

Support for Independent Public School District

On March 13, The Post published an editorial expressing reservations about HB 1299, a bill that would create the Independent Public School District. The Post's primary concern was that such a district might attract the most involved and energetic teachers and parents working for reform — thus weakening the schools they leave behind.

In our judgment, this phenomenon is already occurring. Dissatisfied parents who can afford alternatives pursue private schools. Burned-out teachers leave the profession. Advocates of a voucher system gain force and momentum.

We believe the best way to reinvigorate our public education system is by promoting leadership and competition within the public system, where there is public accountability and assurance of equity and access.

The impact of the Independent Public School District legislation will not be defined solely by the number or activities of its member schools. The full measure of the reform potential lies in how it will motivate changes in attitudes, relationships and practice throughout the public school system.

Member schools of the Independent Public School District will provide powerful models of diverse learning environments that can inspire other schools to action. Its existence will give hope and new energy to educators and community members whose efforts at the school level meet with resistance at the central office level. Most fundamentally, by providing teachers and parents with public alternatives to the status quo, the IPSD will create a shift in power that will force even the most resistant district bureaucracies to be more responsive to the schools, communities and parents they serve. Because of this power shift, the regulatory environment will change for all schools.

This bill is supported by a very broad coalition that courses traditional political and interest lines. Those of us who support the bill share the conviction that we best serve the interests of children and of equity by seeking to raise up the entire system, rather than by leveling down and imposing the lowest common denominator. Equity demands that we hold high expectations for all students and provide the programs and support that each student needs to meet those expectations. The IPSD provides a tool to do just that.

BARBARA O'BRIEN

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P.J. -
This is from
the March, 1992
Denver Post
The children's
Campaign has hired
a lobbyist to
help our bill
this year, and
is very supportive of
our bill -

Bob