

Some Competitions and Comprehensive National (International) Programs*

K-12 National (International) Programs

International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate Program aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

Website: <http://www.ibo.org/>

Touchstones Discussion Project

Through the Touchstones discussion process, all participants engage in respectful discussion and collaboration that fosters essential communication and literacy skills, critical thinking skills, responsibility, community, and shared leadership. The program includes carefully selected and edited works of philosophy, literature, history, and art- readings that offer common themes to which all participants can relate. Individual worksheets and small group activities are also vital components of the program and enhance the effectiveness of the large-group discussions. The texts, individual work, small-group work activities, and large-group discussions all serve as critical tools for the purpose of developing discussion and learning skills.

Early phases focus heavily on group dynamics and full participation. Discussing issues such as power, certainty, respect, and control allows participants to reflect on the topics as they relate to the text, their own

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experience, the group's progress, and their own participation. Over time the group evolves to advanced questioning, reasoning, and problem solving. Rather than bring each discussion to a neat conclusion, or an assessment of who's right or wrong, participants leave with a heightened sense of interest, an understanding of differing viewpoints, and the realization that there are rarely simple solutions to complex problems. As the group progresses, participants learn to evaluate their discussions, monitor their development, and strategize on how to improve the overall effectiveness of the discussion sessions. In doing so, participants gain crucial experience in self-reflection and self-governance that helps them to become more productive in their everyday lives.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.touchstones.org/>

Competitions

A number of academic competitions can be found at:

<http://cty.jhu.edu/imagine/resources/competitions/index.html>

Sample competitions that focus on Era 3 learning knowledge and skills include the following:

Future Problem Solving International

Future Problem Solving Program International (FPSPI) "engages students in creative problem solving. Its mission is to "develop the ability of young people globally to design and promote positive futures using critical, creative thinking". Founded by creativity pioneer Dr. E. Paul Torrance, FPSPI stimulates critical and creative thinking skills and encourages students to develop a vision for the future. FPSPI features curricular and co-curricular competitive, as well as non-competitive, activities in creative problem solving. the Future Problem Solving Program International involves over 250,000 students annually from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, Great Britain and the United States.

Website: <http://www.fpspi.org/>

Odyssey of the Mind

Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Team members apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. They then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state, and World level. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and from about 25 other countries participate in the program.

Website: <http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>

Google Science Fair

Google is looking for the brightest, best young scientists from around the world to submit interesting, creative projects that are relevant to the world today.

Website: <http://www.google.com/events/sciencefair/>

National History Day

National History Day (NHD) is a highly regarded academic competition for elementary and secondary school students. Each year, more than half a million students, encouraged by thousands of teachers nationwide, participate in the NHD contest. Students choose historical topics related to a theme and conduct extensive primary and secondary research through libraries, archives, museums, oral history interviews and historic sites. After analyzing and interpreting their sources and drawing conclusions about their topics' significance in history, students present their work in original papers, websites, exhibits, performances and documentaries. These products are entered into competitions in the spring at local, state and National levels where they are evaluated by professional historians and educators. The program culminates in the Kenneth E. Behring National Contest each June held at the University of Maryland at College Park.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>