

# 2 Boise schools going 'international'

Longfellow, Pierce Park will incorporate global studies, foreign language starting in kindergarten

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The Boise School District will introduce an international curriculum at Longfellow and Pierce Park elementary schools in the 2008-2009 school year.

They will be the only two public schools in the district to offer foreign language from kindergarten on.

Teachers will incorporate material about other cultures and regions, said Russ Heller, the district's educational services supervisor who is part of

a team putting the plan together.

"We do have a good program in terms of geography, history and culture in our world studies program," Heller said. "This would be an opportunity to experiment with going a little deeper, with mingling those explorations with a foreign language."

International school is a popular concept these days.

The public school plan came about after a group of parents approached the district last year with a proposal for an international charter school.

After several meetings, the parents and officials decided it would make more sense to offer an international curriculum at existing schools.

Raising money for a charter school "would have taken away from the time we could have spent with the curriculum and

the kids," said Meridian parent Mike Cram, one of the organizers. "It kind of defeated the

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## Boise's private international schools

In the last several years, two private international schools have been started: Riverstone in East Boise, which follows the International Baccalaureate curriculum, and Arrowrock in Southeast Boise, which has an international curriculum for

gifted and talented students. The International Baccalaureate program is geared toward developing intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills while promoting a world view and a positive attitude about learning.

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purpose."

Those organizers also preferred to start a school that would be available without tuition, said Cram and another organizer, Boise parent Don Keller.

That is something several school districts around the country have done, by authorizing international charter schools or by placing international curricula in existing public schools.

"It's a pretty big growing movement in the United States now," said Keller, a biology teacher at Skyview High School in Nampa.

## THE CURRICULUM

Some of those public schools have undergone the complex process of being accredited to offer the International Baccalaureate curriculum, a rigorous program that emphasizes the arts, service to the community, and teaching through discussion, not lecture.

Class work at Longfellow and Pierce Park will probably look similar to that of the International Baccalaureate, but Boise isn't going to seek International Baccalaureate accreditation, said Heller. It's too expensive.

"This is an effort to express some goals in common with IB — to increase students' literacy with and familiarity with other peoples, other cultures, other nations, and to take advantage of the opportunity to learn languages early," Heller said.

But "this is not an outsourced curricular effort," she said. "We're going to be developing the curriculum in the building."

Students who go through the two international schools will be able to continue the same type of

education with courses that already exist at the district's junior high and high schools, Heller added.

"There's a seamless curricular flow," he said.

Longfellow is in the North End; Pierce Park is in the Collister neighborhood in northwestern Boise. The district chose those two small schools because enrollment has declined there, making some space available.

The principals weren't available for comment for this story, but Don Coberly, district curriculum director, said both have been involved in planning for the programs since early this year.

Spanish will be offered at Longfellow; the district is considering French at Pierce Park and will survey local residents to see if that would appeal to parents, said Coberly. One of the parent organizers is a French teacher.

The district has studied offering foreign language in all the elementary schools, but it's just too expensive, said Coberly.

A study a few years ago found it would cost \$2.5 million per year in Boise.

But Coberly and Heller also hope the international approach will be popular and will grow in Boise.

"If our mission is to educate kids for a better tomorrow, for us that means preparing kids for better success in the communities in which they operate," said Heller. "Increasingly that community is global.

"The largest companies in town operate in an international market; their families' livelihood depends on market forces that are in play outside the Treasure Valley."

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