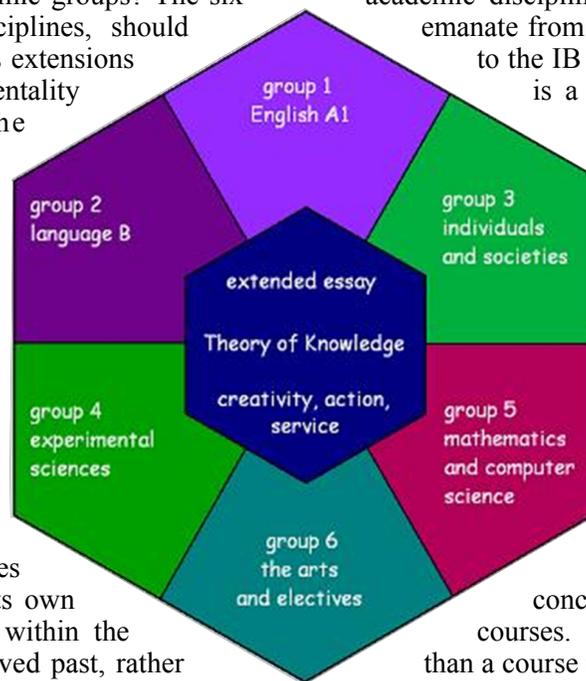


## The Core?

The core of the IB program is the Extended Essay (EE), the Theory of Knowledge Course (TOK), and Creativity-Action-Service (CAS). However, how many schools treat the EE, TOK, and CAS as central to the study of the six academic groups? The six that make up those disciplines, should the EE, TOK, and CAS as extensions of the core. Perhaps, this mentality of their teachers and the and measurements of subjects. To treat EE, extensions separate from, the various subjects is philosophical concept of from, and resting upon, checklist of requirements soul of the rigorous core was intended to be. extension is to require a rather than an extended interest. To treat TOK as curriculum is to separate from the various disciplines stand-alone course with its own the nature of knowledge within the must be managed and moved past, rather courses. To treat CAS as something like a portfolio of accomplishments that need signatures is to miss the very essence of rigorous education. Creativity should be an essential part of each academic group study. Each academic area is asking students to be active and ultimately provide service to society. To remove EE, TOK, or CAS from the core and relegate any or all of them to the sidelines of the academic program ruptures the essence of each subject and places each subject on a weaker foundation.



How then are the core components truly central to the academic groups?

First the Theory of Knowledge. TOK asks questions about the interaction of the various ways of knowing (Reason, Intuition, Emotion, Language, Sense Perception, Faith (Trust), Memory, Imagination, and Language (Groups 1 and 2)) within the various areas of knowledge (Mathematics (Group 5), The Arts (Group 6), Natural Science (Group 4), Human Sciences (Group 3), History (Group 3), Ethics, Indigenous Groups, Religion). This is why each subject must be built upon a growing understanding of the ways of knowing within the particular subject and how it relates to other subjects. The students should consistently be able to recognize the varying interaction of the ways of knowing within their academic subjects.

Secondly, the Extended Essay. The EE requires students who have been introduced to the methodology of each of the six groups to spend time working with an expert in the field to create a project that illustrates not only depth of knowledge but of creativity and a growing understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches used by professionals in the field. To treat the EE as a showcase of knowledge that goes beyond that of a less-rigorous academic program is to only limit the project to only a small portion of its intended purpose and possibilities. Students should not be simply writing a showcase to illustrate their knowledge of information that their peers do not possess. Indeed, anyone who spends time on a particular project will know details that those who have not spent the time will not remember. The project should put into practice theoretical and methodological understandings. Each student should be introduced to the methods, skills, theories, basic information, and examples of professional approaches — be this the profession of the mathematician, the linguist, the literary analysis, the historian, the economist, the physicist, the biologist, the chemist, the philosopher, the artist, &c... —

in order to use the methodology to create their own unique work - as elementary as it may be (they are not PhD candidates after all), but their work is none-the-less a showcase of each student's ability to recognize the theoretical and methodological basis of each academic discipline, choose an appropriate discipline based on their interests, and use the methodology and theory in a practical application. In this process the academic groups sit upon the extended essay — as all academic disciplines sit upon the creation of knowledge — and emanate from, resting upon, the core.

Finally, Creativity, Action, and Service.

There is obviously a desire to make IB students internationally minded, conscience of perspectives and societies, and conscientious of their own actions in their school, community, nation, and world. However, is it not also fair to say that each academic discipline seeks to make students active — that use their academic study and knowledge to do service in their community and world? CAS is more than a checklist of behaviors, but rather something that is often missing from the foundation of academic studies. As the academic fields in an IB program rest upon the core — which includes CAS — the use of creativity, action, and service is often disconnected from the academic disciplines themselves. To illustrate further, focus on creativity. Creativity is a foundational component of the academic disciplines; yet, students often find it more difficult identify an area of creativity than they do identifying areas of action and service. This is perhaps because a focus on test results (often in the case of standardized multiple choice exams) masks the true nature of the academic disciplines. Resting the various IB disciplines on the core, including creativity, restores the disciplines. Pure Mathematicians are not those who simply know more mathematical symbols than others; they are the those who *create* new concepts regarding the relationship of numbers or connections in other branches of maths. Applied Mathematicians and Engineers *create* unique ways to apply mathematical theory and concepts to problems. Historians are not those who retain a large repository of names, dates, and places, and then tell those to others; rather, historians *create* arguments that put forth theories about continuity or change over time and debate the significances of those factors. Scientists are not those who recite equations and experimental results or draw attention to phenomena; instead, they are the ones who develop the experiments, propose new theories, and seek to *create* models that explain various phenomena. Creativity is at the heart of academic pursuit and the creation of knowledge, yet it is often at relegated to the arts, to hobbies, to extracurriculars, and left separated and isolated from academics.

In many ways the true nature of an academic subjects is camouflaged within students' minds as a teacher of science replaces the scientists, a teacher of mathematics replaces the mathematician, a teacher of history replaces the historian, etc.... In fact, good teaching is a skill separate from the skills required to be a good professional in an academic field (though thorough knowledge of the field and its methodology are central components needed for quality teaching). The separation between the two skillsets is bridged by returning the to the core - or the foundation - of the concepts of research (EE) theory and methods (EE and TOK) and an emphasis on creativity (CAS), all of which rest at the "core" of the IB model for rigorous academic education.