art Department strives to engage students in a variety of arts and creative opportunities. Students are brought into contact with the art forms and aesthetic values of other cultures, as well as their own, and are helped to develop perceptions between ideas and art. They are also encouraged to identify particular creative abilities and to master techniques appropriate to that form of expression.

In addition, our visual arts courses:

- Organize learning around the creative cycle—a dynamic, ongoing process of sensing, planning, creating and evaluating art, and one in which all the senses are involved.
- Encourage creative energy, communication, interaction, and reflection.
- Aim to help the student become a developing artist—one who is able to assess his/her level of skill and target the areas that need development.
- Seek to acquaint young people with the creations of men and women whose works have proven to be of enduring worth.

In middle school, students experiment with materials and ideas that reflect art history lessons to make imitative works. Students begin by examining the roles of art in ancient cultures such as Greece, Rome, Egypt and Native American societies.

Students also practice basic drawing skills and techniques, do a sculpture study and solve a design problem. Students practice reflective writing and discuss art issues with other classmates.

In high school art courses, students engage with a variety of media and ideas in design, drawing, painting, sculpture , photography, and mixed-media. The emphasis of the courses is on an overview of art disciplines and techniques, reviewing and practicing constructive critique methods, and improving individual expression and visual communication skills. Students learn about expressing their ideas and becoming more aware of what the viewer is interpreting in their work.

Performing Arts

The Performing Arts Department at Desert Academy is dedicated to fostering individual creative expression in each of our mediums. Our exciting classes in music, theater, dance and film provide students with an opportunity to grow as artists in each of these disciplines. Training in each of these areas begins with the basics. Building a strong foundation is critical to motivating the student to explore and do their best work. Learning the keys and playing simple tunes on the piano kicks off the music program.

Theater games are used to teach voice projection and being comfortable on stage. The glossary of film and practicing camera shots provide a solid start for young filmmakers.

Required Courses—Class Seven
Segment 1: Theater 7
Segment 2: Speech 7
Segment 3: Music Appreciation 7
Segment 4: Art 7

Required Courses—Class Eight

Segment 1: Art Appreciation and Creation 8
Segment 2: Musical Performance 8
Segment 3: Introduction to Film 8
Segment 4: Improvisation and Acting 8

Elective Courses—Class Nine and Ten (all fine arts electives are 1 semester unless otherwise noted)

High School Art Foundations
Ceramics
Printmaking
Studio Art (full year)
Photography I
Photography II (full year)
Film Production
Glee
Chorus
Acting
Creative Writing

Physical Education

Physical Education at Desert Academy aims to help students develop physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially. The objective of these courses is to cultivate a healthy and active lifestyle for students. It therefore advocates activities that are not only enjoyable but also contribute to healthy living. Students are helped to develop the motor skills necessary to enable them to participate successfully in a variety of physical activities, and to learn about the nature of physical fitness. This subject area also serves to promote intercultural awareness, since physical education is a reflection of elements of history, culture, and values. It also enables students to establish links between different areas of experience, and provides opportunities for different forms of self-reflection, communication, and teamwork.

Required Courses: (all PE courses are 1 semester)

PE 7

PE 8
PE 9
PE 10

Assistance Dogs of the West:
Through educational and vocational programs, Assistance Dogs of the West provides trained assistance dogs to people with disabilities in order to increase self-reliance and independence. We teach students to train dogs to help people. To learn more about the Assistance Dogs of the West, visit www.assistancedogsofthewest.org

Diploma Programme Overview: Grades 11 and 12

The IB Diploma Programme is designed as an academically challenging and balanced programme of education with final examinations that prepares students, normally aged 16 to 19, for success at university and life beyond. The programme is normally taught over two years and has gained recognition and respect from the world's leading universities.

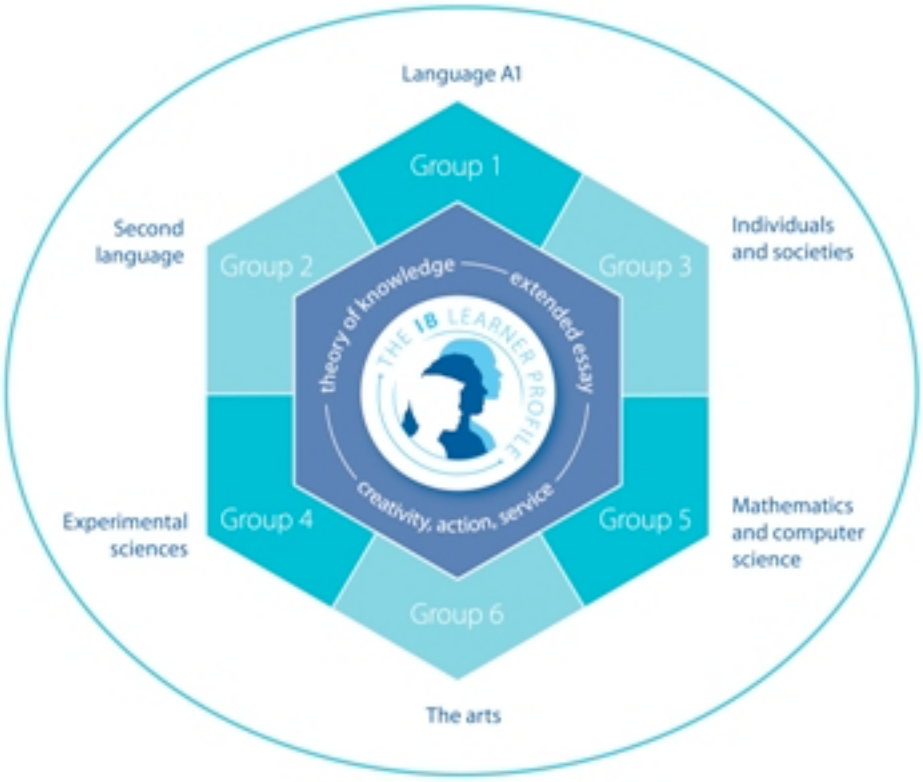
The IB Diploma Programme involves taking six IB courses in six different curricular areas, plus completing a Theory of Knowledge course, a certain number of hours in creativity, action, and service, and completing an Extended Essay. Students choosing to earn the IB Diploma have access to priority admissions at top notch colleges and universities worldwide, as well as the opportunity to earn college credit hours for their Diploma Programme courses.

The IB Diploma Programme gives Desert further tools for implementing its mission and philosophy in the classroom, as well as providing students and faculty access to a broader community of learners with whom to share practices, information, and experiences.

In addition to the various support systems available to students at Desert Academy, the Diploma Programme Coordinator is the primary contact for students pursuing the full Diploma. The Coordinator acts as advisor for Diploma Candidates, answers all Diploma Programme related questions, communicates directly with the IB offices on behalf of parents and students, coordinates internal and external assessments with the IBO, and oversees student progress through the Programme.

For more information, contact Isabelle Thiebaut, IB Diploma Programme Coordinator: ithhiebaut@desertacademy.org

The Diploma Programme curriculum is modeled by a hexagon with six academic areas surrounding the three core requirements.



Over the course of the two-year programme, students:

- study six subjects chosen from the six subject groups
- complete an extended essay
- follow a theory of knowledge course (TOK)
- participate in creativity, action, service (CAS).

Normally:

- three of the six subjects are studied at higher level (courses representing 240 teaching hours)
- the remaining three subjects are studied at standard level (courses representing 150 teaching hours).

Group 1—Primary Language (A1)

Language A1 is the study of literature in a student's first language, including the study of selections of world literature. The range of texts studied in language A1 courses is broad, and students grow to appreciate a language's complexity, wealth and subtleties in a variety of contexts. A specific aim is to engender a lifelong interest in literature and a love for the elegance and richness of human expression.

English HL
The Junior Year of IB English focuses on Spanish language works from South America and include pieces from Borges, Marquez, Allende, and Esquivel. This unit addresses postcolonial issues, with a specific emphasis on the relationship between the body politic and the individual body. Also, two novels (one in English, one in translation) and a memoir (English) are included. Each of these explores the convergences/divergences between fictional and autobiographical articulations of memory.

The Senior Year of IB English includes a survey of 19th century English literature and a genre focus on drama. Authors studied include Dickens, Conrad, Oscar Wilde, Shakespeare, Tom Stoppard, Tennessee Williams, and Athol Fugard. The historical context from which the works emerged is also covered.

Group 2—Second Language (B)

The aim of Group 2 subjects is to promote an understanding of another culture through the study of a second language. The main emphasis of the modern language courses is on language acquisition and use in a range of contexts and for different purposes.

Spanish SL (2 year course)

French SL (2 year course)

Chinese ab initio (2 year course)

Group Three—Individuals and Society

Group 3 provides for the development of a critical appreciation of human experience and behavior, the varieties of physical, economic and social environments that people inhabit, and the history of social and cultural institutions.

In addition, each subject is designed to foster in students the capacity to identify, to analyze critically and to evaluate theories, concepts and arguments relating to the nature and activities of individuals and societies.

History of Europe HL
The Junior Year of IB History focuses on the impact of the Dual Revolutions (French and Industrial) on Europe and Russia. The emerging states of Italy and Germany, as well as the developments under Alexander in Russia are studied based upon the ideological, economic, military and political reverberations from England and France.

The Senior Year of IB History begins with a detailed study of the causes and outcomes of WWI. The fallout of Versailles is explored through the competing paradigms of the U.S. and the emergent U.S.S.R. A study of WWII sets the stage for our close scrutiny of the Cold War. Finally, students gain an orientation to the world they've inherited with a unit on developments in the Middle East.

Philosophy HL
Philosophy deals with issues that are profound, complex, challenging and important for humanity. Through the examination of themes and texts, the philosophy course allows students to explore fundamental questions that people have asked throughout human history. For example: What is it to be a human being? How do I know what is the right thing to do? Moreover, it confronts new problems arising within contemporary society, including those that result from increasing international interaction.

Group Four—Experimental Sciences

Group 4 subjects contain a body of knowledge together with scientific methods and techniques which students are required to learn and apply. In their application of scientific methods, students develop an ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize scientific information.

A compulsory project encourages students to appreciate the environmental, social and ethical implications of science. This exercise is collaborative and interdisciplinary: students analyze a topic or problem that can be investigated in each of the science disciplines offered by the school. It is also an opportunity for students to explore scientific solutions to global questions.

Biology SL (2 year course)
In this course we study four themes: The structure and function of the biological world in all levels of complexity, The concept of Universality vs. Diversity from the molecular level to the ecological level, Equilibrium within systems, and Evolution as it can be regarded as change leading to diversity within constraints. These themes unify the various topics that make up the core syllabus. Examples of topics include (but are not limited to) Cells, Chemistry of Life, Genetics, Ecology and Evolution, and Human Health and Physiology with a special emphasis on diet, nutrition and exercise. The main textbooks that we use include Campbell's Biology and Hole's Anatomy and Physiology. In Diploma Programme Biology, students will acquire a limited body of facts and at the same time develop a broad, general

understanding of the principles of the subject. Lab activities are required as part of the class and students are asked to spend time outside of class hours to complete them.

Physics SL(2 year course)
Physics is the study of matter and energy and their interactions in the Universe. The focus of this course is to provide students with a general survey of the physical laws pertaining to classical Newtonian mechanics, wave motion and interference, electromagnetism, quantum mechanics and Einsteinian relativity. This is developed more thoroughly through the topics of Physics and physical measurement, mechanics, thermodynamics, waves – sound and light, electricity and magnetism, nuclear and atomic physics, astrophysics and historical references. These topics are developed through lecture, practice problems, laboratory experiments and the G4 Project interactive project with the IB Biology students.

Group 5—Mathematics and Computer Science

Group 5 subjects serve to accommodate the range of needs, interests and abilities of students, and to fulfill the requirements of various university and career aspirations. The aims of these courses are to enable students to develop mathematical knowledge, concepts and principles, develop logical, critical and creative thinking, and employ and refine their powers of abstraction and generalization.

Students are also encouraged to appreciate the international dimensions of mathematics and the multiplicity of its cultural and historical perspectives.

Math Studies SL (1 year course)
The Mathematical Studies course has a hands-on and exploratory nature, and is intended for students who do not anticipate needing mathematics in their studies in college. The course covers a range of topics, from sets to statistics to trigonometry, and is organized so that students will get the maximum amount of useful knowledge without much of its more abstract underpinnings.

Math Methods SL (2 year course)
The course covers advanced algebra concepts (arithmetic & geometric sequences/series, logarithms, exponents,etc.), functions and equations, circular functions and trigonometry, matrices, vectors, statistics, probability, and calculus. In addition, students need to complete four portfolio projects, which cover mathematical investigations and mathematical modeling. The portfolio topics are introduced by the teacher and require 10 + hours of work outside of the classroom.

Math Methods HL (2 year course)
This course caters for students with a good background in mathematics who are competent in a range of analytical and technical skills. The majority of these students will be expecting to include mathematics as a major component of their university studies, either as a subject in its own right or within courses such as physics, engineering and

technology. Others may take this subject because they have a strong interest in mathematics and enjoy meeting its challenges and engaging with its problems.

Group 6—The Arts

The subjects in group 6 allow a high degree of adaptability to different cultural contexts. The emphasis is on creativity in the context of disciplined, practical research into relevant genres. Through studio work and more traditional academic study, students gain insight into both the practice and the history of the particular medium that they are working in.

The assessment of these subjects reflects an eclectic attempt to combine contrasting aesthetics and forms of assessment from around the world. In particular, there is no indication of a western-oriented bias.

Visual Arts HL
Through the ongoing use of a research workbook, students will continually reflect on their development as artists as well as explore and experiment with a variety of materials and ideas. Students will engage in a critical inquiry and examination of art from various cultures that will lay the foundation for an understanding and appreciation of art from a multicultural perspective. Working in selected media, studio work will emerge as a result of thoughtful exploration of self, community and the greater world at large. The studio disciplines will include Vocabulary and Media Introduction, Artist Biography Studies, Stylistic Explorations, Subject Matter Studies, Creative and Technical Development, Cultural Studies and Art Analysis.

Theater Arts HL
The IB Theatre program at Desert Academy seeks to develop theatre practitioners who are well versed in all aspects of theatre including history, writing, production and performance. This course of study promotes both individual and team work as the participants gain an understanding of self and learn to express their creative ideas with confidence. Students explore and research significant periods in theatre history from Egypt, Greece and Rome, to Shakespeare and Moliere, to Becket and O'Neil. A natural outgrowth of these studies is critical analysis of plays and performances from these periods. Students also develop their own theatre pieces representing certain styles or historical periods.

Theatre is, by its nature, an international art form. The rich cultural heritage of our own community, with its roots in Native American, Mexican and Spanish culture, is used to enhance the course and ensure that this is a global experience. This course provides a foundation for the participants to determine their own voice in the theatre. Students learn that playwrights and actors and all who work with them, have a responsibility to express the ideas and concerns of their times, that theatre is the heart and the voice of any and all societies.

The Core of the Hexagon

The three elements at the core of the hexagon provide opportunities for students to explore and express their individual voices in a variety of settings. They also provide a hub for interdisciplinary exploration and reflection on the ways that each element of the Diploma Programme interacts with and speaks to the others.

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

The Theory of Knowledge course is one of the central elements of the Diploma Programme. The course encourages critical thinking about knowledge itself. At its core are questions like these: "What counts as knowledge? How does it grow? What are its limits? Who owns knowledge? What are the implications of having, or not having, knowledge? How do I know what I know?" The course, which is taken the second semester of the student's junior year and the first semester of the senior year, is divided into two sections: Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge.

EXTENDED ESSAY

The Extended Essay is a requirement for the IB Diploma. It is a 4,000 word research paper on a topic of each student's choosing. The essay topic must fall within one of the following IB approved subjects.

Biology
Business and management
Chemistry
Computer science
Dance
Design technology
Economics
Environmental systems and societies
Film
Geography
History
Human rights
Information technology in a global society
Mathematics
Music
Peace and conflict studies
Philosophy
Physics

Politics
Psychology
Social and cultural
anthropology
Theatre
Visual arts
World religions

Students may also write their Extended Essay based on the literature of their first language, or on the language, culture and society, and/or literature of countries in which their second language is spoken (EE must be written in the second language for this option).

The Extended Essay is intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery and creativity. It provides students with an opportunity to engage in personal research in a topic of their own choice, under the guidance of a supervisor (a teacher in the school). This leads to a major piece of formally presented, structured writing, in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned and coherent manner, appropriate to the subject chosen.

While students are not required to write their Extended Essay in a subject that they are currently taking, it is strongly recommended that students have high-level classroom experience in the subject. The model for the Extended Essay is an academic journal article in the discipline being studied, and as such, students must be careful to write using the specialized language, methodology, structure, and style of their selected discipline. According to several former IB examiners, the majority of unsuccessful Extended Essays are unsuccessful because they have been miscategorized, which illustrates just how important the choice of subject is. It is also important for students to recognize that the term "research" means something entirely different from one subject to another. In History, for instance, it generally refers to the collection and exploration of primary and secondary resources, whereas in the Experimental Sciences and Psychology, it generally means the design and execution of an experiment with accompanying data collection and analysis.

Students are expected to spend approximately 40 hours on the research for and writing of the Extended Essay. Extended Essay Supervisors are expected to spend no more than 3 to 5 hours advising students on their papers. Supervisors will give broad feedback and direction in the research and writing of the paper, but WILL NOT edit or "red pen" the papers.

Candidates will begin writing their Extended Essay in the winter of their Junior year. Progress of the extended essay will be monitored through the Theory of Knowledge course and their individual Extended Essay Supervisors.

CAS

CAS is an integral portion of the IB Diploma Program. The goal of CAS is for students to gain meaningful life experiences alongside their academic program by participating in creative, active, and service oriented activities. The activities chosen by students should be purposeful as well as a personal challenge. Possible CAS activities include, but are not limited to, music lessons, dance classes, joining a sports team, rock climbing, volunteering at a local elementary school.

The three facets of the CAS component can be defined as follows:

Creativity: arts and other experiences that involve creative thinking.
Action: physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle or complementing academic work elsewhere in the Diploma Programme.
Service: unpaid and voluntary, an exchange that has a learning benefit for the student. The rights, dignity and autonomy of all those involved are respected.

While an activity that fits one of the descriptions above does count as a CAS activity, the best CAS activities combine all the elements of CAS. Students should try, for example, to think of ways to incorporate creativity into their service and action or service into the creative and active elements of their lives.

Reflection is another essential element of CAS activities. Reflection begins before the activity even starts, with students formulating written learning goals for their activity. It continues with written reflections on the experience of each individual activity and how it relates to other CAS activities as well as to their academic courses. Reflection gives the students' activities a context as well as a way to understand the impact of the learning and service that is taking place through them. It is important that students seek out new learning through their CAS activities, even if it is through an activity that they have done all their lives. An avid dancer, for example, may count his or her dance practice or performance as a CAS activity, but the learning goals and reflection on this activity should emphasize what new learning they took away from the practice or performance.

Students are ultimately responsible for generating their own CAS activities, but they have access to our CAS coordinator, who can help brainstorm opportunities with the students, and direct them toward community resources. Desert students have initiated and participated in an ever-growing list of CAS activities both locally and internationally, including an interdisciplinary project working with the United Way, after-school tutoring at Agua Fria Elementary School, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, putting on art exhibitions with the SITE Santa Fe Young Curators program, working with Assistance Dogs of the West after school and during the summer, and organizing a school-wide ongoing relationship with an international service organization that recently resulted in a trip to the Dominican Republic to help build schools over spring break.

Levels of Participation in the Programme

Because the IB curriculum is such a natural compliment to and outgrowth of Desert's own philosophy and mission, we want to ensure that each student has the opportunity to participate in the Diploma Programme in one way or another.

THE FULL DIPLOMA

Full Diploma students are students who have chosen to participate in the full Diploma Programme consisting of classes taken in each of six prescribed subject areas as well as the Theory of Knowledge course, completing CAS requirements, and completing the Extended Essay. Full Diploma students will be given priority in filling IB classes.

CERTIFICATES

Certificate students are students who have chosen to take between one and several IB courses, but not to participate in the full Diploma Programme. At the end of each IB course, certificate students will take the IB exam for a certificate in that subject area in addition to the credit received for taking the class here at Desert.

Assessment

Students take written examinations at the end of the programme, which are marked by external IB examiners. Students also complete assessment tasks in the school, which are either initially marked by teachers and then moderated by external moderators or sent directly to external examiners.

The diploma is awarded to students who gain at least 24 points, subject to certain minimum levels of performance across the whole programme and to satisfactory participation in the creativity, action, service requirement. The highest total that a Diploma Programme student can be awarded is 45 points.