



BERLIN
METROPOLITAN
SCHOOL



Quarterly News

February 2022

Dear BMS Families,

I hope you have had a relaxing and enjoyable winter break and have used the Semester 1 report cards to have an exchange with your children about their learning, their aspirations, and their individual aims for the second part of the academic year.

After an intense period where we spent a lot of time with COVID testing, the management of infection cases, and the entire communication process surrounding this topic, we now aim to redirect our attention to teaching and learning as our main priority and focus for Semester 2. Moreover, the revitalization of BMS community life will be a priority for us because we can see how our students are in need of a strong sense of community after months and years of separation.

BMS Community

I hope that you have used the opportunity to watch the [BMS Talent Show](#), which took place on February 4, 2022, organized by our dedicated CCEP Team. Over the course of several weeks, Primary School students were invited to apply and audition for this event to showcase their individual talents. Over 100 students applied and went through a selection process in front of a jury. The finalists have been invited on stage to perform in front of a group of students, managed and orchestrated by two student hosts, who have been fantastic ambassadors for the event. The BMS Talent Show was live streamed in all our classrooms and was accessible online for all parents and staff as well.



From my perspective, the whole process leading up to this event, as well as the event itself, represents the essence of what we try to role model at BMS: student engagement, student empowerment, and the joy of learning and striving to meet our full potential. In addition, this is also a wonderful example of how important our engagement and offers are to encourage learning outside of the classroom. These events represent important moments where we create a feeling of community, belonging, and appreciation on a big scale, which will in turn strengthen the overall connection, trust, and respect between us as one community.

The feedback we received from students was overwhelmingly positive. They loved the opportunity to present themselves as part of a team of students and immediately after the show they let us know that they will start preparations now for the next show in the coming school year! Our CCEP Team is committed to ensuring that the BMS Talent Show is a permanent fixture on our school calendar.

What the talent show is for our Primary School students, the Secondary School Concert is for our Secondary students. They are equally excited for the upcoming show on March 25th and the wonderful opportunity to share their unique talents, to experience again teamwork and community, and to regain some sense of their normal life they miss so much as part of their school experience.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to visit [our new school website](#). We have created a new online presence for our school with the intention to offer our BMS Parent Community and all interested families a more engaging and clearer insight into what BMS is. We truly believe that our students, their creativity, and their engagement is the strongest asset of BMS, followed by engaging and passionate staff members who always try to find the best possible way forward for our students. We hope that our new website also provides you with a better insight on what we do and most importantly, what our students are able to accomplish.

Academic Priorities for Semester 2

Traditionally, Semester 2 of a school year marks a time period when academics become quite intense, particularly for our students from Grade 6 onwards. We prepare our students for their transition into the next steps of their academic journey, which includes academic challenges but also social demands. Therefore, the expectations will be quite high for our students in the weeks to come, including many internal and external assessments. These assessments are a mandatory part our program and the pre-requisite for our students to enter the next step in their academic career.

This year we will place particular focus on the transition from Primary School into the Secondary School. It was our priority this year to align the programs, the academic expectations, and the approaches between Primary School and Secondary School in a more cohesive and defined way. Our Heads of Department from both divisions worked together to address the gaps we have identified. The latter includes the improvement of our Science program in the Primary School, the consistent assessment strategies used in Grade 5 and 6, the evaluation of academic achievements as the foundation for student placement, as well as emphasis on nurturing greater independence and student choice. With the different initiatives and adaptations, we will support the transition of our students

into Secondary School with greater alignment and clarity. Our Secondary team is preparing for a better entrance procedure in Grade 7, so that students are able to focus on their academic learning right from the beginning.

Our aim is to achieve the highest marks for our students in the IGCSE and the IB Diploma examinations and the results from our previous cohorts have been quite encouraging. Our students from last year have been able to improve our average IB DP points and our previous Grade 10 students achieved the best IGCSE Cambridge results in the history of BMS. We have just been informed that in addition, one of our native German speaking students achieved the highest mark in the English as a First Language oral examinations in Germany! These achievements are a testament to our institutional quality and of course, we are highly motivated to maintain these excellent results and to push even further.

In order to facilitate this push in academic excellence, we need a high level of institutional quality and an ongoing cycle of critical reflection.



Over the past years, we invested time and energy into building structures and implementing consistent processes, procedures, and policies to achieve this high level of institutional quality. For the next academic year, we will undergo a few changes in our leadership teams in Primary and Secondary School with the clear commitment to initiate the next steps in our institutional growth.

Future Leadership Structure

Based on a clear and structured process and in collaboration with members of the leadership team as well as teacher representatives, we hired two new leaders for our Primary School. Our focus areas in the hiring process in terms of criteria for our new colleagues have been:

- Knowledge in the area of curriculum development and a deep understanding of curriculum design
- Expertise in Language Learning Concepts
- Experience with the alignment of national and international curriculum
- Experience with Middle School to role model a whole-school understanding
- Leadership experiences and a clear, gentle, and authentic leadership style
- Commitment to academic excellence
- Diversity in background

For the academic year 2022/23, we will welcome Mrs. Saliha Aslan in the role of Primary School Principal at BMS. Mrs. Aslan currently leads the Uskudar SEV American School in Istanbul, where she has worked as the Primary Principal since 2015. In 2019, she became the Head of School and with this step in her career, she also took over the responsibility for the Middle School, an aspect she truly enjoys. Before her employment at this school, she gained various experience in leadership positions at different schools. She decided to become

a teacher after she worked for several years in business. She completed her BA in English Language and Literature and added several further degrees, such as an MA in Private School Leadership, in the ensuing years. She worked in schools where the national curriculum was implemented alongside the Cambridge program as well as with the Primary Years Programme. Her nationality is Turkish, and she impressed our hiring committee with her warmth and gentle personality, with the clarity in her understanding of the role, her approach to the interview questions, as well as with her authentic presentation throughout the entire interview process. We have been able to invite Mrs. Aslan to our school so that we had the opportunity to meet in person and to discuss the areas in which we would like to improve. We all are looking forward to welcoming Saliha Aslan to BMS and to establish a fruitful, positive, and inspiring collaboration.

We will also welcome a new colleague in the role of Vice Principal Teaching and Learning in our Primary School. During the hiring process, we had the opportunity to interview Mrs. Eric Coutrim and we are very happy that she accepted our offer for this position.

Mrs. Erica Coutrim has a Phd in Education and is a true expert in curriculum development, with a special focus on language learning. Her nationality is Brazilian, she was raised in Sao Paulo, and lives currently in Salvador. She is a trained DaF teacher (German as Additional Language Teacher) and lived already in Berlin for some years as part of her studies. She is an experienced school leader with a specialized focus on Primary School Education. Furthermore, she is involved in many projects and initiatives locally as well as internationally. As a consultant and as an author of books and articles, she supported teachers and schools to improve in the area of teaching and learning. She has a wealth of knowledge about different aspects of curriculum design and is a big believer in the implementation of assessment as an essential part of teaching and learning. During the interview process, we were impressed by her wealth of knowledge and her obvious commitment to excellent teaching practices. Her knowledge of language learning and the management of multilingual classrooms is another asset, which is fully in line with our current priorities. Unfortunately, we have not had the chance to meet in person yet but from the different interactions we have had, we are very confident that with her knowledge and her warm, open, and energetic personality, she will be able to contribute to BMS in a most powerful and positive way. We enrolled Mrs. Coutrim already in a training for leadership in the PYP as she is eager to have the best possible preparation for her new position. Mrs. Coutrim is truly looking forward to returning to Berlin and to make Berlin to her long-term home.



We will also undergo a few changes in our Secondary leadership structure as well. We will establish two new positions in the Secondary School to support Mrs. Samantha Hearn in her plans to establish a high level of operational quality alongside a caring, student focused, and aspirational culture of teaching and learning. Shortly after the winter break, we will already welcome Julie Mansuy in the role of Exams Officer and Data Assistant. The various examinations our students have to pass in their academic career at BMS are particularly demanding and the organization and coordination of these examinations are quite complex. Therefore, the preparation of setting these examinations is critical and has to be of a superb and consistent quality, so that students and teachers can focus on the most important aspect: academic preparation and timely delivery. Additionally, as an institution of learning, we have to make use of the important data we collect from our students to be able to understand which areas of the program, teaching practices, subject offers, and subject choices we have to address to improve our academic achievements and to support our students better. We truly look forward to using the expertise and support from Ms. Mansuy right before we begin our next heavy exam season in April 2022.

In line with the implementation of the exam and data assistant role, we will also establish a second VP role: Vice Principal Student Pathways, who will collaborate with the Heads of Grade, the Program Leaders, and the University and Career Counselor. The intention is to fully understand our students with their individual social and academic profile and to be able to guide them in their subject choices, extracurricular activities, additional support offers, as well as their choices for their future university degree programs, based on personal interest and circumstances, future aspirations, and academic potential.

The Vice Principal Student Pathways will also collaborate with the Vice Principal Teaching and Learning who is overseeing the curriculum development and implementation, the teaching practices, and overall academic quality. Also for this role we are currently searching for someone new to join our team as Ms. Watson will take over different responsibilities in the coming academic year.

Although these adjustments may seem like many changes, it is in fact a summary of our reflections, planning, and preparation over the past months. Overall, we see these changes as great opportunities and truly look forward to the next academic year, when we can implement these changes and hopefully already witness some of the positive impacts we aim to see as a result of these developments.

CIS & NEASC Re-Accreditation Process

One aspect our new leadership members also bring to BMS is that they are familiar with the accreditation process and accreditation criteria for CIS. BMS is also a CIS and NEASC accredited school since our initial accreditation in 2017. It was important to us to undergo this complex and challenging accreditation process because this accreditation stands for a high level of institutional and programmatic quality. Therefore, the best international schools carry this accreditation stamp with pride and confidence. Our goal is to achieve a high quality for our institution and as such, the decision to step into this process was a logical one for BMS in 2017. The process we went through was challenging, demanding, and intense. The outcome we gained was tremendous for our institution and overall, very beneficial in confirming our development and integrity as an international school. Now we face the cycle of re-accreditation for CIS and NEASC with the final team visit scheduled for Spring 2024. Together with all senior leaders and program leaders, we took the decision that we will combine this re-accreditation process with the re-authorization process from the IB for our IB Diploma Programme as well as the PYP Programme and aim to host a joint visit at this time. This is a quite challenging project, which we have to address in the most prepared and structured manner possible. We will keep you informed about the process and the different steps and will be sure to reach out to you to ask for your support. Currently, we are in the process of setting up our project team, preparing the IT structures needed, and defining our project plan. The next important milestone is the preparatory visit, which will take place at the end of September where two CIS representatives will visit our school to evaluate if we are ready to step into the full re-accreditation process. In preparation of this first evaluation visit, we have to prepare a set of documentation, which we will start to gather beginning in March 2022.



In terms of program development, I would like to update you on our project to implement the Abitur. We have met with the representatives of the Senate to discuss the process and have evaluated different scenarios on how to change the legal framework of our school into a framework which would in turn allow us to offer the Abitur in Grade 12. We have discussed all options and have submitted all the necessary paperwork and planning documents. In the end, we have decided to pause the whole process because during the discussions it became evident that the timeline for this transformation is a very tight one from the moment we begin this process, until we have to offer the first Abitur Exams at BMS. Additionally, neither the Senate nor BMS has any experience on how this process works because until now, no other school has completed such a legal transformation. The uncertainty this creates is an aspect we would be able to manage, but not in addition to the current demanding circumstances. The Senate was very understanding of our situation and the reasoning behind the decision to postpone this complex transformation.

We are well aware that many families would have welcomed this addition to our program and further option for their children. Equally, we can see that due to the wide range of subject offers from Grade 9 to Grade 12, the demand for our IGSCE program as well as our IB program is increasing and that we have more requests than available spaces. You might find it interesting that with the launch of our new website and the online application tool we received already 603 applications to date. In an average school year, we welcome 215 new students and hold roughly 270 meetings for admission to our ELC, Primary, and Secondary schools. This represents a lot of

work for our admissions office, our assistants, as well as the school office, who are all involved in the preparation of each single school contract and with the onboarding procedures for our students.

Learning Opportunities Outside of the Classroom

Finally, I would like to share a few community updates from our highly committed [Berlin Model UN students](#) who have been extremely active in attending virtual UN conferences online. Members of our BMS Model United Nations students in Grades 8-11 participated in a virtual MUN conference hosted by Yale University in January, marking the second round for our students, and they showed their skills and creativity as confident students, participating in mock humanitarian crises and responses, discussing cyber security and global health, as well as networking with students from around the world in break-out groups.



BMS delegates also took part in lectures from Yale professors, interactive workshops, and numerous other activities centered around providing meaningful and thought-provoking exchanges. In addition, our students will participate in a Berlin Model UN with schools worldwide on education for equity and excellence in the 21st century in Semester 2. Our students will take part in security council sessions and in UNESCO themed discussions during this 3-day conference. Together with the JFK School Berlin and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, our Model UN students are currently preparing for debates, speeches, and executive meetings with over 750 students, 15 guest speakers, and 80 schools represented worldwide. As you can see our students are extremely dedicated to the BMS Model UN Club and their engagement continues to inspire us; they just registered for another next round in May hosted online by the Yale Model United Nations Taiwan. Well done to the Berlin Model UN Team!

These events are a testament to how important engagement and learning is outside of the classroom. We can see that interactive and engaging activities like Model UN provide our students with an opportunity to extend their learning and support their individual talents. We will take this learning and apply it to the offers we will expand in our afterschool program.

Connection will be a big part of campus life in Semester 2 and I look forward to celebrating the many opportunities we have coming up in March, with the annual Secondary School Concert, a AGIS Higher Ed Fair, and a school-wide Mathematics Day. These are but a few of the community events we will offer, and all details will be published on the BMS homepage.

I would like to thank you again for your trust and support in our institution and I look forward to welcoming many of you personally on our school campus in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Silke Friedrich