

## **June Student Trustee Reports**

Sepideh Soltaninia

### **STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT**

At this time, Student Trustee S. Soltaninia made the following remarks.

*“Good evening Madame Chair, Mr. Director, trustees, superintendents, ladies and gentlemen.*

*For many students June is a month of anxiety and anticipation. With summer so close, students have the hurdle of exams to face before entering two months of bliss. June is the accumulation of hard work and of time spent inside studying while wishing to be outside enjoying the sun. June is a difficult time for all students as work builds, grades hang in the balance, and summer plans begin to unfold.*

*Unlike most high school students in the Region, I have had a much different perspective this June. Gone are the days of studying, cramming, and trying to finish Individual Study Projects. Here are the days of reflection, nostalgia, and realization. I share some of my sentiments with other graduating students, most of whom have spent over one fifth of their lives in the same building, with the same peers. Four years may be a dent in one’s life, but for graduating students, most of whom are only seventeen or eighteen years old, four years is an eternity.*

*So why has this June been a different experience for me? Why have I had so much time for reflection, for reminiscing and looking back? Unlike most students, my time for anxiety, nervousness and cramming occurred in May. As an International Baccalaureate (IB) student I wrote my examinations not with other students in York Region but with IB students across the world.*

*I’ve spent my entire high school career trying to explain the meaning carried by those two letters. To be completely honest, it was this month, when the work load abruptly ended that I truly began to understand what it means to be an IB student. As the first student trustee to take part in the program, I feel a sense of duty to tell the Board a little about the program from a student’s perspective. Throughout my term I’ve heard much discussion about the program; what it stands for, what its aims and goals are, and its place in public education; however, IB is not an administrative question for me. IB has become, in a strange way, a fact of life. For two years, most aspects of my social and academic life were greatly impacted by this program.*

*It is hard for many students or even adults to understand the different aspects of the IB program, let alone how it affects individual students. IB is intensive. With no spares, and some courses at a first year university level, time often becomes an illusive friend. Was it difficult? Definitely. Were there times when we complained more than we worked, when there was an excessive amount of work, too many tests and too much pressure? Yes; however, what I have always found remarkable about the IB program is the amount of support that exists. As a student, when every single one of your classes consists of the exact same 22*

people, it is almost impossible not to find others who share your stress or anxieties. Also, with so many IB students across the world, and so many forums and methods of communication across the web, it is an amazing feeling to realize that there are students everywhere who understand the unique pressures of the program.

IB is a comprehensive program meant to build well rounded students. To describe the work load as heavy at times would be an understatement; however, at the end, when one holds their diploma in their hands, the deciding factor for one's marks will be the IB examinations.

I remember being a grade eleven student and feeling extremely nervous to write my first four IB exams that May. With seventy per cent of my mark being decided by these examinations, the pressure was unbelievable. I also remember looking at my sister, an IB student a year older, with amazement. While I had four examinations to write that May, spread over a little less than a month, she had 11 in a span of two weeks. Needless to say, I saw very little of my sister that April and May. While she was studying, I was thinking ahead, wondering how, come next year, I would possibly write so many exams.

Now, a little over a month after my last IB exam, I am still amazed that my peers and I made it through what was, undoubtedly, the most intense ten days of my life. From May 5<sup>th</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>, International Baccalaureate students at Bayview Secondary School (except for the seven who took physics) wrote 11 exam papers which covered material spanning over two years of teaching. I saw more of my 'library family' of fellow IB students than I did of my own. Mentally, the examinations were draining. Emotionally, they were frustrating. Spiritually, they were an immense source of pride. Looking back, as I have for most of this month, I thought that it would be impossible. Eleven papers, two years worth of material, in less than two weeks; that is an undertaking. It is events like this, those that seem not achievable in the beginning, that bring about the most personal satisfaction. Their completion is always a source of pride as they are proof of one's capabilities. For that, I applaud all my fellow IB and York Region students in general. Be it the completion of a program, of high school, or of a year of their education, students across this Region are working hard to accomplish some of their personal goals.

As for me, I must wait until July for the International Baccalaureate Organization to release my grades. With the exams taking such precedence, scholastically, these grades make all the difference; however, they will have no impact on what I have learned as both an Ontario and IB student. Throughout the past two years, I've often been asked, "Was IB worth it?" My response used to be, "if you catch me on a good day, then yes, if you catch me on a bad day, then I'm not so sure." After an entire month of reflection, I say yes, it has been worth it.

Thank you".