



BAES Buzz

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Mission Statement

The Banjul American Embassy School is an accredited international school providing a meaningful, rigorous American curriculum in a global context. In partnership with the local and international community, we empower students to become enthusiastic, creative, lifelong learners who value integrity, cultural diversity, and global responsibility.

Message from the Director

Dear BAES Family:

It seems the whole world is struggling to make sense of the unexpected outcome of this week's US presidential election. As BAES is a school with an American identity, I feel it is important that we share a clear understanding of who we are and what we stand for as a school community. We are proud to be an American school and proud to share in our beloved American traditions, just as we are proud to welcome students from all identities and backgrounds and celebrate the beautifully diverse traditions and perspectives that all our students bring.

As you know, we are considering changing our name from the Banjul American Embassy School to the Banjul American *International* School. I share some more information and perspective about this idea on the next page. But I want to make it clear that whether we remain BAES or become BAIS, we will continue to pursue the same mission and vision. As our Mission Statement states, we at BAES seek to "empower students to become enthusiastic, creative, lifelong learners who value integrity, cultural diversity, and global responsibility." As we state in our Vision, we want all BAES students to "embrace peace and diversity." Our Belief Statements affirm that every child "is a valued, unique individual...entitled to a safe and supportive learning environment," and that "community values must be respected and promoted." And our Profile of Graduates states that we strive for every BAES student to be "global-minded" and "caring," to "actively contribute toward a democratic society with an abiding respect for the earth and its resources," and to "exhibit compassion and respect for differences among people." As diverse as we are, our entire school community shares in these values. I'm honored to be part of the dedicated team of educators working every day to put these values into practice.

Caleb Steindam, Director

BAES or BAIS?

This week I sent out a survey to see how our school community feels about the idea of changing our name to the Banjul American *International* School. Thanks to those who have already responded. It is important to me to have input from as many members of our school community as possible, so please fill out the survey if you have not done so already:

<https://goo.gl/forms/kRK5fyP6qu77xuyy1>

I will keep the survey open until this coming Tuesday (November 15th).

As the survey form explains, the change we are considering would be in name only and would not affect our educational program, our accreditation status, our relationship with the US Embassy, or our grant funding from the US State Department Office of Overseas Schools. There would be no major costs or legal obstacles to changing our name. The decision comes down to which name we as a school community feel best represents us to the rest of the world. Whatever we decide, we are and will continue to be “an accredited international school providing a meaningful, rigorous American curriculum in a global context.”

As we mull over this decision, I’d like to provide some context on what it means to be a US-supported international school. We are one of 193 schools in the world, and one of 41 schools in Africa, that receives financial assistance from the US State Department Office of Overseas Schools. The purpose of this financial assistance is to ensure that the families of US government employees have access to high-quality schools throughout the world. Fortunately for us, this financial assistance benefits all of us equally, not only our American students.

One of the ways we ensure that we provide a high-quality educational program that is both American and international, is by designing our curriculum using the AERO standards. AERO stands for “American Education Reaches Out.” The US Office of Overseas Schools developed this set of curriculum standards specifically for American international schools like BAES. These standards are intended for international contexts and diverse student populations, but they align with the Common Core State Standards, which are currently used in more than 40 US states. This means that the skills and concepts students learn at AERO schools are similar to those they would be learning in the US through Common Core.

Counting BAES, there are 41 US-supported international schools in Africa (full list here: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/os/c58172.htm>). 14 of them have “American International School” in their name. 12 schools (not counting ours) identify as “American” by name but not “international.” And twelve schools’ names include the word “international” but not “American.” We are the only school in Africa with the word “embassy” in the name (not that there’s anything wrong with being different!).

Thank you for making your voice heard as we contemplate this important decision.

Expository Writing Assessments

We will administer our second school-wide writing assessment for 1st through 9th graders this coming Tuesday and Wednesday, November 15th and 16th. This will be an assessment of students' expository (informational/explanatory) writing skills. The format will be similar to last month's narrative writing assessment. Students will have 45 minutes each day to develop their essays. The first day will be spent on prewriting and the first draft, and the second day will be spent on revising, proofreading, and writing the final draft. These essays will be again be assessed by members of the Writing Assessment Committee using a rubric based on 6 Traits +1 framework for writing instruction. We will complete another round of narrative and expository writing assessments later in the year, which will provide excellent opportunity to see our students' growth as writers over the course of the school year.

The writing assessments will begin by 8:15am Tuesday and Wednesday, so it's very important (even more than usual!) that our 1st through 9th grade students arrive on time and prepared on those days.



Celebrations of Learning

We are proud and excited that we are now holding Celebrations of Learning under the canopy every Friday from 11:45am to 12:15pm. On November 4th (our first Celebration of Learning under the canopy), we enjoyed a double feature with presentations from both the Grade 1 and Grade 4-5 classes. Both classes gave us student-led presentations highlighting their learning in the core subjects of English language arts, math, science, and social studies. I asked some of the students from these classes how they felt about their Celebration of Learning experience after it was over. Several of them felt nervous before and even during the presentation, but they all felt very good about it in the end. Jessie (grade 1) told me, "I was kind of nervous, but I thought I could handle it," and 4th grader Kelechi says she felt "nervous and excited" to present her work in the Celebration of Learning. Divine (grade 4) added, "It was very scary for me, and it was very educational because we got to share with the whole school what we have learned." Ruke (grade 1) expressed appreciation for Grade 4's roller coaster projects, and she also said "I liked how our class shared what we've been learning in class." Liliane (grade 1) summed up her classmates' feelings about the Celebration of Learning when she commented, "I think it was great!"

This week on Friday, November 11, we were given a real treat as all of our students from pre-K through middle school contributed to the Celebration of Learning for music class under the direction of Mr. Daniel. Next week (Friday, November 18th), Middle School Science will be featured. And the Early Childhood classes (pre-K and kindergarten) will lead the Celebration of Learning on Friday, December 9th. (There will be no Celebrations of Learning on November 24th or December 2nd due to the Thanksgiving holiday and the election.)

PTO Update

The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) had a productive meeting at Ngala Lodge Thursday night. Here are some of the exciting events and initiatives we are planning:

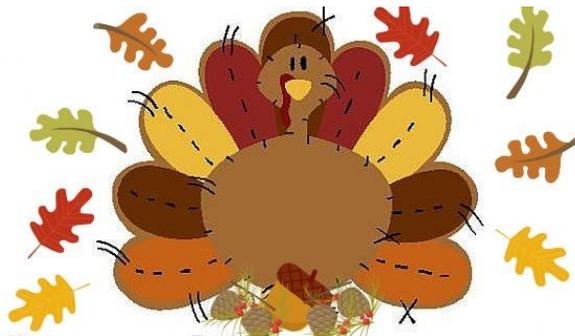
- On **December 10th** we will have a **Christmas Festival** with featuring fun activities for the whole family.
- Our next **Movie Night** will be on **Friday, January 20th**.
- We've begun planning an event we're calling **BAES Olympics** to be held on Saturday, **February 11th**. This event will be held at MRC, and we will invite other schools to join us.
- The PTO is working on arranging a **Scholastic Book Order** and will update you as they figure out details.

Congratulations to Muna Morrill, who has been voted in as PTO co-president! Muna joins Co-President Cassie Banna along with Vice President Sandra Amalfi, Treasurer Barbara Banda, PTO Board Liaison Edith Nziki, and Teacher Representative Leah Woldman.

Changes to 2016-17 Calendar

BAES will be closed on Thursday and Friday, December 1st and 2nd, for the Gambian election. To make up for some of this lost instructional time, we are extending the school year by one day in the summer. Our last day of the 2016-17 school year will be Friday, June 23rd, 2017. Thursday, June 22nd, will be a full school day.

Our scheduled holidays remained unchanged. Winter Break begins Saturday, December 17th, and we resume school on Monday, January 9th, 2017.



Thanksgiving is Around the Corner!

The US Thanksgiving holiday, Thursday, November 24th, will be a half-day for students, and we will have no school Friday the 25th.

Student Council is planning some fun activities for the whole school to enjoy on Thanksgiving Day! Your Student Council representatives will share more information soon about this exciting event.

Halloween Movie Night

Halloween Movie Night was our first big PTO-organized event of the 2016-17 school year. It was a *spook-tacular* success! We are grateful to the parents and teachers who worked very hard to make this event a success! It was fun having the Marines with us leading some games, as well as many other guests and friends from outside of BAES.

I enjoyed speaking with BAES students about Halloween Movie Night. Abdul Aziz (grade 8) commented, "I quite liked the movie, the costumes, and how the rooms and doors were designed for Halloween." Audrey (grade 1) thought that "the movie was pretty funny," and her classmate Jessie added that she enjoyed the trick-or-treating. Cisy (grade 2) said, "I had fun because I like scary things and I liked the movie." Enoo (grade 2) added, "I really liked the movie, and the costume parade was fun." Relive the fun with these photos!





NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

Name	DOB
Liliane (Grade 1)	November 1
Omar Sarge (Security Staff)	November 11
Kelvin (Grade 8)	November 19
Sainabou (Pre-K)	November 25
Mr. Badjie (French teacher)	November 25
Raya (Grade 6)	November 26

