

MORRIS BRANDON ES

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Greetings!

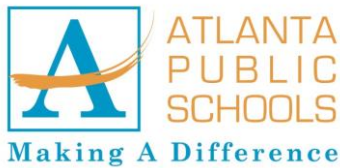
We're off to an exciting year here in the hive. If you are a new family to Brandon, please add me to the list of many people to extend a warm welcome to you – we are glad to have you here! It is my hope that you have experienced the welcoming culture we have developed here at Brandon.

For those not familiar with me, I am Sam De Carlo – the newly-appointed International Baccalaureate (IB) Specialist for the school. I've been part of the Brandon family for 12 years – I started my time here as a 4th grade teacher for four years, and then a 5th grade teacher the remainder of those years. I arrived just after Morris Brandon was authorized as an IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) World School and have seen and contributed to the great strides we continue to make to be a truly authentic and transparent IB PYP World School where we imbed inquiry-based concept units that teach students to be inquirers along with many other attributes taught as part of an IB education.

For those new to IB, you may have many questions about this program. And, throughout the year, I will feature different standards and practices of the program to give you a better breadth of knowledge. In the meantime, I will share that it is the mission of IB to create a better world through education. It is an international program offered at schools world-wide. It comprises of 4 programs – PYP, MYP (grades 6-10), and CP or DP (grades 11-12) – that focus on teaching students to think critically and independently, and how to inquire with care and logic. An IB education prepares students to succeed in a world where facts and fiction continually merge in the news and where asking the right questions is a meaningful and applicable skill.

In the North Atlanta Cluster – and soon to be most of Atlanta Public Schools – students are fortunate to have the opportunity to receive an IB education from Kindergarten through graduation. And North Atlanta HS students who have graduated with an IB Diploma are continually accepted to the most prestigious colleges and university in the nation.

At our level, the PYP focuses on the whole child as an inquirer in school and beyond. It develops students' academic and social-emotional well-being. In classrooms each day at Brandon, students are learning social-emotional skills to build relationships with each other and their teachers; teachers also plan inquiry-based units centered around common themes that incorporate local and global issues. For example, in 1st grade, students are learning that their perspective of the world can change just from reading good literature. Earlier in the week, I spent time talking to the curious and enthusiastic 1st graders in Ms. Casey Hice's room, and students were surprised to learn from literature – *It's Back to School We Go* by Ellen Jackson - that first grade students in Japan clean their classroom until it's spotless every day, they eat different food for lunch in the cafeteria, and the students share in the responsibility in preparing lunch for the school! Very different compared to their days at Brandon. At first, it was many 's



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initial reaction to say “ewww” when they learned that the main dish of the day was rice with seaweed sauce. This moment was used to share with students that just because they do not like something does not mean that everybody dislikes it too, and different is OK. This moment was used to present a question of inquiry to students – what would first grade students in Japan think if we were to tell them what we eat for lunch here in America? As the students in the class thought about that question, perspective was changing for many of them. I left them with a closing sentence frame to use throughout their unit and their teachers will also be using throughout the unit when discussing their readings – “I used to think _____, but now I think _____”.

In the coming days and throughout the year, take some time to inquire of your child about the stories they are reading in class and what the central idea of their current IB unit is. I guarantee you will be impressed, if not amazed, at how their perspective is changing when they learn that not all people in the world experience life in the same way. And it is through sound teaching practices coupled with an open-mind and open-heart that students begin to learn and apply Social-Emotional concepts with the information they are learning in class to gain a sense of empathy when approaching learning and inquiry about other cultures.

As the year progresses, feel free to reach out to me anytime with questions about IB – my phone number and email are below. If you are interested in serving on this year’s IB committee to contribute to the day-to-day student culture of Morris Brandon, please also get in contact with me. The time commitment is as much as you are willing and able to give and will pay dividends to continuing our journey of education excellence and keeping Brandon “the place to BEE”.

Namaste,
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