

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

“Having those characteristics ... would propel our class to understand there was nothing out of our grasp, not only as an IB student, but in life.”

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Dakeyan Graham PhD completed the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) at C Leon King High School, Florida, USA. He currently serves as the Director of Instrumental Studies at his IB World School alma mater. He completed his undergraduate and master's studies in Music Education at the University of Florida, received a Master's in Educational Leadership at Concordia University and his PhD in Music Education at the University of South Florida.

Why did you originally decide to pursue an IB diploma?

When I was younger, my parents stressed the significance of education. I was the first to graduate with my college degree within four years of entering college (my mother earned her degree during my junior year of college and was the first in the family to earn a degree). Learning also came incredibly easily to me so when searching for an academic institution in a county that promoted magnet school programs, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (DP) seemed to be a perfect fit. At the time of making my section, I was also very dedicated to my music courses and it helped that our area IB school also had a strong music program.

Which of your IB teachers inspired you most?

Out of my IB specific teachers, the one who inspired me the most was my homeroom and freshman English teacher, Mrs. Christine White. She always expected more out of us than we realized. She maintained those high expectations even after we left her classroom. Having those characteristics and standards imposed upon us at the beginning of our IB career was incredibly helpful in developing an indomitable spirit that would propel our class to understand there was nothing out of our grasp, not only as an IB student, but in life.

These values were reinforced by my Inquiry Skills teacher, Mrs. Kathryn Smith. She was incredibly strict but caring. She used her curriculum to teach us morals and build our character. Both of these teachers were also incredibly creative in their delivery of content and provided us with opportunities to embrace our own creativity. I remember building a guillotine when we studied one of my favorite works of literature, A Tale of

Two Cities. These are the lessons that made my IB experience, and these teachers in particular, so memorable.

How did you reach where you are today?

My original desire when I left high school was not to be an educator. Education was a choice that I made later off in my college career. Had it not been for the teachers I had, I would not have realized my potential to unlock skills and characteristics in my students the same way they did for me; to create future world changers in the same manner that the world changers I learned from had done. Specifically, my high school band director, Cheri Sleeper, had the most profound influence on my life. Although she was not technically an IB teacher, she taught a large percentage of the IB students in our class and was an incredible motivator and mentor.

“In everything I do, I put the students first!”

To this day, she stands as the most commanding influence in my life, a second mother. I had the opportunity to follow in her footsteps directly when I took over the position of band director at my alma mater, where I have been for the past 10 years. Everything I do is an effort to make her proud and shine light on the significant impact and wisdom she imparted in me all those years ago. I believe the reason I have been given the platform and designation that I have is because in everything I do, I put the students first! My passion ... my responsibility ... my ministry, is to positively influence the next generation of world changers, one student at a time!