

International Baccalaureate Summer Task Force 2010

Minority Report: Community Patron (IB Critic) Response

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It is worthy of note that this is considered the “minority” report. The title truly reflects our representation as “one out of ten” members on the International Baccalaureate Summer Task Force 2010. However, it does not reflect the growing number of concerned students, teachers, parents, or tax payers with vested interests in this discussion.

To begin with, we appreciate the professionalism in which the task force meetings were conducted; the transparency in the process, the honesty in the discussions, and the expression of feelings and concerns by task force members. The issues before this task force were daunting on many levels.

It was not easy to step away from the embattled debates between the school board, teachers, parents, and concerned citizens that had quickly deteriorated to vilification in the press. The creation of this task force enabled civility to return to the discussion and we appreciate the opportunity to participate in the process.

Many man hours were spent by district staff accumulating information to support the IB curriculum as it relates to seven questions created by Superintendent Hazel Bauman to answer the “IB Critics.” Those questions are available on the district website. The following are considerations to be included with their analysis as they were omitted from the District’s report.

What is truth? The purpose of this task force was stated as: “To seek the truth and provide evidence for the answers to these questions.” Early in the process of data gathering, it became clear that the phrasing of the questions was specific to provide evidence in support of the IB program.

The question was asked of me in the final meeting, “Will this (referring to the information in the final report) satisfy the IB critics?” In a word, the answer was “No.” Both sides are advocating a “truth.” Both sides believe they are right in their “truth.” The core of the critical argument in this discussion is that two opposing world views are at stake.

“IB Critics” would have preferred an answer as to “why” the Coeur d’Alene School Board chose the IB curriculum from all of the curriculum choices available - without the use of IB talking points and labels.

Utilizing the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) website to answer questions posed in this endeavor is somewhat equivalent to using an advertisement to justify a purchase. Questions such as: “Does the purchase fall within my budget?”, “Will the purchase accomplish what I want it to?”, or “Does this purchase satisfy my needs?” are not addressed in the advertisement sales pitch.

Additionally, a quick review of the IBO website revealed links to prepackaged training materials, scripts, and “selling points” for dealing with public debate. This training stresses a critical aspect

of IB implementation: minimize public discussion during the implementation process. The apparent disenfranchisement of parents and concerned citizens in the planning and implementation process is precisely the issue voiced in debate, and yet it was not addressed.

In our efforts during this task force investigation to determine the chain of accountability in curriculum approval, it appeared as if the educational system of Idaho has evolved on the premise of plausible deniability.

The school district task force members clearly believe its IB curriculum aligns with Idaho State Curriculum Standards. And yet, the Idaho Department of Education pointed all of our curriculum inquiries back to the “local control” at the district level.

In essence, the IB Program in the CdA school district has acted as a lightning rod highlighting the condition of public education in the state of Idaho. There is a growing chasm between the desires and responsibilities assumed by the school board and the intent and understanding of parents and concerned citizens. It is with great interest that we recognize the students are left confused in the middle of the curriculum debate.

Research into the 2010-2011 goals for the Idaho Department of Education revealed statewide programs aimed at creating students capable of meeting “international” ranking standards. These programs include “Race to the Top” (of which Idaho did not meet first round grant qualifications) and “Core Curriculum”.

Again, many parents and concerned citizens would like to know where and how these new programs were “advertised” in the local school districts. Because of this, more people are asking the question – “Why?”

Why “International Baccalaureate”? Why “Race to the Top”? Why “Core Curriculum”?

Why “KTEC” (Kootenai Technical Education Campus)? On August 24th, a levy to approve KTEC will be presented to voters in Coeur d’Alene, Lakeland, and Post Falls school districts. Those promoting KTEC (including the CdA District) have written:

“School officials and business leaders for many years have realized the need for a strong professional technical program in high school. Three years ago, a committee was formed to explore local interest and support and to look at successful models in other districts.”

There appears to be opposing efforts within our school districts. On one hand, they promote the education of our children to compete internationally in a global society. On the other hand, they promote the need for a supplemental educational facility to prepare our children to work in the local industries that require a skilled labor force to continue operating locally.

The reality is that volumes have been written in the past three decades regarding the concerns of “one-size fits all” education and “canned” curriculums. Viable educational choices that serve the needs of the community should be requisite for all school districts in the state of Idaho.

Unfortunately, we are left with more questions than answers. As summer ends and preparations are in process for the beginning of the new school year, a coalition of community education task forces begins their investigative work to answer those questions.