

Coeur d'Alene School Board Chairman Tom Hamilton discusses reasons why he and wife, Katie, pulled their fifth-grader from Hayden Meadows School (10/3/12):

To clear this up, our decision to remove our daughter from HM was due to the specific actions of pro-PYP parents, not staff. I was notified that this had occurred by the Superintendent and it was her suggestion that perhaps we needed to relocate our daughter. In fact, the administration at the school handled that particular incident very well but it became clear to both of us that our daughters were going to be made pawns in an argument that wasn't theirs and my first obligation is always to protect my children.

Secondly, while I would say that most of the staff at Hayden Meadows are excellent at what they do and have been a blessing to my children personally, I stand by my wife's description of a "poisonous element" at that school. That element is small, but the impact they have had on us as a family is significant. One member of the staff at HM is on record in the CDA Press referring to schools in our district that don't have PYP as "mediocre" and parents such as my wife and I who oppose PYP as part of a "subculture" similar to the "KKK and the Aryan Nations". Similar views and other more hurtful statements have been expressed to other people that we know, but since those are 3rd party to me, I won't repeat them here. However, the quotes I reference above are in print and can easily be verified if one cares to look.

However, let me be very clear, our decision to ultimately leave the school had NOTHING to do with the staff and we made that quite clear to several of them that morning as we left. The tears shed were not just from my wife and I but also from two teachers who clearly LOVED and made great efforts to nurture my daughters. I told them both how much I admired and respected them and that if we could have it any other way but to pull our daughter out of the only school she had ever known, that is what we would choose.

Lastly, my wife's reference to "knuckle-dragging morons" was in direct response to vile comments made on several blogs about this issue. Those were their words, not ours. We do not believe any children in any of our schools fit that description and are personally appalled that this description was used at all.

I have been quite open and honest with anyone that cares to participate in a respectful manner about my issues with the PYP. In fact, last week I met both with Chief Allan and with Mike Patrick to discuss very openly our differing views. I have also met with teachers at the school and had similar conversations. Simply put, however, my research made it clear to me that it is a "values" and not a "subject" based program. IBO's own literature describes PYP as a framework that places a curriculum (PYP is NOT a curriculum) into a values based framework. Those values are defined by the IBO, not by our district and most certainly not by parents such as myself. I can't put it any more plainly than to say that public schools cannot and should not be in the business of defining values for families.

There is no "opt out" option for the PYP. This is defined by the IBO and not the district. While I support fully the district's right and obligation to select literature, curriculum, etc based on the

knowledge and education they have as professionals, I can never and will never support a program that takes away a parent's right to object for any reason to what and how their child is being taught.

Contrary to the accusations being made in this blog, I do not want my values taught to other people's children either. I simply want public schools to be and to remain "values neutral" and I will fight tirelessly to protect a parent's right to object when they don't believe that is how the school is acting.

I have said what I have to say. I will not engage in arguments here. My wife has made her point of view known and she is quite capable of explaining that herself. I will expect that anyone responding here will ensure that my children are left fully out of the discussion.