

## **World Class Education Research Responds to the International Baccalaureate's "Myth v. Facts" and "As A Matter of Fact" Flyers**

Since 2005, controversy has dogged the International Baccalaureate Programme. But does the criticism have merit? You can access the IBO's responses to the charges at the [IBO website](#). Here's the list of criticisms with condensed answers from a more extensive overview I have compiled on the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. I have answered TRUE, FALSE or PT/PF (partly true, partly false). Even though this is a synopsis, I have included citations. If readers would like more information, they can contact me.

### ***"The IB is a western system."* PT/PF.**

If "western system" means the IB originated in the West and is founded on Western philosophy, as opposed to Eastern philosophy (in the classic sense), that is mostly true, as far as the critical thinking skills used. This is a criticism from Eastern countries that prefer the ideals of their Eastern philosophers. Because it's international, the curriculum combines Eastern and Western thought.

However, the *foundations* of the pedagogy in the IB (but not limited to this curriculum) are deeply rooted in Western philosophy and were created in Europe. For example, its core course -- "The Theory of Knowledge" -- utilizes a modern, post-modern "Philosophy 110 Course" approach to teaching (made popular at Oxford) that asks the student to evaluate what is true (i.e. "critical thinking") under the microscope of metaphysics (what is real), epistemology (how we know -- reasoning and fallacies of reasoning, rational thought, and the scientific method), and axiology (what value it places on truth and knowledge). It leans heavily on the philosophers of the Western world for analysis. Thus "truth" is examined through a post-modern, deconstructionist lens (i.e. "truth is elusive and unattainable"), using the politics of meaning, or "politically correct thought," popular on college campuses today.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this approach is to produce a "skeptic," which has merit when examining quantifiable information in math and science.<sup>2</sup> However, some believe that faith-based knowledge cannot, and should not, be placed under the same microscope. This is progressive education in its purest form, founded by progressives.<sup>3</sup>

C.S. Lewis confronted this intellectual conflict. He began as an atheistic progressive, and when he defected to Christianity, his progressive colleagues considered him somewhat of an intellectual "lightweight" thereafter.<sup>4</sup> Those who embrace the progressive theology will also likely embrace the International Baccalaureate theory of knowledge. Those who prefer the knowledge-based method of learning, rather than this process-based approach, will not embrace IB, or any other curriculum or pedagogy based on this approach.

### ***"The IB is a Swiss export."* PT/PF.**

The IBO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The contract is between the IB school and the IBO in Geneva. Arbitration is handled through International law and the Geneva Chamber of Commerce. The regional office for IB schools in Utah is headquartered in British Columbia.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond that, the IB is not Swiss. It's European in origin. The IB is an international curriculum developed by collaboration of educators from Oxford and the International School of Geneva who held post-World War I internationalist ideals. They sought to provide a consistent education for the children of transient employees of the League of Nations, later the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> The curriculum is written in a neutral perspective. In that sense, one could say, the IB is "Switzerland." Those who want an American view of the world will not appreciate this "neutral" approach to the teaching of history. One could also argue that to take a neutral position is an oxymoron.

***"The IB is funded by UNESCO." PT/PF.***

The IBO was originally funded by the United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization (which also oversees "communications") before it officially organized. That funding continued until 1976, after the IBO became self-supporting – from school application and registration fees and government subsidies.<sup>7</sup> However, the IBO and UNESCO are partnered on a curriculum project due for publication in 2008.<sup>8</sup>

***"The IB is a pilot program for UNESCO and the U.N." PT/PF.***

The IBO has been partnered with UNESCO and the U.N. far too long to be a "pilot" program. Rather, the IBO is a *model* curriculum for UNESCO and the U.N. UNESCO and the IBO share education philosophies.<sup>9</sup> The IB is probably the most developed and popular curriculum for international education. There are others – for example, former Assistant U.N. Secretary General, Robert Muller developed the World Core Curriculum.<sup>10</sup>

***The IB was developed for the purpose of creating an 'international education system'.***  
**PT/PF.**

The founders were truly internationalists, liberal, and humanist in philosophy.<sup>11</sup> The original idea was to provide an education that would provide continuity for transient League of Nations employees' children (later of the U.N.). To this day, the mission of the international school remains different from a national or state school. The international school is not concerned with developing a national identity. That was not – and is not – its intent. A state school should examine why a curriculum constructed for students who are living abroad and who are transient is being used in schools whose student body is not transient and should develop an identity to the state and nation.<sup>12</sup>

***"The IB is only for private and international schools." PT/PF.***

The international schools that so many Americans speak so highly of from their experience living abroad are usually the privately-run IB programs that have a high tuition averaging around \$25,000 a year per student.<sup>13</sup> The IBO curriculum is in about 400 U.S. schools, public and private, and over 2,000 schools in 125 countries. The IBO is a business that plans to bring the IB to as many schools - public, charter, or private - as possible.<sup>14</sup> Again, the mission of an interna-

tional school is different from a national/state school. So in that regard, the IB is more appropriate for transient students living abroad.

***“The IBO hasn’t moved on since it was launched in 1968.” FALSE.***

IB schools have consistently grown in number since its founding. There are over 2,000 IB schools worldwide. Some schools have dropped the IB program for a variety of reasons including lack of funds, concerns about the philosophy and connection to the U.N., and lack of results commensurate with the costs. (See the citations previously provided on the blog for specific examples.)

***“The IBO promotes a left-wing agenda, socialism, disarmament, radical environmentalism, and moral relativism, while attempting to undermine Christian religious values and national sovereignty.” TRUE.***

A review of speeches given by its founders and contemporary leaders show an array of progressive (leftist) thought that include all of the above.<sup>15</sup> Former IB Deputy Director Ian Hill delivered a speech on the purpose of international education to the Disarmament Forum identifying the organization’s political persuasion.

Desmond Cole, the recently deceased director of the United Nations International School in NYC, and one of the key leaders in the development of the IB gave a speech which supported the idea that no war is ever justified – only the war on poverty, want and hunger.<sup>16</sup>

An Internet search of IB teacher websites shows a predominantly leftist thought process.<sup>17</sup> The U.N. and UNESCO share the leftist ideals of redistribution of the wealth (for achieving “sustainability”), world citizenship, disarmament, and environmental policies whether or not scientific research warrants it.<sup>18</sup> The solutions require that wealthy countries redistribute their wealth to developing countries through taxation.<sup>19</sup>

History is taught from a regional perspective, rather than a national view.<sup>20</sup>

The perspective of the teacher certainly could make a difference. However, because the curriculum takes a holistic, interdisciplinary approach (educating outside the traditional “three R’s”), the tests require politically correct answers<sup>21</sup> and test in the “affective domain” - attitudes and values.<sup>22</sup> One can logically reason that those who are internationalist and progressive in their own personal political philosophy would be more attracted to teaching in an IB program in the first place, so a more leftist philosophy is what a parent can expect. (More later on this point.)

It must be remembered that President Reagan withdrew the United States from UNESCO primarily because of its U.N.-American views and leftist policies.<sup>23</sup> The U.S. did not re-join until 2003. Even then, the Heritage Foundation issued an unheeded warning.<sup>24</sup>

Secretary of Education Rod Paige spoke to UNESCO, and even acknowledged the work of that organization in providing the *Education for All Framework* at Dakar as the parallel to the U.S.’ current plan - *No Child Left Behind*.<sup>25</sup> Those who do not subscribe to the progressive, anti-

American policies of UNESCO will not be supportive of NCLB, nor the progressive educational models that stem from any UNESCO partnership.

The claim that the IB might be anti-religious stems from two sources: First, the IB applies a narrow scope of analysis to “what is knowledge” and “how we know truth.” This is applied to a holistic curriculum (not limited to the 3 R’s, but including religious and ethics beliefs), which requires religion or the faith-based domain to be examined under the same microscope as the scientific method and empirical research. That which cannot be proven through epistemology cannot be true or fact. Although it would be unlikely that one’s religion would be outwardly attacked in a classroom setting, the critical thinking/higher order thinking skills process is persuasive.

The other concern is most likely that the UNESCO/IBO partnership, the connection between UNESCO’s *Education for All* and the U.S. Secretary of Education’s reference to its U.S. parallel, *No Child Left Behind*, shows a logical connection of principles. For example, *Education for All* Article 58 references allegiance to the United Nation’s *universal Declaration on Human Rights* Article 26 (a document the U.S. has not yet ratified), and in particular, its commitment to promote U. N. activities.

U.N. activities include the promotion of its policies, declarations, accords, treaties and agreements, of which *The Earth Charter* is one. UDHR also declares that the purpose of education is to develop the affective domain (meaning to change children’s values and attitudes), to socialize students to the ideals of the UDHR. Among these ideals are same gender marriage rights, abortion rights, and immigration rights. No immigrant can be denied the right to change their nationality (which explains why schools cannot identify illegal students and why the U.S. Congress has been paralyzed in building a border fence or in keeping illegal immigrants from entering the country.)

*The Earth Charter* has put pressure on the U.S. to redistribute the wealth to eradicate worldwide poverty, to support abortion rights and same gender marriage internationally as human rights, and it uses controversial environmental “U.N.-science” to drive its socialist solutions. Read it for yourself. [www.TheEarthCharter.org](http://www.TheEarthCharter.org) .

To simplify this connect-the-dots maze, UNESCO, the IBO and NCLB are aligned in principle. UNESCO laid out the framework for NCLB, and the IBO is a model curriculum for that framework and in partnership with UNESCO, which is the U.N.’s education arm and which endorses the UDHR.

***“The IB teaches a ‘world view [that] includes the promotion of the Earth Charter.” TRUE.***

The IBO was listed as an endorser of *The Earth Charter* Until 2006.<sup>26</sup> It removed its name as the controversy mounted and school boards began to drop the program.<sup>27</sup> However, the curriculum remains unchanged. In fact, Utah uses syllabi and testing that pre-date this public relations distancing. Principles found in *The Earth Charter* can be found throughout the curriculum and tests. As a partner with UNESCO, the IBO shares the U.N. ideal.<sup>28</sup> Parents who want these ideals taught will prefer this curriculum. Most parents are not aware of the ideals in the Earth Char-

ter, much less that they are being taught. Parents should be informed so they can make good decisions for their children's education.

***“The IB comes from a philosophy that ‘America’s foundational principles of national sovereignty, natural law and inalienable rights are at odds with the IB curriculum and are not taught.’” PT/PF.***

The IB program gives lip-service to the right of a nation to teach about the national culture first, recognizing that most countries have state requirements. (Again, this references the two separate missions of national and international schools.)<sup>29</sup>

For example, all Utah students are required to take U.S. History. However, *U.S. History is not an IB course*. The IB approach deconstructs the national view and re-constructs a new world view – for example, *the regional, pan-American view*. In IB history a student can select a region, but it does not necessarily have to be the pan-American region. The student is only required to research a 100 year period anywhere from 1750 to current events.<sup>30</sup>

The IB Theory of Knowledge course, central to the program, places all perspectives on the table and, in a relativistic way, values them equally (e.g.: “What I value as right may not necessarily be what you value as right, but your value has as much value as mine.”).<sup>31</sup> Therefore, what is a terrorist to one nation is a freedom-fighter to another. All things being equal, who is to decide who is right and who is wrong?

***“The IB is very expensive.” PT/PF.***

That depends on what is being evaluated. The IB tests themselves are comparable in cost to AP tests, minus the expensive international mailing costs. However, the entire program, including professional development, facility requirements, small class size requirements, start-up costs, ongoing costs, etc. makes the IB more expensive to deliver. I went to the IBO website to order two small booklets and the total was over \$300, \$70+ for shipping. The most effectively run IB schools are private and have an average tuition of \$25,000 per student per year. The IB programs in U.S. public schools are estimated to run about 3 to 7 times as expensive as AP courses.<sup>32</sup> The IB school contracts with Geneva, so the Utah State Office has not been tracking the costs.<sup>33</sup>

***“The IB is ‘not a well-recognized qualification’” PT/PF.***

Some colleges and universities may favor the IB because of they favor post-modern, deconstructionist thought (critical thinking), especially in the more elite institutions. However, AP courses are more universally accepted and can replace college credit. Except in rare instances, IB does not replace college credit. The IBO has created an image of “prestige” and “rigor,” which has yet to be substantiated in the research.<sup>34</sup>

***“The IB is only for Diploma Programme students.” FALSE.***

Anyone can take an IB course, but statistics show that the typical profile of the successful IB student is a gifted student. Sometimes IB and AP are taken interchangeably.<sup>35</sup> The IBO offers a Primary Years Programme, a Middle Years Programme, and the high school level Diploma Programme.

***“The IB is an elite club and is only for the brightest students.” PT/PF.***

Again, any student can take IB courses, but the research shows that the profile of the student who takes IB coursework and *completes* the diploma program is similar to that of the gifted student. Students who take IB courses tend to prefer the IB classes over others because they are more homogeneously grouped with students who share their level of interest in learning.<sup>36</sup>

***“The IB is a non-academic ‘fad’ program and many colleges and universities will not accept IB courses as fulfilling undergraduate requirements for admissions.” PT/PF.***

The IB program not only tests academic rigor, it also tests the students’ attitudes and values toward the subject matter (such as global warming, population control, and sustainability, which lead to support of international, government-run programs to eradicate poverty).<sup>37</sup> As mentioned before, AP courses are accepted as college credit. Only in rare instances are IB courses used for college credit.

***“The IB examination assessment is not thorough enough.” PT/PF.***

That depends on what one considers “thorough.” The IB assessment is an open essay format, as opposed to a multiple choice format, which requires the student to be able to write about a particular topic. However, the students also know what they will be tested on in advance. The student must give politically correct answers in order to qualify for the highest descriptor scores.<sup>38</sup>

***“The IB tests and papers of American [IB] students are sent to Europe/Geneva for grading and evaluation.” PT/PF.***

The tests are not only sent to Europe/Geneva; they are sent to a number of regions of the world. The student does not know whether an examiner in Thailand or in Australia will be evaluating their essays, nor of what cultural or political persuasion that examiner will be. The answers must be written from a “neutral” position.<sup>39</sup> (That in itself is an oxymoron.)

The international perspective of the IBO and its partner UNESCO embrace the Dakar Framework – *Education for All* - the U.N. parallel for *No Child Left Behind*. The Dakar Framework embraces *The Earth Charter* and other U.N. agreements promoting sustainability and global citizenship. Because of the partnership with UNESCO, the standard is outlined in the various protocols and agreements on human rights and sustainability. Those are the ideals to be demonstrated in the essays.<sup>40</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

One of the most respected of leaders in global, international education is Robert Muller, former U.N. Assistant Secretary-General and 1989 recipient of the UNESCO Peace Education Prize. He summed up the philosophy of UNESCO and its partners in a daily email I received from him just as I was concluding this “Myth v. Fact” response. (What good timing he has.)

“In the year 2000 there were 3500 days left to the year 3000. If every day produces [*sic*] in their skyscrapers come up with more products, more markets and more advertisements, this might mean the end of our planet if the world population is not stabilized, if the rich countries continue to increase their consumption of often needless products, needless travel, car and airplane uses unnecessarily, which might lead to disasters. So would the increase of the world's poor population by several more billions in the next decades.

Why not come up instead with ideas to conserve our precious planet and create a just and humane society. Please, governments and all great peoples of the world, elevate your heads and your minds to do it.

There is also need for a World Parliament of the Future, which would look as far at least as the year 3000 ahead of us. It would bring together the best visionaries, thinkers and futurologist of the planet and submit their views, fears and recommendations to the United Nations.

The decision of heads of states to meet every few years in millennium 3000 meetings is a first good step. They should also create futurologist positions and even futurology departments in all their governments.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Van de Lagemaat, Richard. *Theory of Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also: International Baccalaureate Organization, Subject guide for Theory of Knowledge relating to the Diploma Programme, (Geneva:1996)

<sup>2</sup> Van Loo, Marc and Kevin Morley. *Implementing the IB Diploma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also, List of Authorized IB consultants <<http://www.dp-help.com/about.html>>

<sup>3</sup> Ian Hill, Former IBO Deputy Director-General, in A.D.C. Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers*, Chapter 11: “The People Who Made the IBO” (Open Court, 2003): 281-285.

<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis Foundation, <http://www.cslewis.org/resources/chronocsl.html>

<sup>5</sup> See IBO website [www.IBO.org](http://www.IBO.org)

<sup>6</sup> A.D.C. Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers, The Story of the International Baccalaureate and the United World Colleges* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003): 15-18.

<sup>7</sup> A.D.C. Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers, The Story of the International Baccalaureate and the United World Colleges* (Chicago: Open Court, 2003): 15-18. See also: [www.IBO.org](http://www.IBO.org)

<sup>8</sup> IBO website: <http://www.ibo.org/partnerships/governments/>

<sup>9</sup> Peter Smith, Assistant Director-General UNESCO, “International Education in an Era of Globalisation: What’s New.” *The International Baccalaureate Organisation, Conference on International Education*, Geneva, September 11, 2002

<sup>10</sup> Robert Muller’s World Core Curriculum: <http://www.U.N.ol.org/rms/>

<sup>11</sup> Ian Hill, Former IBO Deputy Director-General, in A.D.C. Peterson, *Schools Across Frontiers*, Chapter 11: “The People Who Made the IBO” (Open Court, 2003): 281-285.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Nicholas Tate, “What Is Education For? The Purposes of Education and Their Implications for the School Curriculum,” International Baccalaureate Organization, The Peterson Lecture, April 24, 2004, Geneva: 10.

<sup>13</sup> Some American dollar converted examples are: The Canadian Academy (approx. \$17,000) [www.canacad.ac.jp/Adm\\_Tuition.php](http://www.canacad.ac.jp/Adm_Tuition.php); The International School of Geneva (approx. \$26,000);

<sup>14</sup> See the IBO website. [www.IBO.org](http://www.IBO.org)

<sup>15</sup> Ian Hill, “Education for Disarmament: Curriculum Development and Ethics in International Education,” United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, *Disarmament Forum* 2001:50. See also: <http://www.U.N.idir.org/pdf/articles/pdf-art53.pdf> “Recommendation on education for international Understanding,” *UNESCO General Conference*. (Paris: 1974); International Baccalaureate Organization, Subject Guide for Envi-

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ronmental Systems Relating to the Diploma Program, (Geneva: 1996): 4; J. Rifkin, "Biosphere Politics: A Cultural Odyssey from the Middle Ages to the New Age," (New York: Crown, 1991), in Hill, *Disarmament Forum*: 58

<sup>16</sup> Cole, Desmond, *A Moral Equivalent to War* 1967. Former Director United Nations International School, NYC. <http://www.U.N.is.org/News%5C../pdf/mailings/specialprogs/DesmondColeMemorial/writing.htm>

<sup>17</sup> See: [http://www.amyscott.com/recommened\\_sources.htm](http://www.amyscott.com/recommened_sources.htm) Time Magazine "Yes, it has a liberal bias, doesn't all thought-provoking journalism? When did liberal get to be a dirty word?"

<sup>18</sup> Peter Smith, Assistant Director-General UNESCO, "International Education in an Era of Globalisation: What's New." *The International Baccalaureate Organisation, Conference on International Education*, Geneva, September 11, 2002

<sup>19</sup> [www.TheEarthCharter.org](http://www.TheEarthCharter.org)

<sup>20</sup> IBO Diploma Programme History, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> IBO Diploma Programme Biology, 2001 See also: IBO Diploma Programme Social and Cultural Anthropology, Standard Level, Paper 2, 2005

<sup>22</sup> Marc van Loo and Kevin Morley, *Implementing the IB Diploma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 186-187. See also, List of Authorized IB consultants < <http://www.dp-help.com/about.html>>

<sup>23</sup> Susan Tiftt, "Waving Goodbye to UNESCO," *Time Magazine*, Jan, 9, 1984. See also: Gregory J. Newell, *U.S. Dept. of State Bulletin*, March 1985.

<sup>24</sup> Shaefer, Brett, "Not the Time for the United States to Rejoin UNESCO," Heritage Foundation, January 17, 2001, Backgrounder #1405. <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/BG1405.cfm>

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Education News Release "US Re-enters U.N.'s education arm – UNESCO," October 1, 2003

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.ibo.org/ibna/actionpacks/documents/MythvFacts.PDF>

<sup>27</sup> (See my blog entry – A Perspective on the IB.)

<sup>28</sup> IBO Diploma Programme Biology, 2001. See also: IBO Diploma Programme Social and Cultural Anthropology, Standard Level, Paper 2, 2005; International Baccalaureate Organization, Subject guide for Theory of Knowledge relating to the Diploma Programme, (Geneva:1996); IBO Diploma Programme History, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Nicholas Tate, "What Is Education For? The Purposes of Education and Their Implications for the School Curriculum," International Baccalaureate Organization, The Peterson Lecture, April 24, 2004, Geneva

<sup>30</sup> IBO Diploma Programme History, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> Van de Lagemaat, Richard. *Theory of Knowledge*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> *MN Dept of Ed 2005 report to legislature foU.N.d at:*

<http://www.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2006/Mandated/060264.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Hales, Brenda, Curriculum Committee Comments, Utah State School Board Meeting, May 9, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> See [www.TheSenateSite.com](http://www.TheSenateSite.com) blog post – A Perspective on the IB.

<sup>35</sup> See my comments on IB research studies at the Senate Site blog.

<sup>36</sup> See my comments on IB research studies at the Senate Site blog.

<sup>37</sup> IBO syllabi provided by Utah State Office of Education; Test samples from [www.IBO.org](http://www.IBO.org)

<sup>38</sup> IBO syllabi provided by Utah State Office of Education; Samples from [www.IBO.org](http://www.IBO.org); Marc van Loo and Kevin Morley, *Implementing the IB Diploma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also, List of Authorized IB consultants < <http://www.dp-help.com/about.html>>

<sup>39</sup> Conversation with West High School IB Staff. See also: <http://www.ibo.org/examiners/>

<sup>40</sup> See the Education for All website: [http://portal.UNESCO.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=46881&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.UNESCO.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=46881&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). Also see: No Child Left Behind Act: Public law 107-110 <http://www.nochildleftbehind.com/nclb-law-contents.html>

<sup>41</sup> Muller, Robert, <http://www.robertmuller.org/> See: **[GMW #1486] Creating A Just And Humane Global Society Of Our Precious Planet, May 28, 2008.**