

# **SIERRA ELEMENTARY PYP PARENT HANDBOOK**

Welcome to Sierra Elementary, an International Baccalaureate World School. We at Sierra know that parents are a child's first and most important teacher so we are hopeful that the information in this handbook will help you to support your child's IB education.

## **The IB Learner Profile**

The 10 attributes of the IB Learner Profile are a focus each day at Sierra Elementary to develop confident, lifelong learners who thrive intellectually and are globally-minded, compassionate and balanced.

***Sierra students strive to be:***

### **INQUIRERS**

***We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.***

How can you help at home?

Encourage your child's love of learning by showing interest. If your child is excited about insects, ask him to tell you about them. Take a walk and look for bugs, go to the library or research online together to find information.

Model being an inquirer. Show your child that you don't know the answer to every question. Sometimes as adults we feel that we should have the answers. Let your child know if you don't know something and enlist his/her help in discovering the answer.

Try NOT to simply answer your child's questions. Guide him/her to a source to discover the answer. Children not only remember what they discover, but will gain confidence and independence with each successful discovery.

### **KNOWLEDGEABLE**

***We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a wide range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.***

How can you help at home?

Encourage your child to read books, research on the internet, or ask questions about the concepts and topics being covered at school. Look at the teacher's class webpage for the dates

and content of the units of inquiry. Talk to your child about what he/she is learning at school. Ask questions:

Why do you think this is an important thing to know? Is anything similar happening in the world today? Has something like this ever happened in the past?

Discuss other countries and make comparisons. What is the weather in Japan today?

Read to or have your child to read the newspaper or watch the news to become familiar with current events.

### THINKERS

***We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyze and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.***

How can you help at home?

When your child asks for help with a problem encourage him/her to try to think of solutions and to solve the problem independently.

Ask your child to help you solve problems like:

Can you help me arrange the glasses so they all can fit in the cupboard?

How do think we should change the recipe so that we have enough cookies for all of the students in your class?

How many hours do you think it will take us to drive to the museum?

Ask your children questions when they are working on a problem:

Do you have any ideas about how we might begin?

How could you do this differently?

That is so interesting. Tell me more about it.

What do you think about that?

How did you figure that out?

### COMMUNICATORS

***We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives other individuals and groups.***

How can you help at home?

Encourage your child to write letters, call, or send an email to friends or relatives who live far away.

When working on mathematics problems, encourage your child to explain his/her answer to you orally or by drawing a picture.

Work with your child to improve his/her listening skills. Being a good listener is an important part of communicating with others. Be sure to model listening.

Model and support the acquisition of other languages. Ask your child to teach you the language he/she is learning at school or use an online program to learn along with your child. Engage your child in a conversation in this language.

Discuss non-verbal communication with your child. Play games like expressing an emotion or idea by using only body language or movement. Discuss the power; positive or negative, of body language.

If English is your child's second language, encourage your child to speak to you, read books and write in his/her mother tongue. If English is your second language be sure to show your child the importance of both languages.

## **PRINCIPLED**

***We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.***

How can you help at home?

**You** are your child's most important role model. Your child is watching how you handle situations; treat other people, and the choices that you make. Be sure to model the attributes and discuss them with our child. Something as simple as holding the door for someone, picking up a piece of trash, or treating people with respect will impact the choices your child will make. Involve your child in deciding on the rules for a game or activity and then ensure that they follow the rules that have been decided upon.

Insist and model how a well-mannered winner behaves.

Don't change the rules or "let" your child win a game. He/she needs to learn how to be a gracious loser and a polite winner.

Discuss how you feel when someone dents your car or cuts in front of you. It's important for kids to see that unprincipled behavior truly does impact others.

## **OPEN-MINDED**

***We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.***

How can you help at home?

Encourage your child to try new things: foods, games, book genres, and activities.  
Expose your child to different festivals, celebrations and traditions.  
Read or introduce literature about different cultures to your child.  
Discuss the reasons for differences in cultures: clothing might be different in other places due to beliefs or simply climate.

## CARING

***We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.***

How can you help at home?

Involve your child in caring activities. Ask for his/her opinion of a birthday card or gift. Enlist his/her help in baking a treat for a friend or relative in need.  
Role model caring when you are at the store by letting someone with fewer items go in front of you in line. Pick up the toy that a baby dropped or help an elderly person with their bags.  
Discuss characters on television shows or in books. Was the main character caring?  
Be sure to let your child know how much you appreciate it when he/she does something caring for you.

## RISK-TAKERS

***We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.***

How can you help at home?

If your child is feeling uncomfortable about trying something new, encourage him/her to develop a plan to succeed and then attempt it. Ask your child to reflect upon the experience and how they might improve their plan to be more successful or celebrate the success.  
Explain to your child the difference between being a risk-taker by trying new things that are thought out as opposed to impulsive and possibly dangerous behaviors.

## BALANCED

***We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives-intellectual, physical, and emotional-to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.***

How can you help at home?

Encourage your child to participate in a variety of activities.

During less structured time, also be aware of the activities that your child is participating in. Too much time in front of the computer or television is not desirable, but all kids need to do a variety of things. Active kids should be encouraged to take time for quiet reading or drawing. Kids who spend a lot of time drawing or reading should be encouraged to exercise and play. Discuss nutrition with your child. Ask your child to help you select items at the grocery store for a healthy dinner or for his/her lunch.

Be sure to model your own healthy eating, physical activities, and quiet activities.

## REFLECTIVE

***We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.***

How can you help at home?

When your child makes a poor choice be sure to ask him/her to reflect on his/her behavior and come up with a plan so it doesn't happen again. Ask "What could you do next time?"

Review progress on goals periodically. Be sure to encourage positive progress.

Discuss with your child the importance of learning from mistakes. Discuss mistakes you make and let your child see you reflect.

## CONCEPTS

Our curriculum is concept based; meaning that we teach students through a conceptual lens as opposed to the study of a single topic. An example might be a topic study of dinosaurs would be learning the name and other facts about each dinosaur. A concept based study is a unit on extinction. The student would learn about dinosaurs, but through the conceptual lens instead of memorizing names and facts, he/she would research possible reasons or causes of extinction. Students would also compare the extinction of the dinosaurs to more recent extinctions of species and endangered species. All of the studies would be globally based instead of a focus on species in our country.

IB explains concepts as: *Powerful ideas that have relevance within the subject areas but also transcend them and that students must explore and re-explore in order to develop a coherent, in-depth understanding.*

How can you help at home?

Ask your child about the concepts being studied at school.  
Encourage your child to look through any books or materials that you may have at home that might relate to the concept(s) being studied.  
Check the science/social studies based programs on TV to see if there is a related program to watch and discuss with your child.  
Be sure to encourage discussion of the concept after the end of the Unit of Inquiry. If a newspaper article comes out that relates to the concept long after the unit ends, discuss it with your child.

## **KNOWLEDGE**

Our teachers present six transdisciplinary units of inquiry each year. Each unit usually lasts about 6 weeks. The units are:

### **Who we are**

An inquiry into the nature of the self; beliefs and values; personal, physical, mental, social and spiritual health; human relationships including families, friends, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; what it means to be human.

### **Where we are in place and time**

An inquiry into orientation in place and time; personal histories; homes and journeys; the discoveries, explorations and migrations of humankind; the relationships between and the interconnectedness of individuals and civilizations, from local and global perspectives.

### **How we express ourselves**

An inquiry into the ways in which we discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend and enjoy our creativity; our appreciation of the aesthetic.

### **How the world works**

An inquiry into the natural world and its laws; the interaction between the natural world (physical and biological) and human societies; how humans use their understanding of scientific principles; the impact of scientific and technological advances on society and on the environment.

### **How we organize ourselves**

An inquiry into the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on humankind and the environment.

### **Sharing the planet**

An inquiry into rights and responsibilities in the struggle to share finite resources with other people and with other living things; communities and the relationships within and between them; access to equal opportunities; peace and conflict resolution.

How can you help at home?

Ask your child which unit of inquiry is being studied.

Check the class website for more information.

Discuss the unit and concepts with your child.

If you have expertise in the area being studied, and have time to visit the class, ask the teacher if he/she would like you to come to the class to present.

## **PYP ATTITUDES**

The attitudes are often thought of as the stepping stones to the attributes. You HAVE an attitude, while you ARE the attribute. For example, you **have** empathy and respect if you **are** caring.

In PYP schools, students should demonstrate:

### ***Appreciation***

Appreciating the wonder and beauty of the world and its people.

### ***Commitment***

Being committed to their own learning, persevering and showing self-discipline and responsibility.

### ***Confidence***

Feeling confident in their ability as learners, having the courage to take risks, applying what they have learned and making appropriate decisions and choices.

### ***Cooperation***

Cooperating, collaborating, and leading or following as the situation demands.

***Creativity***

Being creative and imaginative in their thinking and in their approach to problems and dilemmas.

***Curiosity***

Being curious about the nature of learning, about the world, its people and cultures.

***Empathy***

Imagining themselves in another's situation in order to understand his or her reasoning and emotions, so as to be open-minded and reflective about the perspectives of others.

***Enthusiasm***

Enjoying learning and willingly putting the effort into the process.

***Independence***

Thinking and acting independently, making their own judgments based on reasoned argument, and being able to defend their judgments.

***Integrity***

Being honest and demonstrating a considered sense of fairness.

***Respect***

Respecting themselves, others and the world around them.

***Tolerance***

Being sensitive about differences and diversity in the world and being responsive to the needs of others.

## **ACTION**

The action cycle is an important component of our programme. The IB believes that education needs to extend beyond the classroom to include socially responsible attitudes and appropriate action. What does student action look like? It is simply using the knowledge gained to make a positive change through service to family, peers, school, community, country, or planet. It can be as simple as a student asking if the family can recycle cans or helping an elderly neighbor to take out the trash. It can be assisting a peer or writing a letter.

Action can be taken by a group of students or an individual. It is our hope that Sierra students will become globally- minded people who possess the attributes of the IB Learner Profile and will make a difference, no matter how small, in the world.

How can you support action at home?

Communicate with your child's teacher when he/she takes action at home. Remember, action might be your child asking to go to the library to get a book on something studied at school or asking you to turn off the water when you brush your teeth. It's important for parents and teachers to celebrate and support student action.

