



During the event © Franziska Henkes

BCS kicks off the first welcome BBQ for new families!

Laughs were shared, and maps were quickly pulled out to share places and ask advice.

I moved around a lot - and still do -, so I have experienced a lot of different schools. The school culture of the States, however, stuck with me the most. The welcoming atmosphere and the school spirit is deeply ingrained in their society, and something that I still long for here. When I came to BCS, there was nothing outside of a coffee morning. This is fine, of course, but I felt like there could be something more.

Parents and guardians should be welcomed into the school environment which their children now find themselves in. This heightens the parents' awareness of what the atmosphere is like, and introduces them to teachers or those who run things behind the scenes, like upper management. Furthermore, this event itself allowed them to create connections with others who are in the same place as them: those in a new environment.



Two of the volunteers posing before the event © Franziska Henkes

The event itself was planned with help of Ms. Layanna and Mr. Fanore, who gave input and helped with logistics, like the food planning or getting the back courtyard for an evening. I got some student volunteers from varying grades. These student volunteers also made the event possible - they helped make the food, set up, clean up, made the welcome sign, etc..

Helping out at the drink stand I first got to interact with a parent. He's from Brazil, new to Berlin, and, as typically Berlin, struggling to find his way in the oversaturated housing market

here. Not to fear, sir, I know you'll find the perfect place. It takes a while in Berlin sometimes, but it truly does have a perfectly fitting place for all.

The drink stand is where I interacted with parents the most. However, what I enjoyed nearly even more was seeing how quickly and easily they all mingled with one another. It took only a couple minutes before they mixed with one another at the tables. Laughs were shared, and maps were quickly pulled out to share places and ask advice. Speeches and toasts were given, and the event went by quickly. This is always a good sign, because it means that the atmosphere was good.

All in all, the first barbecue was definitely a success. Parents enjoyed themselves and the good food, and the children that came along seemed comfortable as well. The weather was definitely on our side, because it wasn't that cold for it being nearly November. I'm glad the school allowed me the opportunity to host such an event.



New families enjoying a conversation together © Franziska Henkes

Events such as this create a school community by bringing new families together, and by showing them the setting they will now be in for the foreseeable future. They get a sense of the space their children will be in - it draws them into the environment and can let them join this part of their children's lives. This is not to suggest that parents or guardians should be in every aspect of their children's lives, but to merely observe a place that the children will be in for a majority of the time is enough to understand and be "involved", as opposed to detached.

I will use this as an opportunity to state that I believe events similar to this should be more common. A parent noted that they hoped BCS does more things like this, and wondered if there would be an event like a Christmas market. I think that it is entirely possible, and that student-lead events should be encouraged. Events create a school community, and it creates school spirit. It also creates an opportunity for parents and guardians to observe and be involved - something the barbecue succeeded in. These families were introduced to what BCS is, and could be. We have shows like the ones held in winter and summer, but festivities like a Christmas market, or an end-of-the-year-BBQ, international fair, or even a market is what creates a stronger, more involved BCS community.

With the finishing of such a successful event, I hope that BCS will utilize the opportunity to do more things like this.

A massive shout-out to Franziska Henkes for photographing the event. The credit of these photographs goes entirely to her.