Identify Key Theme/Ideas Ms. Burkey Intro to IB

*Directions: As you read the article below write down the main ideas from every paragraph in the column on the right. When finished writing the main ideas from article below, write a short paragraph summarizing the main ideas on the lines provided on the last page.*

**Systems Thinking - The Fifth Discipline of Learning Organizations**By [*Marty Jacobs*](http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Marty_Jacobs)

Although the field of systems thinking had not yet hatched at the time of this quote, it is clear that Einstein already knew about systems thinking, even if he didn't call it that. He was able to recognize that if we continually approached problems in the same way, we would continue to get the same outcomes. We humans are creatures of habit, and we often find it difficult to recognize patterns of behavior that are counterproductive. Systems thinking offers tools and processes that enable organizations to see patterns and connections, leading to greater productivity.

What is a system?

According to *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition*, a system is "a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole." The key words in this definition are "interdependent" and "unified whole." A pile of rocks is not a system because they do not interact with each other, and you do not really change anything by adding to it or taking away from it. However, if you take that pile of rocks and create a stone wall, you now have a system. Adding or removing a stone can create havoc. This stone wall system is more than just the sum of its parts; these stones work together to create something much greater than a pile of rocks.

Systems can range from very simple (filling a glass of water) to extremely complex (climate change) and are constantly working to maintain a level of stability. They do so by creating feedback loops using inputs and outputs. To understand systems in greater depth, let's take a look at a simple system: driving a car. Inputs into this system are the desired destination, actions of the driver, and the driving conditions. The output is the car moving in the desired direction. As we drive, however, we are receiving continual feedback. We may see a small child in a yard ahead, playing with a ball, and we instinctively slow down. It begins to rain, and we turn the headlights and wipers on and lower our speed. We see another car on the entrance ramp of the highway as we approach, make a quick check to the side mirror and behind, and then move into the passing lane. All these inputs influence the system, but because we have a clear goal in mind, we generally tend to stay on track.

Organizational systems are more complex than this. There are two distinct sections of an organizational system, the internal system and the external system. The internal system consists of a variety of parts, including the products or services produced, personnel, the materials and tools used to create products or services, the relationships that people have with each other - this list could be endless. The external system is everything outside the organization that influences it: competitors, the economy, the condition of the financial industry, the environment, regulations, the political landscape, and the community, to name a few. Both the internal and external systems are not only interacting within themselves but are also interacting with each other. Observing and understanding these interactions is the crux of systems thinking.

What is systems thinking?

The discipline of systems thinking evolved from the field of systems dynamics and is both a set of tools and a new way of thinking involving new language. In systems thinking, we look at the whole system rather than trying to break it down into its individual parts; that is, we become expansive in our thinking rather than reductive. By looking at the whole, we are more capable of seeing interrelationships and patterns over time. We also begin to understand that the presenting problem may be symptomatic of deeper issues within the system, and so we start looking for the root causes. In doing so, we move away from assigning blame and focus on the desired outcomes.

Write a short paragraph summarizing the key themes and main idea:

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