

THE INTRODUCTION OF IB LEARNER PROFILE: PYP IN BLIS

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**Abstract**

In this paper I expressed my observations and first impressions about BLIS Primary School and Primary Year Program. I was with a third grade class for a day and had a chance to involve their Mathematics, English and Unit of Inquiry classes. I observed students' behaviors in different classes/activities and tried to understand how they learn in these grades. Additionally I realized some differences and similarities between the Turkish and international teachers' techniques and expressed them in this article.

*Key Words:* primary school experience, Primary Year Program, IB Learner Profile.

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this article was to explain my impressions in BLIS Primary School. I was with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade for a day. It was 3B Class with ten girls and seven boys. The Turkish teacher was Ms. Aylin and the international teacher was Ms. Marcet. I observed both teachers' and students' day in primary school and compared them with my previous school experience in middle and high school.

### **The First Step with Primary Year Program**

Primary Year Program (PYP) is the first step to educate students for IB Learner Profile. BLIS Primary School wants to be a good starting point for students to be a communicated, inquiry, balanced, reflective, risk-taking, principled, open-minded, caring, thinking and knowledgeable people during their lifelong education process. When Mr. Michael and Mr. Sam made a small talk, they also mentioned about a student-centered, inquiry based and holistic approach. Mr. Michael said that curriculum, instruction and cognitive, physical and social evaluation are main parts of PYP. It was expressed that "*thinking outside of the box*" for kids was very important and to obtain this, scaffolding, educating students about how to ask the right questions, personal motivation for each student, pre-assessment, formative and summative assessments were essential. And all these outcomes indicate an IB Learner Profile.

The IB characteristics could be seen almost everywhere in the school, in library, hallways, classrooms etc. with some posters, projects, drawings on the walls. Particularly I noticed an IB Profile Chart on the wall of 3B Class. Students' photos were on some adjectives in this chart. For example, the international teacher of 3B Class, Ms. Marcet told us an anecdote about this chart: A few days ago one of the students felt bad during the class and he would go to the nurse. Then another student, Bahacan said: "Ms. Marcet, could I go with him and help him

down the stairs? He does not look well.” Then Ms. Marcet put Bahacan’s photo on *Caring* part on the IB Profile Chart. It was nice to appreciate students’ behaviors in such a way, I think.

Because of the bilingual program, there were two teachers in BLIS Primary School, one Turkish and one international teacher. Teachers were in cooperation during the classes. For example, when Çiğdem and I entered the classroom students were in Mathematics class with their Turkish teacher, Ms. Aylin. Students were trying to find the multiples of six by counting and mark the findings on a number table. After finishing this exercise, Ms. Aylin asked students for their comments about the table. One of them realized that the whole numbers that they marked were even. Another one said it was similar to multiplication table. Then Ms. Aylin expressed “You are right, there is a pattern” and explained the meaning of pattern in Turkish. I observed Ms. Aylin was careful about the words’ meanings, definitions and students’ use of the right terminology. Then Ms. Aylin wanted students to construct their own multiplication tables on their notebooks and each time one of the students came to board and constructed one row of the multiplication table. This time after finishing the multiplication table students expressed their findings about the table and then Ms. Marcet took over the lesson for an activity.

Teaching techniques and classroom management styles usually differed from one teacher to another. The international teacher, Ms. Marcet was more relax about mobile students during her classes. In Mathematics class, when Ms. Marcet took over the lesson she distributed red papers to each student and one another paper with number tables from 1 to 100 on it. Ms. Marcet wanted students to take their scissors and six different color pencils. Then students walked to their cupboards to take them, talked to each other and some of them did not sit. It took a bit time and there was a noise but Ms. Marcet did not care this since she had already expected this and it was normal. Ms. Marcet conducted the activity by giving clear instructions such as “Now, cut each number table and glue it on the red paper.” “Take away the scissors!” “Hands up! One color

in the air!” Ms. Marcet made her voice up while giving instructions so students could hear her and follow the activity. The activity intended to discover number patterns while counting in twos and threes and so on. Ms. Marcet also counted numbers with kids. She sometimes tried to make them say the wrong number and this made students awake and they had fun. Ms. Marcet was usually mobile during the activity, monitored students and gave feedbacks and encouraged their ideas with her praises.

The content in English class was very rich with its grammar, reading and writing part. In first 15 minutes of the lesson Ms. Marcet told about *pronouns* by a questioning-answering part and wrote some notes on the board. Then Ms. Marcet wanted students to write a journal about the day, their learning or any other thing that they wanted to write. While the rest of the class was writing their journals, Ms. Marcet called each group respectively to the other part of the class with their books that they had already read. In this part students sat on the floor, there were lots of books in cupboards around them. However the teacher knew their reading stage and had already selected some books in her hands. Before giving a book to a student, Ms. Marcet wanted the student to talk about the book to be sure that they really read their books. She also asked whether the student liked the book or not and what kind of book he/she wants to read this time. According to the responses Ms. Marcet gave new books each of them.

Unit of Inquiry lesson was such a science lesson. Students made an experiment by using scientific method steps. They first had their material, a piece of tissue, a coin, a glass of water for each table and squeeze tube with the help of Ms. Marcet. First the students tried to predict what could be done with these materials. Then Ms. Marcet told about the process. There would be pair work, one of them would drop a blob on the coin each time and the other would record it until the blobs overflowed into the tissue. Then Ms. Marcet wanted them to construct their own

hypothesis. The students had their own papers with scientific method steps on it. The students wrote materials, hypothesis, process, results and conclusion on these papers.

In general I observed that elementary school students needed much more time and hands on activities to construct their own understanding than middle and high school students. For example, I had observed a 6<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics class and the topic was same, divisibility rule of six. In third grade students needed to count the numbers even by using their fingers and first marked numbers then tried to discover some patterns about them and it took nearly the whole class. But in sixth grade, students more easily discovered that the multiples of six could be divided by two and three and it took nearly ten minutes.

On the other hand students were more dependent to teachers in elementary school than middle and high school students. The students were always under the supervision of their teachers, they went everywhere with their teacher. Additionally the elementary school students wanted to show their paintings, writings, knowledge, ability or maybe any memory etc. to their teachers and needed to be approved by their teachers. In time students were getting more independent during respectively their middle school grades and high school grades.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article was to explain my impressions of a day in BLIS Primary School. I learned this elementary school teachers need more time, hands on activities than middle and high school students. The elementary school teachers should be more careful and patient because students are more dependent to their teachers and first steps/impressions were very important in my opinion. If students like learning new things and learn about how to ask the right questions and how to study to build up their own understanding in elementary school, it influences the rest of their education life. In BLIS PYP also focuses on a good beginning for students to bring them the characteristics of IB Learner Profile.

"A Bilkent student does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do. On my honor, as a Bilkent student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work."

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