

IB Task Force Recommendation to the ANCS Governing Board

February 17, 2015

Introduction

Since August 2014, the IB Task Force has met twice each month to explore myriad aspects of the International Baccalaureate Program. The guiding questions for the task force were presented to the board in May 2014. Those questions are: What would be the benefits to students of an IB Programme while at ANCS? What would the costs - financial and otherwise - be? What, if anything, about the ANCS experience would change for students and/or teachers by becoming IB authorized? If ANCS were to become IB authorized, what are the advantages to ANCS students if they attend an IB Programme in high school? If ANCS did not become IB authorized, would there be any disadvantages to students who go on to the IB Programme at MJHS or elsewhere?

IB Task Force Members

Cathey Goodgame - Middle Campus Principal and worked in an IB school in Decatur; Nickey Hardon - Middle Campus MST teacher and worked as an IB Coordinator; Lesley Michaels - 4-8 Instructional Coach; Layne Wiggins - Middle Campus parent; Beth Wells - former ANCS Governing Board member and parent of two former and two current ANCS students; Alice Jonsson - current ANCS Governing Board member and worked as a teacher in an IB high school in NC.

Task Force Activities

The task force used the MYP Sample Application for Candidacy (http://www.ibo.org/globalassets/publications/become-an-ib-school/myppapplicationforcandidacy_e.pdf) to guide the early work. This application has three major areas - Philosophy, Organization, and Curriculum. We were able to investigate each of these areas to make an early determination of the fit between ANCS and IB.

In addition to this work, we sought the expertise of IB educators at three local schools. In October, Cheryl Nahmias, IB Coordinator at Decatur High School, joined us for a discussion about MYP. She shared insights about the authorization process in Decatur as well as the benefits for students involved in the MYP. In November we visited Atlanta International School (<http://www.aischool.org/>), a private IB institution, and Ridgeview Charter School (<http://school.fultonschools.org/ms/ridgeview/Pages/default.aspx>), a public IB charter middle school. These visits allowed us to see IB in action as we were able to speak with coordinators and visit multiple classrooms.

The repeated theme from all three schools was the importance of teacher buy-in to the success of implementation. Considering this strong and consistent message, the task force formulated a two-step plan to assess teacher buy-in, beginning with whole staff learning about MYP on January 21. Cathey Goodgame, Nickey Hardon, and Lesley Michaels worked together to present the staff with an update on the work of the Task Force, an in-depth look at MYP, and activities comparing the IB standards to our current work at the Middle Campus.

At the close of the faculty meeting on January 21 teachers were asked to express questions they had about the MYP programme through an anonymous online survey, polleverywhere. This survey revealed many questions teachers had, some being positive, such as, "When can we start?", and "How can I further get involved?". Other questions were around how the framework of IB would effect the day-to-day instruction at ANCS as well as if implementation of the MYP programme would hinder teacher creativity. For example, teachers wondered, "Am I going to have to revamp my entire curriculum plan and all my projects if we go to the MYP?", "How does integrating this framework affect/change/influence what teachers are already doing in the classroom?", "How will this program benefit our school?", "What are the pros and cons of this program?", and "Will this program foster students learning?". The many questions that the teachers had about the MYP programme further solidified to the task force the importance of obtaining teacher-buy in before making any decisions as to whether or not ANCS would pursue MYP authorization.

The second step of the plan is to provide 5 interested teachers with the opportunity to attend MYP professional development this summer with the expectation that their learning will help inform the final recommendation of the Task Force. Prior to the summer workshops, the selected teachers will receive training about MYP to prepare them for the learning. The MYP Category 2 summer workshops emphasize assessment, teaching and learning methodologies and explore best practices in the classroom. This learning is in line with current ANCS professional development goals and will be useful regardless of our decision about MYP. The training is currently being funded from the Professional Development budget with an application being submitted to the APS Title II office for reimbursement.

Curriculum, Planning, Assessment and Grading

As the Middle Campus continues to grow, there is a recognition on the part of ANCS leadership that there is work to be done around curriculum, planning, assessment and grading. This work needs to be done whether or not MYP authorization is pursued. This informs our discussion about MYP as we consider how this work will best be supported.

Additional information to consider in our decision

GA is a leader in the US in terms of numbers of IB schools and APS is the leader within Georgia.

The Center for the Advancement and Study of International Education, which provides IB training, is located in Atlanta.

Roughly 90% of IB schools in the US are public.

The IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) had just been revamped. Entering at this time may be beneficial as all schools are being trained on the new process.

The Jackson Cluster has proposed through Cluster Planning to be an IB Cluster.

APS now has an IB Coordinator, John Denine, and is considering increasing financial support to IB clusters.

IB Timeline:

Broadly speaking, the process of becoming an IB school takes three years. The first year is one of preparation for candidacy and completion of the application. If the application for candidacy is accepted, the school spends approximately two years as a Candidate School in preparation for an Authorization Visit. Upon authorization, the school becomes a Participant School.

Possible ANCS Timeline:

15-16 Consideration year (notice of intent to apply due in January 2016 with an application deadline of April 1, 2016)

16-17 Candidate year one

17-18 Candidate year two (Authorization visit should occur during this year)

18-19 Participation year one

Budget Estimation: Document from Beth

Recommendation:

The work of the IB Task Force has revealed many positive connections between the goals and focus of ANCS Middle Campus and the MYP. The Task Force members feel strongly that teacher buy-in is critical to this decision and do not want to rush to recommendation without that crucial piece. The Task Force has worked to provide additional learning opportunities for interested teachers in the coming months. Introductory training will take place prior to the MYP training in June 2015. After the trainings, attending teachers will provide feedback on their learning as well as their assessment of the fit of MYP with the Middle Campus. Informed by our work since August 2014 combined with this teacher feedback, the Task Force will make a final recommendation at the August 2015 Governing Board Meeting.

