

# WOOSTER – Recruitment has been going well for next year's International Baccalaureate Class

By LINDA HALL Staff Writer Published: February 16, 2014 4:00AM

WOOSTER -- Recruitment has been going well for next year's International Baccalaureate class, according to its director, who said its reputation is paving the way for students to get on board.

The globally-recognized degree program is available to students in Ashland, Wayne and Holmes counties through Tri-County International Academy, housed at Wooster High School and operated by the Tri-County Educational Service Center.

With only four seats left, Richard Bellanco said, 21 students from six districts -- Wooster, Smithville, Chippewa, Northwestern, Hillsdale and Dalton -- "have asked us to save them a spot."

"We've never had anybody from Dalton," he said. "We try not to go above 25 (students) because of lab space, but we have 26 juniors. We hate to shut anyone out."

The academy was founded in 2006 and struggled the first few years of its existence to attract students and become financially stable.

But the achievement levels of students who have been trailblazers in the IB program are creating the excitement, in Bellanco's opinion.

Prestigious colleges and universities have demonstrated a track record for enrolling IB graduates and offering them substantial amounts of money to attend.

At this time, "current seniors have applied for early decision (at various institutions) and been accepted," he said, although for some, "it's not their final choice."

The seniors this year comprise a larger class than previously, he said, but even so, will "surpass the scholarship money" earned by their predecessors, and they "haven't even taken any (final IB) tests yet."

Most of the colleges and universities to which they have been accepted are private institutions, he said.

"(IB students) are going to come out way ahead of anyone else," he said, adding, "The word is getting out there."

Bellanco also pointed out that academic scholarships are more lucrative than athletic ones, sharing the statistic of "one dollar of athletic money for every \$100 of academic."

Financially, the program itself, after a somewhat rocky start in that aspect, has been thriving "since we have been able to fill the last two classes (to capacity)," Bellanco said.

"We have 51 kids right now," 49 full-time and two participating in "a partial day. That takes care of balancing the books," he said.

"We're in much better shape financially than we have ever been," Bellanco said.

Academically, students are in good shape as well, with juniors in the program earning an average GPA of 3.8.

"Twelve came into the program with a perfect 4.0," he said. "If they are good students coming into the program, they are going to continue to be good students."

The IB program takes a "worldly view," he said, with literature spanning the globe and a second language -- German or Spanish -- required.

History is taught not just from the American perspective, he said, but how the "rest of the world looked at (the events studied)."

The philosophy behind the program is world understanding, Bellanco pointed out, adding, "It would be nice if we could pick the best of everybody without giving up our own beliefs."

The IB program, in his opinion, is transforming one student at a time, creating a snowball that grows larger, he said.

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