



## **Montessori to adopt International Baccalaureate Program**

**By TANYA MANNES**

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ST. THOMAS - The V.I. Montessori School has become the first school in the Virgin Islands to adopt the International Baccalaureate Program for its high school curriculum.

The International Baccalaureate Organization, a nonprofit educational foundation, is a recognized leader in the field of international education, encouraging students to be active learners, well-rounded individuals and engaged world citizens. Founded in 1968, the organization currently works with 1,763 schools in 122 countries.

V.I. Montessori began in 1964 as a preschool and later added a primary and middle school. The school launched its high school program in 2004. Beginning with a ninth grade class, the school is adding one grade per year. It recently purchased a building adjacent to the East End campus for the high school's exclusive use.

School administrator Shournagh McWeeney said the school chose the IBO program because of its strong reputation as a "rich and rigorous" program and its international perspective.

"We had been talking about it and collecting information about it for some time," she said. "We see it as a natural transition and pulling together of the curriculum we have for upper school."

The International Baccalaureate name and standard of education "will add a certain clout" to graduates' college applications, McWeeney said.

"All the readings we have done show that colleges and universities look favorably upon students graduating from the program," she said.

There are some 943 private and public schools in the Caribbean and North America offering one or more of the International Baccalaureate programs. There are currently five diploma programs in the Caribbean: one each in the Bahamas, Dominican Republic and Curacao, and two in Bermuda. Schools pay fees that support the foundation.

As an IBO school, V.I. Montessori will be visited by consultants who will make recommendations on how to implement the organization's philosophy and curriculum. All teachers will receive initial and ongoing special training, McWeeney said.

She said the school does not anticipate a significant rise in tuition as a result of launching the program. Upper school tuition for the coming year ranges from \$9,310 to \$9,525.

- Contact Tanya Mannes at 774-8772 ext. 317 or e-mail [tmannes@dailynews.vi](mailto:tmannes@dailynews.vi).