

MICDS Induction Ceremony

Head of School Remarks: "The Poetry of St. Louis"

September 5, 2019

How wonderful it is to see our entire school community gathered here today! How grateful I feel to be here with all 1,245 of you students, and how excited I am to connect with each of you this year, and in the many years to come, by knowing your individual names and your unique stories.

Speaking of names, let's see a show of hands if your first name – the name that people call you – begins with the letter "M." Hold them high so I can count you all. 1, 2, 3, 4, 92. I am a very quick counter. That's 92 students whose names start with "M." 6 Maxs, 6 Mayas, 5 Maggies, 5 Mias, 5 Morgans, and many more of you besides. Lots of "M" names. I can't wait to know all of you!

Now raise your hand if your first name begins with the letter "I." That looks like approximately 27 of you, I would say. 6 Isabelles, 3 Isabellas, 4 Isaacs, 3 Ians, 2 Ishans, and more besides. I can't wait to know all of you, too!

How about "C" names? Where are those hands? That looks like approximately 101 of you, I would say. 6 Charlies, 5 Carters, 4 Camerons, 4 Charlottes, 4 Coopers, and many more besides. I can't wait to know all of you.

Now put your hand in the air if you have a "D" name. 1, 2, 3, 4... 32! 4 Daniels, 2 Danielles, 3 Dominics, and more besides. I can't wait to know all of you, too. What about "S" names? Get those hands up! Looks like approximately 104 of you have names that begin with "S." 8 Sams, 6 Sarahs, 6 Sophias, 5 Spencers, 3 Stellas, 3 Sameers, and many more besides. I can't wait to know all of you.

So altogether, 356 of you have names that begin with M, I, C, D, or S. But 887 of you have an M, I, C, D, or S somewhere in your first name, even if it's not your first initial. And an impressive 1,166 of you have M, I, C, D, or S somewhere in your first and last names put together. That's 94% of you!

And if you are part of that special 6% that has no M, I, C, D, or S in your full name, you are still every bit as important to our community as those who do. That's the wonderful thing about MICDS. All of us belong here, and here belongs to all of us.

Names are endlessly fascinating to me because they can connect us to each other and distinguish us from each other at the very same time. For example, an impressive 172 of you are connected through first names that begin with the letter “A,” and an amazing 870 of you are connected by having the letter “A” somewhere in your first name. But only 34 of you are distinguished by having 3 As in your first name – like Aadhya and Anagayle and Natasha and Shamara. Only 1 of you, Nanayaa, is distinguished with 4 As, just as only 1 of you, Aanjaneyaa, is distinguished with 5 As. I cannot wait to know all of you.

Or how about the letter “E”? 84 of you are connected by having “E” as your first initial, and 612 of you are connected with at least one “E” in your first name. Of these, 7 are distinguished with 3 Es in your name – Chereen, Estephanie, Everdine, Katherine Rose, Renee, Taehee, and Terrence – and only 1 of you, Ellemieke, has four Es. I cannot wait to know all of you.

There are 19 Jacks connected by that most common first name at MICDS this year, but each of you is distinguished by a different last name. There are also 13 Alexs, 12 Henrys, 11 Wills, 10 Hannahs, 9 Evans, 8 Chloes, 7 Carolines, 6 Avas, 5 Sophies, 4 Catherines with a “C,” 3 Kais, and 2 Levis – all connected by common first names, but all distinguished by unique last names.

694 of you are connected to at least one other MICDS student with your same first name. And the other 552 of you who are distinguished by a first name that is unique in our community are nevertheless connected, I have noticed, by rhythm and rhyme. At MICDS, we have:

1 Barbara, 1 Bowen, 1 Sanjana, 1 Nell,
1 Borna, 1 Brooklyn, 1 Sonia, 1 Elle,

1 Courtney, 1 Anya, 1 Gordon, 1 Vanik,
1 Carly, 1 Arya, 1 Garren, 1 Anik,

1 Addie, 1 Cody, 1 Adam, 1 Emina,
1 Anny, 1 Carrie, 1 Ittmum, 1 Leena.

I could go on and on. Your beautiful names make the poetry so easy! Your beautiful names are the poetry of St. Louis.

You arrive to us every day from more than 70 ZIP codes in our region. This exceptional place that we call MICDS is our city in miniature, and our opportunity here is to be the strongest St. Louis in all of St. Louis – to bring our distinctive names and to tell our unique stories from across this region, and to dignify and embrace each other’s

distinctive names and stories here as well. Our different names and stories do not divide us. Quite the opposite. Our different names and stories are the very richness and strength of our community. They are our gifts to one another.

My wish for you this year, and in our years together to come, is that you will be as curious about one another as I am curious about each of you – your unique names and stories. My wish is that you will be as delighted at the sight of one another, of being in the company of one another, as I am delighted every day at the sight of each of you, and of being in the company of each of you. My wish for you is that you will be as in awe of one another as I am in awe of each of you.

I wish you inquisitive minds, open hearts, and fearless souls, this year and in the years to come. Always reason, always compassion, always courage. Together. We are MICDS – we are Rams Nation – and it is my joy and my privilege to lead this extraordinary school forward with you.

(Note: Some student names with different spellings but similar pronunciations were grouped for the purpose of these remarks.)