

EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT  
IS CURRENTLY

Eastside High School's IB Program: Where It Came From and Where It Is Currently

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### **Introduction:**

Eastside High School lies in the east side of Gainesville in the central part of the state of Florida. It is one of six public high schools in the Alachua County School District and is the only school in the district with an International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The Alachua County School District initially placed the IB program at Eastside in an attempt to promote voluntary racial integration and it now serves the additional purpose of boosting test scores for the school.

### **Historical Background:**

The Alachua school district was granted unitary status by the state of Florida in 1971 through the *Wright v. Board of Public Instruction of Alachua County* court case and after Lincoln High School was closed (FLDOE Florida State Advisory Committee, 2005). Eastside was expected to take in most of the student population from Lincoln High School which was known to be the county's "All-Negro" high school, and it did. Therefore, Eastside was predominantly made up of Black students and the district saw a need to continue integration. Ideas of rezoning and bussing came up, however the middle-class White parents on the west side of town would not allow for their children to be sent to an 'inferior' school. Eventually, in 1983 the district came to the agreement that they would bring the International Baccalaureate program to Eastside with hopes that "racial balance would be achieved" They hoped that by offering an academic program that could not be found anywhere else in the district it would encourage parents and students to voluntarily attend Eastside (Garner, 2005). As Linda McNeil mentions in *Contradictions on School Reform*, the goal of specific schools offering magnet programs is to have

## EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

“academic programs so special and of such high academic quality that they would draw from racially segregated neighborhoods (and their racially segregated schools)...” (2000, p.21)

Regan Garner explains that while it was a valiant attempt by the district to integrate students, the school itself was divided.

Eastside High after the institution of the IB program was no longer a de jure segregated school in the manner of those that existed prior to the Civil Rights legislations of the 1950s and 1960s. By the class of 1989, EHS had reached the 30/70 white/black ratio mandated by the federal government. But a closer look revealed that a school desegregated on paper is not necessarily integrated on its campus. This was proven with the use of population statistics that demonstrated that although black and white students were on the same physical campus in the 30/70 proportion mandated by the federal courts, they were still segregated within the school walls in terms of curriculum and resources (Garner, 2005).

It is interesting to note that the current demographics of the students at Eastside closely resembles that as it was two decades ago. The current demographics at Eastside is roughly 35/65 (FLDOE FCAT, 2011).

### **Demographics Across Alachua County**

The table below shows the distribution of the population for each of the zip codes for the six public high schools in Alachua County. Notice though that there is an outlier. Eastside. While all five other high school locations in the district have a majority of a White population, the area surrounding Eastside differs with only a quarter of its population being White. Naturally,

## EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

with the school zoning requirements determined by the district, those families living in the area surrounding Eastside will attend Eastside, just as those living near Newberry will attend

Newberry High School, unless the student from Newberry is in the IB program, he/she will then attend Eastside. This would cause the school demographics to change; in fact, they do.

According to the demographics of the neighborhoods surrounding Eastside, about a quarter of the students attending Eastside would be White, but according to the FCAT reports from the 2011 school year, 35 percent of the students attending Eastside are White. This means that about ten percent of Eastside's population consists of students who are commuting from other areas of Gainesville to Eastside for the IB program (Mapszipcode 2011). This data also makes it rather clear why the IB program was placed at Eastside; while it isn't located in the zip code with the most isolated population, it was placed in the 32641 zip code to draw out White students to the east side to help balance both parties, but mainly Eastside's.

### Gainesville Demographics by Zip Code

Zip Code (High School)	White	Black
32606 (Buchholz)	85.40%	6.05%
32641 (Eastside)	24.80%	71.61%
32609 (Gainesville)	55.22%	39.88%
32640 (Hawthorne)	77.76%	19.00%
32669 (Newberry)	84.35%	11.34%
32615 (Santa Fe)	80.88%	16.28%

### Standardized Testing at Eastside High School:

The scores of the State standardized tests and advanced placement exams at Eastside are impacted by the IB program; thus the data may not be a true representation of the school as a whole.

We will see for example that the high scores by a large majority of one demographic make up for the struggling scores of another; while in the end the scores average out and the school appears to be

## EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

doing fine. In *A Critical Race Analysis of Latina/o and African American Advanced Placement*

*Enrollment in Public High Schools*, Solorzano and Ornelas state the following:

Three different patterns emerged around access and availability of AP courses: Latina/o students are disproportionately underrepresented in AP enrollment district-wide; schools that serve urban, low-income Latina/o and African American communities have low student enrollment in AP courses; and even when Latina/o and African American students attend high schools with high numbers of students enrolled in AP courses, they are not equally represented in AP enrollment (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004).

For the case of the students at Eastside, all students have the opportunity to take the advanced placement classes if they so choose, however as mentioned by Solorzano and Ornelas, many do not.

### 2011 FCAT results for 10<sup>th</sup> grade Math by Demographics

Demographic	% Passed	% Made Level 1	% Made Level 2	% Made Level 3	% Made Level 4	% Made Level 5
White, Non-Hispanic	94	4	2	7	33	54
Black, Non-Hispanic	56	33	24	26	18	0
Total Students	75	18	15	17	24	26

The table shows the breakdown of student scores on the tenth grade mathematics portion of the FCAT in 2011 (FLDOE FCAT, 2011). From the table one can see that the average of the percent passed between White and Black students equals the percentage of the total number of students. But why is there such disproportion between the two races? It seems to me that this is the question that is not being answered; instead we are asking ourselves, what can we do to

## EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

overcome this lopsidedness? The solution Eastside is able to use is its IB program. For an outsider looking in, as does the state Department of Education, it appears that Eastside is faring well, 75% of their students are passing the tenth grade mathematics. This looks great and the value is near, if not above the number required to attain adequately yearly progress and the school receives a hefty check to go along with its A rating (School Board of Alachua County, 2011). Even the principal of Eastside boasts about his school's results, in the 2011-2012 School Improvement Plan (SIP) Principal Charbonnet states that "77% [of students] met high standards in math" when mentioning the school's results from the previous year. How does he define "high standards"? To him, 'high' must be equivalent to passing, or meeting the minimum requirement because while 75% of students passed only 26% of Eastside students made a level five (Florida Department of Education, Bureau of School Improvement, 2011). Another deceiving front by Eastside made possible by the IB program is that Eastside High School was selected as number seventeen for Newsweek's list of "America's Best High Schools". After evaluating the FCAT results one may not necessarily agree, so how does Newsweek judge the schools, what are their criteria for a 'best school'? The announcement reads, "Each year, NEWSWEEK picks the best high schools in the country based on how hard school staffs work to challenge students with advanced- placement college-level courses and tests" (Newsweek, 2010). The evaluation does not look to see what percentage of the students taking these challenging courses pass, or what percentage of the students at the school are taking these challenging classes. With over 1,600 students attending Eastside and about 550 in the IB program, less than half of the students at the school are taking these "college-level courses and tests." The Newsweek article boasts that "According to its 2008 No Child Left Behind report, 42.6 percent of students classify as economically disadvantaged." It is as if Newsweek is pointing out that while Eastside is above

## EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

the district and state average for amount of economically disadvantaged students it continues to challenge students and to prepare them for college. The assumption they make is that the students classified as economically disadvantaged are equally represented in the population of students enrolled in the advanced placement classes (Eastside High School, 2011).

### **Current Status of the IB Program:**

John Noonan, the IB coordinator at Eastside, shared that on average the IB program has about 550 students. When asked the demographics of the IB students Noonan said that they “don’t keep track of those sorts of things”. In an attempt to explore the idea that the most qualified teachers at the school are the ones who teach the IB classes and the non-IB students are assigned to less experienced teachers, J. Noonan was asked how this worked at Eastside and he replied that sometimes, from year to year, a teacher who typically teaches IB classes will also teach mainstream classes. Noonan added that this is beneficial for both the teacher and the students. While on the other hand, the school tries to create a sense of team cohesiveness among the IB teachers and students. The final topic for J. Noonan was that of funding and resources. When asked if the IB program/students receive any additional funding or resources he responded that it actually works the other way around. For each advanced placement course that is passed the school receives money but the process for the Alachua school district is that the money goes to the district and is allocated accordingly. Noonan explained that typically the funds Eastside contributes to the district is reallocated and given to “more needy schools, needier than Eastside” (J. Noonan, personal communication, December 13, 2011).

### **Conclusion:**

## EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

While the IB program at Eastside provides many benefits to Eastside, the Alachua County School District, and the students in Alachua County, there can be some negative effects. It is a very valuable tool still today in integrating the population across the city of Gainesville as well as bringing money and prestige to the district when Eastside High School is the top school in the state for National Merit Scholars. On the other hand, it can deprive the mainstream students at Eastside from the more qualified teachers and it can skew the data, allowing struggling populations to go unnoticed. The IB program is a treasure of the district and it continues to serve its initial purpose, however one must be careful of its overarching effects.



# EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

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EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL'S IB PROGRAM: WHERE IT CAME FROM AND WHERE IT IS CURRENTLY

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