



BERLIN  
METROPOLITAN  
SCHOOL



# Quarterly News

April 2021

Dear BMS Families,

With this edition of our Spring newsletter, we would like to provide you with a brief update on some of our school-wide projects, student activities and accomplishments, as well as information on our current school development priorities.

Our highest priority at the moment is of course to maintain the balance between in-class instruction and home learning in order to support our students as they prepare for final examinations, assessments, and presentations in Semester 2.

We can see now – after one year of the pandemic – that our students grow tired of distance learning and that our Grade 10 and 12 students in particular, feel the immense challenge of maintaining their focus, commitment, and work ethic in preparing for their IGCSE/DP examinations.

Indeed, this is currently our greatest challenge, which we try to address in the most beneficial and effective way. To this end, we are currently conducting various assessments across all grade levels in order to identify any possible gaps in understanding. These assessments are to aid our teachers in ensuring that potential gaps are adequately addressed in the coming weeks.

# BMS Middle School, Transition into Grade 1 and Professional Development Days at BMS

We have used the past months to also review any necessary adjustments to our school program, in order to support the further development of our teaching and learning. As an outcome of this review, we have decided to focus on grade levels 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the coming academic year. Hence, the years of Middle School will be our focus point in terms of:

- Increased focus on teaching subject-specific content in grade 5 and 6 with a program for science, organized through a collaboration with the Secondary Science Teaching Team
- Alignment of content-specific requirements between Primary and Secondary School
- Introduction of benchmark tests for all subjects at key points in the year
- Introduction of number grades for those benchmark tests in grade 6
- Baseline assessments for grade 6 and 8, to provide evidence-based consultation with students and parents through the transition years
- Scheduled consultation meetings with parents to discuss academic achievements prior to the transition
- Design of more interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences in grade 7 and 8

Our Primary and Secondary School teaching teams will work together on our Assessment Policy as well as our Grading Scale and Reporting Structure with the central aim to create:

- Transparency according to academic achievement
- Alignment between school divisions
- High academic standards
- Data to inform teaching and learning as well as differentiation in the classroom
- Evidence to support and challenge high-achieving students



In addition, we will review our transition from Preschool into Grade 1, with the same goal of creating more evidence-based diagnostics to support our students. Our Preschool Team will continue to monitor and document the learning progress of our future 1st graders. This Spring, they will also be closely monitoring students' individual development related to benchmark literacy and numeracy skills. Our Preschool and Grade 1 Teams are working together to further enhance communication on transitions and will review these benchmark outcomes for each student to ensure a smooth and stable transition into grade 1. We will support our Preschool students and families in their last few months in the ELC by staying in close contact about each student's developmental progress and offer specific feedback and advice to each family regarding their child. We understand this has been a difficult and unpredictable year for our Preschool students and wish to ensure a successful and exciting start in our BMS Primary School.

In our school-wide professional development days, we focused on preparing the adaptations and developments outlined above. Secondary School focused on assessment, reporting, and documentation and reviewed ways to identify and fill any gaps - social and academic - in our students' progress due to the pandemic.

The Primary Team focused on grade level/departmental mapping of learning outcomes, assessment, and differentiation practices and held reading strategy workshops for our faculty.

Our ELC Team focused on the review of the Programme of Inquiry with regards to the adjustments of the Central Ideas. They also reviewed numeracy and literacy teaching together with the respective curriculum coordinators and Primary School teachers.

CCEP hosted a workshop designed to help educators deal with situations and student emotions which interfere with their learning. Together, they focused on factors behind „bad days“ and reviewed what can be done when nothing seems to be working and how students can best be supported. Within this workshop, CCEP team members were encouraged to look at the teacher-student relationship from the perspective of both the teacher and student, with a primary focus on how emotions impact the management of our relationships. Moreover, the workshop highlighted and explained strategies to manage these relationships effectively in the classroom.

## BMS Academic Framework – Implementation of the Abitur and the High School Diploma

We also would like to use this newsletter to provide you with an update regarding the status and current phase of the implementation of the Abitur track at BMS. At the beginning of the school year, we shared information regarding the introduction of the Bilingual Abitur as a further Diploma option for our students, alongside the IB Diploma.

After we submitted our application letter and documentation in October 2020, we received notice that the accreditation process would take a bit more time, which was something we expected could happen, but had hoped to expediate the process. Due to the necessary processing timeline for our accreditation, we will not be able to begin with the implementation in the coming academic year and will instead focus on the implementation for the academic year 2022/23.

We applied to the Senate Department for Education for permission to implement the bilingual Abitur as a two-year course of study, so that all students would be able to finish their final exams in grade 12. To allow this to happen, we also applied for a partial transformation of our middle grade levels (Grade 7-10) into a Gymnasium, alongside our current status as an Integrated Secondary School. In essence, a partial transformation means that, in future, we will remain an Integrated Secondary School, but will also offer the track of the Gymnasium with the final Abitur diploma.

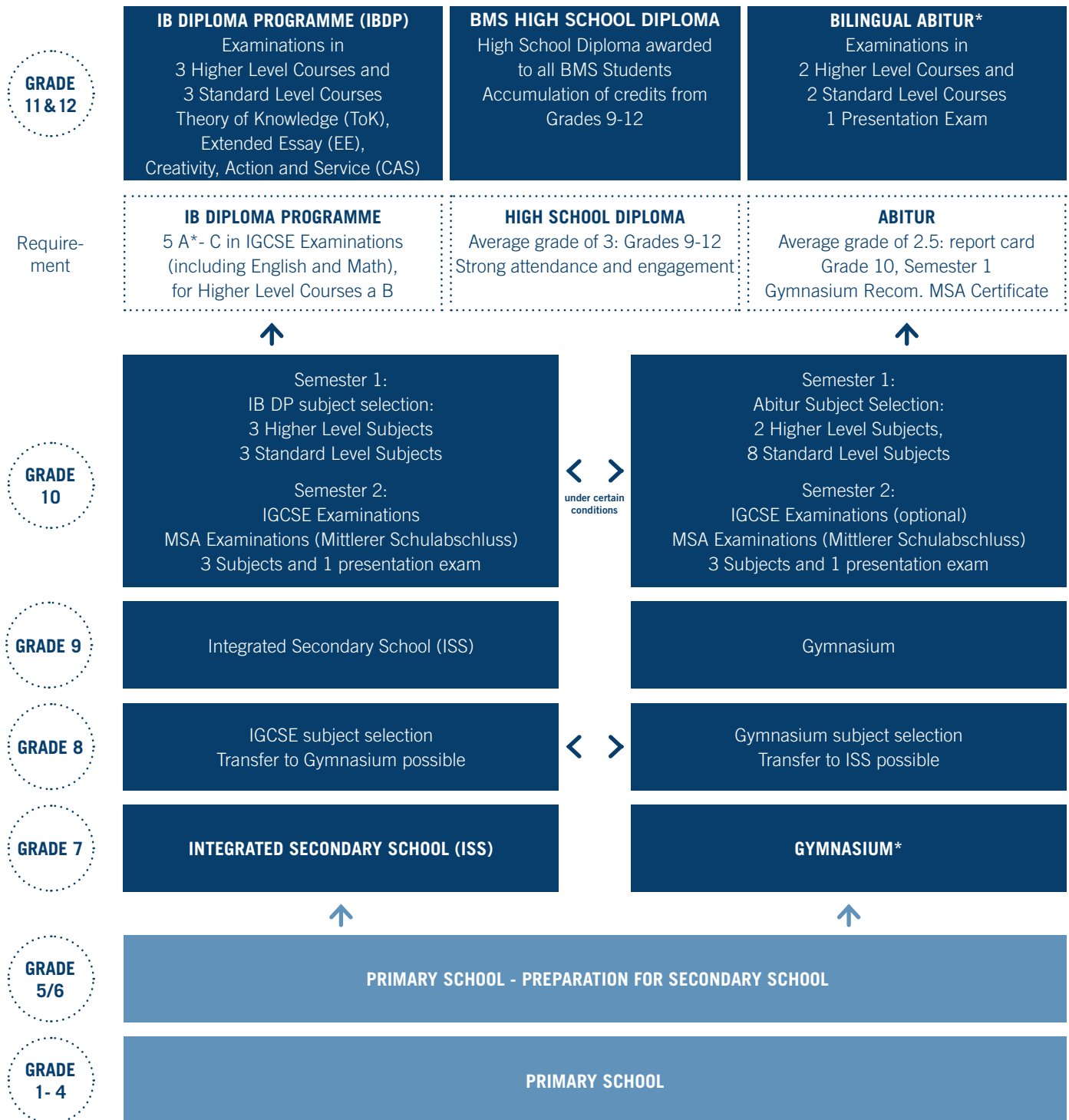
As soon as we are authorized to implement this adaptation of our school structure, we will share detailed information on the next steps with our community. It is important to note that at this point, all students will attend the same classes for most of their courses, regardless of whether they aim to complete the Abitur or the IB Diploma. The latter is an important element for us as we aim to nurture a culture of “one school” and will avoid any division amongst our students.

As in prior school years, we will ensure that we implement and manage various rounds of consultation for our students from Grade 7-Grade 9, regarding their decision-making process when selecting subjects. Our goal, as ever, is to ensure that their final exam track will be kept open and remain adaptable as long as possible. Because this consultation process is already an integral part of our academic process overall, no noticeable change will be felt at this stage.

In addition to the Abitur and the IB Diploma, we will also offer our students the High School Diploma, which is an additional diploma for their pursuits after Secondary School. The high school diploma will be awarded to all BMS students based on a culmination of credits accumulated from Grade 9-12. Through our accreditation as a NEASC/CIS school, BMS can now offer the high school diploma to our Secondary students.

With these adaptations and developments, we aim to expand the mission created at the onset of BMS which is to offer our students a wide variety of subjects and programs with the intention of supporting their best possible academic achievement, as well as the realization of a successful future after Secondary School.

Please find below an overview of our academic framework outlining the choices your child has at our school, aiding our community in evaluating which option best suits the needs of our students and their future aspirations.



\*implementation academic year 2022/23

## BMS Building Project Completion and Security

As much as we focus on building a robust school program and reviewing areas for improvement and development across our school-wide curriculum programs, we are also happy to report that our focus and determination with our physical building project has reached a successful conclusion. Indeed, this is a momentous achievement for BMS! All the planning, focus, work, and investment has created a school campus that our students can benefit from. We are all very proud of this achievement and finalization of the biggest project since the inception of BMS. We truly want to thank all of you for your support and patience. We are aware that this was a very challenging time but now that the project is complete, barring a few small details, the challenges are now a distance memory and we are very pleased that our students love their new classrooms, are inspired to be creative with their learning, and to enjoy their new music room and school auditorium.



We would also like to take a moment to thank our teachers and educators for their patience, having worked under challenging circumstances over the past 4 years. Even when the construction noise and volume level made it difficult to teach, they maintained the quality of our school program. They kept safety and security protocols in order, especially when we had cranes carrying building blocks left and right through the yard. They created an engaging environment for our students even when space and flexibility was limited due to construction.

We can now all appreciate our new school campus which we will develop further at time progresses, step-by-step. We are still working with our architects, Sauerbruch & Hutton, to address all the fine details, such as the entrance area of the Torstrasse gate, access to the elevator from the yard, selecting the furniture for the roof terrace to host our students during break, as well as lighting fixtures throughout the building. We will keep you updated regarding the next steps. In the meantime, we hope that you are also proud of our achievement. The many publications which we shared with you via our website are a testament to the results we have created together!

In line with the completion of our building project, we are also currently reviewing how we can improve security overall at BMS. We are currently working with the U.S. Embassy who is offering their support as well as with the police to evaluate our security standards and procedures. In line with this overall review, we made the decision to create our own team of security personnel who will support us in creating a high level of security for our students. We already hired a first member of this team and are still in the hiring process for the second member of the team. As soon as both new hires are confirmed, we will be sure to introduce them in a forthcoming communication.



## Student Projects and Accomplishments

After a formal election process, our student leaders were elected by their peers last semester in Secondary School. Candidates created interactive campaign videos, outlining their vision for change and leadership, as well as how they would like to inspire the student body at large. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Orlando as School Captain, Maud as Earth House Captain, Julius as water House Captain, Marie as Fire House Captain, and Ornella as Air House Captain. Our student leaders represent the voice of our students and as such, hold a very special place in the organization of school events and activities, as well as with the collaboration on key initiatives together with our Secondary School leaders.



Our Grade 11 students have made the most of current circumstances, forging ahead in unique ways with the Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS) initiatives as part of their DP studies. One project in particular involves a group of young artists in Secondary School, who had the opportunity to collaborate with the BVG on a project aimed at reimagining future cities and envisioning green, urban spaces. Our students put their inspirations to canvas, creating artistic city landscapes using concepts derived from the BVG-BMS collaboration. The artwork will be printed on large transparencies and featured at a public transport station in Berlin. We are incredibly proud of

their unique contributions, as are the BVG representatives, and would like to formally acknowledge Ava, Sophia, Milla, Paulina, and Lena on their artistic accomplishments. In addition, we would like to thank Ms. Koch for her CAS supervision and inspiration.

Another area of active student engagement remains our dedicated Model United Nations Club. Over the course of the last 4 months, our students have written position papers, developed strategies for group collaboration with peers from across the globe online, and delivered formal remarks as part of a leadership position in formal committees. With four UN simulations behind them, including one at Harvard and one in London, and two upcoming conferences this Spring, our students continue to develop their ability to engage topics of global importance. Moreover, these students are using these simulations to develop their own unique leadership style, through delivering their insights and analysis on a wide variety of international topics such as human rights, international governance, and globalization. Most recently our very own former School Captain and Grade 11 student, Alma, received the Diplomacy Award as part of her contributions in the latest Model UN simulation in London. The award is the highest possible accolade bestowed to participants and was awarded to Alma based on her engagement in the Security Council simulation. Congratulations to Alma on this tremendous achievement! We are also pleased to report that our Junior Model UN members are also experiencing their first taste of UN simulations, having just competed their first Model UN conference in Berlin. We would like to thank the entire student team as well as Ms. Malinowski for their dedication and commitment. Their work is truly inspiring!

We hope you have enjoyed reading about our current developments and the accomplishments we all can be proud of. We would like to wish all BMS students a wonderful start to their learning after Spring break, and wish them all the best of success in their upcoming exams and assessments!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Silke Friedrich', with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Silke Friedrich