

Jewett Academy Magnet School Now an IB Middle School

Prestigious designation comes after a 3-year application process.

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WINTER HAVEN | Jewett Academy Magnet school has been officially certified as an International Baccalaureate school.

Jewett becomes the third Polk middle school to get the prestigious IB Middle Years Programme designation, which comes after a three-year application process, said Carolyn Bridges, senior director of magnet, choice and federal programs.

The teachers and administration received extensive training and developed the more rigorous curriculum to meet the IB standard, she said.

"It took a lot of extra work by teachers and administrators to get this designation. It takes a whole school and whole community effort.

"I'm really proud of the staff at Jewett because not every school that expresses interest can get designated," she said.

The transition was paid for by a federal grant the district received in 2010, the same grant that allowed Lawton Chiles Middle Academy to earn the designation in 2012 and Union Middle Academy in 2013.

The grant will run out in October of this year, but most of the work has been done, Bridges said.

International Baccalaureate is a nonprofit educational foundation with programs for students from 3 to 19 years old meant to "develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world," according to its website.

According to its mission statement, IB "aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect."

Brenda Hardman, principal at Union Middle Academy, said the IB curriculum covers everything, from arts to foreign language to core curriculum subjects.

She said the district helped make the transition seamless at Union.

New teachers at IB designated schools will have to go through the same training current teachers there went through to get the designation, Bridges said.

IB evaluators make site visits to IB schools every five years to make sure the programs are being implemented properly, Bridges said.

The district allocates any additional funds needed to cover training and altering curriculum, Bridges said.

Students at Brigham Elementary, a science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, school, automatically are admitted into Jewett, and that will not change, Bridges said.

Any additional seats at Jewett will continue to be filled by a random lottery. Jewett graduates will be able to apply for the Haines City High School IB program.

Unlike at the high school level, students do not have to have a certain grade point average or level of success to be admitted to the IB Middle Years Programme.

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