

Enrollment at Bridgeport International Academy Reaches All-time High

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BIA moved to a newly renovated facility in August of 2007 located on Lafayette Street immediately adjacent to the campus of the University of Bridgeport.

Enrollment reached an all-time high at Bridgeport International Academy (BIA), capping off this academic year at 86 students, 43 percent of whom are Unificationist-born youth and 38 percent of whom are international students from ten different nations. As a result, BIA is now welcoming married couples to apply for the position of residential life coordinators, or “dorm parents,” for students who live in the school’s family-style dormitory for boys. For more information or to apply, please visit bridgeportinternationalacademy.org/news/joblisting.html

Founded by and based on the educational vision of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, BIA is a private, college preparatory, senior high school located adjacent to the seaside campus of the University of Bridgeport (UB). A diverse, global educational community, BIA offers a curriculum for grades 9-12 that emphasizes character education and community service. Students have the opportunity to take college courses either at UB or at Housatonic Community College in a dual-credit system, as well as the right to use the facilities of UB.



According to Spurgin, BIA "has become known for its dramatic production of classic dramas and musicals."

The mission of Bridgeport International Academy states that the academy is “committed to a high standard of academic excellence, shared values, the advancement of cross-cultural and interreligious understanding, and the development of character and personal integrity.” To fulfill such a mission, BIA offers a holistic educational experience, emphasizing the study of core academic subjects including oral- and written communication skills, character education, community service, technological skills, fine arts, and physical fitness; and seeking to instill in each student a passion for learning while promoting harmonious relations with other peoples in a positive educational environment.

“The vision of the Reverend Moon was to establish in Bridgeport, Connecticut a comprehensive educational system from kindergarten through graduate school,” Hugh and Nora Spurgin, the president and principal, respectively, of BIA, wrote to Unificationnews.com. “Founded in 1997 by the Rev. Moon, under the name ‘New Eden Academy’, Bridgeport International Academy was established as a private high school where students could practice a pure, moral lifestyle. During the last sixteen years, BIA has progressed through many phases of development and has become well-established and self-sufficient.”

In 2001, Rev. Moon directed that the school be renamed “Bridgeport International Academy” and become an “open school” in which students of all races, religions, and cultural and ethnic backgrounds could be enrolled, as long as each student complied with the core values and rules of the school. The

Board of Trustees of the academy accepted that recommendation and changed the articles of incorporation and the name of the school to reflect the broader vision of its founder.

In March 2007, BIA was granted accreditation for ten years by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and received approval for the second time from the State of Connecticut as a nonpublic school. The Department of Homeland Security of the U.S. government allows BIA to issue I-20 forms in order for international students to obtain F-1 non-immigrant student visas.



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The Curriculum of BIA

Required courses include four years of English, three years of science, mathematics, and social studies and two years of a foreign language. One credit is the equivalent to a one-year course that meets 200 minutes per week, and students must complete a minimum of 23 credits to graduate. Electives and activities have expanded to include fields within film, digital arts, band, chorus, and theater, as well as an extensive English Language Learner program for international students. Since 1997, twelve classes, altogether 192 students, have graduated.

Each student is required to perform 75 hours of community service prior to graduation, which involves work in local agencies, non-profits, elementary schools, or community programs. Students have worked with Habitat for Humanity to help build houses, tutored at the Head Start program of Action for Bridgeport Community Development, visited homes for the elderly, helped in local neighborhood cleanup, painted houses on the campus of the University of Bridgeport and volunteered with Groundworks Bridgeport and other local community service projects.



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The Culture of BIA

Young Unificationist students serve as a core group that defines the culture of BIA as one that upholds a pure, moral lifestyle and religious values. For example, the school has a “no-dating policy” and has incorporated basic principles that are prevalent in the Unification community into the policies, curriculum, climate, and culture of the school. The “Seven Pillars” of BIA are the following:

1. Respect God, parents, teachers and humanity.
2. Live for the sake of others.
3. Respect your environment.
4. Be trustworthy.
5. Be a moral person.
6. Strive for unity of mind and body.

7. Be responsible.

Mottos for BIA include: “Experience a global community while still in high school”; “BIA is where minds and hearts meet”; and “Decisions that a teenager makes determine the flower of his or her adult life.” The latter motto was given by Rev. Moon in person when he visited the school in 1999.



BIA's class of 2012 celebrates its graduation.

“At BIA, students from many different nations study together to become citizens of a peaceful world,” Dr. and Mrs. Spurgin have written. “We are proud of the harmonious atmosphere that exists among teachers and students. Students who are American and those who are international, as well as those who are Unificationist as well as non-Unificationist, work together as one, beautiful, global family. The school itself is self-sufficient and financially stable. BIA is grateful to the Rev. Moon for founding the school and for providing the overall educational vision, to the faculty and staff for their sacrifices, and to the leadership of outstanding students in creating a beautiful educational environment for the next generation of leaders.”

For more information about BIA, please contact either Mrs. Nora M. Spurgin, Principal, or Dr. Hugh Spurgin, President.

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