
SJ board examines global diploma program

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BENTON HARBOR — The St. Joseph Public School board has started researching a program that would allow its students to undertake university-level coursework.

Superintendent Ann Cardon and St. Joseph High School Principal Kevin Riggs presented their findings on the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at a board workshop meeting Tuesday at Harbor Shores Golf Club.

Similar to advanced placement courses – with a stress on critical thinking – Riggs said many colleges and universities recognize the IB program and award successful students college credit, waivers or other benefits. To get a better perspective on the possibility of bringing in a program that could affect St. Joseph High School's curriculum, Riggs spoke with Rick Searing, the IB coordinator at Portage Northern High School.

"I was an assistant principal at Northern (Portage) for five years, so I was not surprised by what it offered," Riggs said. "I've been through the program there and saw it grow over the course of that time."

Even if the program was adopted, the district would still offer traditional AP courses.

Cardon said the administration is considering avenues for all its students, and has looked at what it would take to implement not only the IB program, but middle college

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options and Certified Technical Education programs with Lake Michigan College.

While Cardon said entities such as the SJPS Foundation have voiced support of the IB program, she stressed the district is “just looking” for now.

“We are only investigating,” she said. “We don’t know if we want to move on with this yet. It’s another avenue we are considering.”

One of the main talking points among board members was what kind of time-

line the district is looking at.

Implementing the IB program would be a three-year process in different phases including more workshops forming a committee and putting teachers through a three-day training session.

“We would need to explore the course this year,” Riggs said. “That’s the beginning part – to examine if this is something we would want to continue with. The question is can the process be speeded up? No it can’t because you are looking to get through three different phases before you can authorize these courses.”

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