



**Carl Sandburg Middle School/Robbinsdale Cooper High School: Partner Schools delivering the 5-year *International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program***

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Sandburg Middle School is a public school located in Robbinsdale Area School District #281, a suburban district northwest of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Named for the poet Carl Sandburg, who attended the school's dedication in 1959, Sandburg Middle School educates approximately 1,050 students in grades six through eight. In total, 48% report as minority. Approximately 47% of Sandburg's student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch. In the MYP itself, there are approximately 22% students of color and 11% who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Opening over 45 years ago, the school has since dedicated itself to diverse, progressive and inclusive learning programs. Sandburg Middle School was among the first schools in Minnesota to offer such gender-indiscriminate classes as home economics for boys and basketball programs for girls. Over the past decade, much larger populations of immigrant and refugee families have moved to the northwest suburbs. As a result, Sandburg has proudly and confidently reflected an increasingly diverse student population with an ever-growing, large English Language Learner (ELL) program. Students from 53 countries (first or second generation) are currently represented in the school. Seventy-seven international flags hanging in the hallways are a testimony to the countries of students who have attended Sandburg. The school's progressive curricula and dedicated staff have embraced the changing student demographic.

Since 1999, the school has hosted the district's *International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program [IBMYP]* whose curriculum, objectives and philosophy comply with the highest international educational standards. The program, currently with 406 students in grades 6, 7 and 8, and another 147 or so students in grades 9 and 10 at Robbinsdale Cooper, the partner high school, focuses on developmentally sound, real-life applications of curriculum for young people. It promotes communication, intercultural awareness and a holistic, multiple-perspective view of knowledge through curricular content, skills and attitude.

***Sandburg is now moving to a 'full-school' program; this year's entire grade 6 is MYP. We will add the full 7<sup>th</sup> grade next year, then 8<sup>th</sup> the following year. We will maintain a rigorous application tier for highly motivated students at all three grades.***

**Number of total students in school(SMS):** 1,050: grades 6-8  
**Number of total MYP students in IBMYP:** 407: grades 6-8 (SMS); 146: grades 9-10 (CHS); 72 IB Prep(CHS)  
**How long an MYP school:** implemented in 1999, authorized in 2004

**Change in reputation because of MYP:** *Sandburg and Cooper were looking for a challenging and balanced academic program that would attract and maintain capable students. Both schools have been perceived by the community as the “disadvantaged” schools in the district, largely because of their higher levels of racial and socio-economic diversity, and a rising number of itinerant families. With the introduction of the MYP (and IB Diploma program at CHS), the schools have leveled the playing field in many ways; MYP has contributed to stabilizing the population and offering new opportunities for student development.*

**Change in school culture because of IB:** *MYP is an international program; consequently, it promotes cultural awareness and appreciation, tolerance of differences, strong communication skills, content knowledge and multiple perspectives of world issues and events, and setting and achieving high personal and academic standards. Teachers who directly instruct MYP students report that “the blinders have come off” both students and teachers as they are able to maintain an increased pace while dealing with motivated learners. The program contributes significantly to the entire school through curriculum development and integration, teaching practices, a human rights curriculum, community service, and assessment practices.*

**How are IB students engaged in the life of the school?** *MYP students are among the most involved students in both schools, taking part in every club, activity, organization and sport. They also have a rich extra-curricular and after-school life, participating in private music lessons, civic organizations, volunteering, plays, contests, and so on.*

**From where do students come to attend the program?** *Students come from all 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools (for the 9-10 classes) in the Robbinsdale district, and from private and public schools in other metro districts on an open enrollment basis, as space allows. Currently, we have 42 students in grades 6-8 who were not attending Robbinsdale District 281 schools, and 26 in grades 9/10. Once they come, they tend to stay for the duration of the program.*

**Parent Involvement?** *Like their students, IB parents tend to be positive and productive contributors to the school culture. There is an MYP Parent Advisory Group (PAC) at both schools that meets monthly with the coordinators to share ideas and suggestions for the program. They run parent nights to inform and give/garner support for program activities and policies; they plan and host events, such as an annual welcome picnic for new MYP students and fundraisers for items or activities that enhance the curriculum, and they advocate for the program at all levels.*

**Do you have an application process?** *While Sandburg is in the process of changing to a full-school MYP format, we currently use an application process for the more rigorous “challenge tier.” The application includes a general information page, teacher recommendations, reading and math scores (6<sup>th</sup> grade), a copy of the most recent report card (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades), a student writing sample (essay with choice of 3 prompts), a paragraph about motivation to join the program (by student), a parent piece about the student (not scored), and an optional student demographic information page. If students successfully complete the 8<sup>th</sup> grade MYP, they are automatically enrolled in Cooper’s MYP for grades 9/10.*

IBMYP at Sandburg Middle and Cooper High has achieved its original aims and more. The two schools have now steadily drawn and retained students who care strongly about their educational opportunities. This attitude and a general level of strong achievement have raised the bar for both schools’ populations. Students are motivated, thorough learners with a sense of direction. While “normal” in all ways important to kids, these students nonetheless take personal responsibility and understand the value of “rising to the occasion” as concerns their futures. The reputation of the program has attracted families who have high academic expectations and actively participate in the education process at all levels.

**For further information regarding Robbinsdale Cooper High School’s IB Diploma Program, please contact Holly Lewis, IB Coordinator at CHS: [holly\\_lewis@rdale.k12.mn.us](mailto:holly_lewis@rdale.k12.mn.us) 763-504-8684 or see the Robbinsdale Cooper school profile in this packet.**