



BLAKE BLUE NOTE

April – May 2015

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PTSA President’s Remarks

Paul Girolami

There’s much to do in the next few months and we need your help.

Nominations for PTSA officers for the 2015-2016 school year are now being accepted, and several other volunteer opportunities need to be filled for next year. At the PTSA Executive Board meeting on April 21, representatives of the Nominating Committee presented the following slate of individuals who have volunteered to serve as PTSA officers for the 2015-2016 school year:

President: VACANT **We need someone to fill this position – it could be you!!!**

Executive Vice President: Abby Sandler

Vice President, Communications: Sharon Ramsey

Secretary: Betsy Sirk

Treasurer: Jamila Mathis

We will continue to accept nominations during April and May, and you may nominate someone or yourself the night of our May 14 meeting, when elections will take place. We need you to attend and vote!

If being an officer is not your first choice, we have positions available for several committees, including: Membership, After Prom, Blue Note Editor, EubieMail, Book Sale, Grocery Receipts, Reflections, Scholarships, Cultural Arts, Graduation Events, Student Directory, and Volunteer Coordinator.

Prom and After Prom are only weeks away! This year we need 160+ adult volunteers to help staff the After Prom to ensure that our kids are safe and supervised while having the time of their lives. Use Sign-in Genius at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0d4aa5ab2f4-2015> to choose one or more slots.

The **10th grade parent meeting** is scheduled for Thursday, April 23, at 6:30 p.m. in the Amphitheater.

Staff appreciation events are planned for May and June. Please watch EubieMail for ways you can help.

Our NAACP Parents' Council meets May 14 at 6:00 p.m. in the Media Center, followed by the PTSA general meeting and elections at 7:00 p.m. See the article on page 6 for more news about the Parents' Council activities.

Deadline for PTSA scholarships is April 30, 2015. See the application online at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/schools/blakehs/news/PTSA%202015%20scholarship%20application.pdf> or Mrs. Moore in the Career and Counseling Center for more information.

Streetlights have been installed along Norwood Road and are working! The PTSA successfully lobbied for these lights and we continue to advocate for sidewalks to make it even safer for our students to get to and from school. See the article on page 7 about how Blake parents spoke at recent hearings for increased bus transportation along Norwood Road.

Peer-parent grade coordinators: Thank you to this year's peer-parent representatives for coordinating the many parent grade meetings the PTSA sponsored this year:

9th grade: Lori Goodwin

10th grade: Sheila Holmes and Betsy Sirk

11th grade: Sue Present and Abby Sandler

12th grade: Melvin Moore

It's never too early to join next year's PTSA. Join online at <http://www.blakeptsa.org/join-online/> or fill out a membership form and leave it at the school office.

And be sure to **tell other parents to join our listserv** by sending an e-mail to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Blake_High_School_PTSA.

We're only as strong as our active parent base. Be sure to volunteer your time and talent today to PTSA.

Principal's Perspective

Christopher Berry

April and May are always the busiest month in a high school and these months are especially hopping Blake. Our annual spring events include The Festival of Arts and Humanities; athletics; instrumental, choral and dance concerts; HSA and AP exams; Academic Awards Night; Athletic Awards Night; and, of course, Prom, After Prom, and (this year) graduation on June 10. As the weather has turned warm recently, school spirit certainly runs high!

Advance Placement testing: A near record number of our students will take **Advanced Placement exams** during the May 4-15 testing window. Specific schedules will be given to students by their teachers. We continue to be fortunate in being able to use the Peoples Community Baptist Church, just up Norwood Road, as our off-site testing center. High School Assessments (HSA) will be administered the week of May 19 (with make-ups the following week) to students enrolled only in Biology and NSL Government. With the onset of the PARCC exams, the HSA's in Algebra and English have gone away. Students not involved in testing may arrive to school on a special delayed opening schedule. Additional information will be sent home with students in a separate letter, as well. **HSA testing** remains a graduation requirement for students taking those courses. Teachers work hard to prepare Blake students and they have consistently done extremely well on the HSAs.

PARCC exam: Blake High School, along with the other MCPS high schools have been participating in the initial examination of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam. Students in Algebra 1, Algebra 2 and English 10 were designated by the State of Maryland to take the PARCC exams in March and currently now in April. While many parents, teacher and students continue to have reservations about the duration and challenge of the exams, I must complement our students on their willingness to do their best on these exams. My hope is that the state and the PARCC consortium will closely examine the impact on instructional time of these tests, and perhaps scale back the time commitment they require. Certainly we will take our "lessons learned" from this testing administration and put them into practice next year as we seek to improve on this measure of our student's preparedness for college and the world of work.

With spring, also comes **end of year activities** which are of particular significance to our graduating seniors. A packet of very important information was distributed at the Senior Parent meeting on April 1. The PowerPoint presentation from this meeting is now posted on our school website. Please download this as it addresses many issues specific to Senior Academics, Prom, After Prom, and Graduation. This is a critical time of year for seniors. Attendance still counts to the very end of the senior year. Parents need to pay attention to Student Service Learning hours, as well as completion of courses needed for graduation, including those taken in High School Plus. Counselors are the best resources to be certain students are on track to walk across the stage at DAR Constitution Hall. But even our most capable seniors need to be reminded that "senioritis" is not a real word (even if it seems like a real phenomenon) and while they have worked hard, high school isn't over and this is not the time to slack off and let things slide. Just ask the students who are put on academic probation and told they need to take summer programs before they enter college based on poor second semester grades.

The **senior celebrations** include the **Athletic Awards on May 19. Academic Awards night is May 20**, when many of our students are honored for their academic achievements. Final exams **for seniors only** are from May 18 (review day) until May 22, which is the last school day for seniors. **Mandatory Graduation Rehearsal is Tuesday, June 9 at 7:30 a.m. Any student who is not at graduation rehearsal may not walk at graduation; the rehearsal is a non-negotiable expectation.** Graduation is at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 10 at DAR Constitution Hall. We have been designated a morning graduation ceremony this year as determined by a lottery system MCPS uses with all of its high schools. While guests traveling to DAR to get to the ceremony should leave plenty of extra time, remembering that there is not much parking available. Consider checking out the PTSA Bus for a \$21.00 fee: <http://www.blakeptsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/blakegraduationbusform.pdf>.

Drugs and alcohol have no place in any student activities. The stakes are particularly high for graduating seniors this time of year. Talk with your children to make sure they are perfectly clear about the activities (including the graduation ceremony) they stand to miss should they decide to partake in illegal substances, in addition to the high stakes for their safety, as well as legal action. Our utmost concern is to keep our students safe, providing events and activities that are drug-free and alcohol-free.

The **Junior/Senior Prom** is set for Friday, May 8 at Samuel Riggs IV, Alumni Center, UM-College Park, with the **After Prom** immediately following at the Mid-County Recreation Center on Queensguard Road. This is a very special evening for students and a critically important time to remind them to be safe and smart. We have been very fortunate the past five years that most of our students acted responsibly and we have not had to face the potential tragedies that Prom Night can bring. Although Blake staff consistently reinforce responsible decision-making to students, students need to be reminded that they are not invincible, that drinking and use of other illegal substances don't mix with driving.

Unfortunately, we did have incidents involving alcohol at a recent year's Prom. This not only ruined prom night for a small group of students, but also involved disciplinary action, a loss of senior privileges and, in a few cases, police charges. As a reminder, **any student who shows up at the Prom under the influence of or who has alcohol or drugs in their limo or car in which they were a passenger will have his/her parents called to pick them up and they will not be admitted to After Prom under any circumstances.** I strongly suggest parents talk to their children about a Plan B if their children's peers decide to drink. A phone call to come get a child is preferable to the ramifications of guilt by association. This message will be reinforced to juniors and seniors through class meetings and pre-Prom assembly.

The **spring sports** season is an extremely successful one for the large number of students participating in sports and supporting each other. This investment of time and energy has positive payoffs for student athletes in teambuilding, camaraderie, skill development, and most importantly good sportsmanship. I hope parents and students alike will continue to come out and cheer on our student athletes.

The warm weather may have come late this year, but we have a real need to monitor and **reinforce positive student behavior** for our "restless natives." Please help us reinforce school rules and policies such as keeping cell phones off and out of sight during the school day, which is MCPS (and State of Maryland) policy. We have had great success in the past few years with our policy of allowing students to use their phones strictly at lunchtime, but as a result we have been more adamant about having them off and away during instruction time. Unfortunately, we have parents who call students during the day on their cell phones. Please call the main office at 301-879-1300 if you need to leave a message or wait until lunchtime (10:53 to 11:42 a.m.) or after 2:10 p.m. to call your child's cell phone. Cell phones are an

ever-present issue during the school day with text-messaging, cheating on exams, inappropriate photos being taken as well as the temptation for theft. Please do not set your child up to have their phone sent to the main office by calling during the school day.

Other issues encountered more often in spring include students failing to get to class on time, and attendance problems. The tardy issue seems to grow exponentially as warm weather (and love) seems to slow down student incentives to be on time for class. Please remind your children that being on time to class is a minimum expectation that certainly would not be tolerated in the world of work. We always stress with students that the first five minutes of class are often the most important.

Likewise, please monitor your child's attendance in school. A student is NEVER permitted to leave campus during the school day without preapproved permission. If you receive an autodial call at night indicating an absence from one or more periods, it is always a good practice to confirm with the attendance office about the nature of the absence if you can't account for this with your child or if you have a suspicion that your child is being less than honest about her/his whereabouts. A confirmation call only takes a minute, whereas a conversation with a teacher and administrator about unexcused absences is difficult and embarrassing for all concerned. More problematic is that teachers are not required to accept work when a student's absence is unexcused, which can be a serious consequence. There is no substitute for being in class.

Lastly, **dress code violations** become a real issue as the weather gets warmer. Halter tops, tube tops, exposed underwear, bare midriff tops, and extremely short skirts are some of the issues we deal with repeatedly from our young ladies. This, frankly, makes for an environment that is distracting and not conducive for learning. How your daughter leaves for school in the morning may not be how she appears once she gets to school. Likewise, boys should not wear sleeveless tank-tops or pants that reveal undergarments. We always have spare t-shirts for loan. In addition, the new t-shirts with double-entendre messages can be offensive and inappropriate for school, as well as shirts with drug, alcohol, or sexual implications.

I hope you and your family enjoy all of the wonderful routines of spring and the anticipation of the summer to come. Blake's traditions, its support for students, its dedicated parents and staff make me realize how in some ways we are rare and in others we are a unique high school. For those parents of seniors, I thank you for your tireless dedication to our school, your willingness to support what we do as educators every day and, mostly, trusting us with your most prized possession – your children.

Bengals Golf Classic set for September 24, 2015

SAVE THE DATE!

The 10th Annual Bengal Classic Golf Tournament will be held on Thursday, September, 24, 2015 at Hampshire Greens. Mark your calendars and spread the word! We want to include as many past, present and future Bengals in this annual fundraising event for the Blake Athletic Booster Club!

More details will follow in the coming months. Questions or want to be a volunteer? Please contact Alumni Parent Laura Matusek at laura_matusek@comcast.net. Go Bengals!!



Cheer Squad Day Camp, April 25

Please join the Blake Bengals Cheer Squad on Saturday, April 25th, 2015, from 9:00 a.m. until noon, when it will be hosting their Bengals Cheer Day Camp. All participants, grades K—12, will be taught a short, age-appropriate, routine from current Bengals Cheer team members. The campers will show off their dances at the end of the camp for all family and friends at 11:30 a.m. Each participant will receive poms, a snack, as well as a picture to remember the day. The cost for each participant is \$25 on or before April 24, or \$35 at the door. Cheer day camp t-shirts also will be on sale at the camp for \$10 each, or for preorder below. Interested participants are able to contact the Blake HS Cheer Coach Ms. Victoria White (blakejuniorvarsity@gmail.com) or Blake High School's Athletic Director Jared Fribush (Jared_B_Fribush@mcpsmd.org) for more information.

Blake HS NAACP Parents' Council Announcements

The March NAACP Parent Council meeting convened right before the monthly PTSA meeting. Mr. Diallo K. Radway, Blake parent of six and Financial Planner at the World Financial Group, spoke about "The Basic Principles of Building a Financial Foundation." The main point was to "save early and often."

At the meeting, we also received a short update on the Blake Academic Intervention program from Dr. Daniel. On March 31, the Montgomery County, MD Section of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), in conjunction with the Blake NAACP Parents' Council, sponsored the Q3 Blake Academic Intervention Awards ceremony. Students enrolled in this program had GPAs less than 2.0 in Q2. The students were awarded certificates, gift cards, and Blake Bengal coins for achieving the Q3 goal of GPAs above 2.0. One student even raised his GPA to a 3.0 (from a 1.9). NCNW President Juanita Goudy gave the students a pep talk to encourage them. The award ceremony ended with a pizza party. Good job!

The NAACP Parents' Council is seeking nominations from students and/or parents for "The Best and The Brightest" teacher or staff of MCPS. Those nominated will all be invited to our May Parents' Council Meeting and The Best and The Brightest Celebration.

What you should know:

- Students may nominate one teacher/staff member only
- Parents' Council parents may nominate a teacher/staff member
- To nominate a person, submit a short essay (200 words or less) describing why you have nominated them and what this teacher/staff member has done that makes them "The Best and the Brightest" staff member
- All nominees will be invited to attend our "The Best and The Brightest" celebration held during our May Parents' Council meeting on Saturday, May 16, 2015 at 8:45 a.m.
- All Parents' Council representatives should share this information with the Parents' Council group at your school.

· email nominations to Patricia Williams at atpwilliams317@yahoo.com and Sharon Ramsey at alljazz105@aol.com.

All entries are due by Saturday, April 25, 2015

We want to take the opportunity to recognize outstanding staff that inspire our children each and every day! We hope that you will join us.

Sheila Holmes
sheilaholmes@alumni.princeton.edu

Crystal Lee
crysllee@comcast.net

NAACP Parents' Council representatives to Blake High School

Blake Parents Testify for Increased Bus Transit along Norwood Road

Blake High School PTSA was represented at the ATU Local 689 and Interfaith Alliance Foundation Transit Hearing on Metro Safety last month. We testified about the lack of Metro buses at Blake (Z2 bus only runs 4:00-5:00 p.m. past the school). We also showed a video made by a Blake student that highlighted the safety issue – kids walking with no sidewalks from Blake HS to the New Hampshire Avenue bus stop: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZcFnJWdyvM&list=UUrM9FPSnj1d2S-orCUWrn6w>.

See the summary from the Fall 2014 Metrobus Priority Study of Z lines - we made enough noise to be of note, no results yet. Blake parent letters documented in the study, pages 16-19: http://www.metrobus-studies.com/Z_Line/Tech_Memo_4.pdf. Service to Blake High School: Participants expressed through email and comments during the public meetings that additional trips are needed to Blake Senior High School for students attending school."

Summer High School Musical Theatre Institute

For the 6th straight year, Blake will hold a musical theatre institute for students interested in a terrific musical theatre arts experience this summer. Classes begin on June 18 and conclude with shows of GREASE on July 16, 17, 18, and 19.

An annual event that the entire community looks forward to, the summer musical allows students to hone their singing, dancing, and acting skills all with loads of fun!

Write director Michael D'Anna at Michel_D_D'Anna@mcpsmd.org for information and sign-up materials. This is a tuition-based experience that lasts for 5 weeks. Auditions are May 1 and 2. Students may contact Mr. D'Anna for additional information or help.

Also families with middle-school aged students may wish to participate in THE LITTLE MERMAID this summer. Auditions for that show are May 8 and 9. The director for this show is Michael Kelley.

9th Annual High School 101 Program

Summer 2015 – a starting point toward high school success for incoming 9th graders

Ninth grade is an important year because a smooth transition to high school starts a student on the path to academic success and positive social experiences. Incoming Blake students can get a running start on being ready for the challenges of high school by enrolling in our unique summer program.

High School 101 eases the transition from middle school and builds connections to Blake that will be in place when the academic year begins. New ninth grade Bengals will be ready to learn from the first day of school, bolstered by the academic support and activities in High School 101.

High School 101 is a week filled with useful information, self-discovery, skill-building and new friends—all delivered in a fun atmosphere of hands-on activities. Blake High School invites your son or daughter to join us for this starting point toward achievement and high school success.

FEATURES OF THE HIGH SCHOOL 101 PROGRAM

- **Opportunities to make new friends**
- **Academic support for required summer English and Math assignments**
- **Orientation to the Blake HS building and staff**
- **Strategies for academic success**
- **Sports activities and teambuilding**

DATES

SESSION 1: July 13 – July 17

SESSION 2: July 27 – July 31

[NOTE: Sessions offered through High School 101 are not for credit.]

DAILY SCHEDULE

8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Monday through Friday

ELIGIBILITY

Students currently in 8th grade who will be attending James Hubert Blake High School in the fall of 2015 are eligible to participate in this program.

TRANSPORTATION

School bus transportation will be available (pick-up and drop-off) at designated school locations within the Northeast Consortium. Register by June 1st to guarantee availability to your stop. Sites will be reduced based on enrollment after 6/1/15. (See application form for specific sites.)

FEES

Cost is \$120.00 per one-week session.
Tuition assistance is available to eligible participants.

ENROLLMENT

Applications and directions for enrollment are also available in the Blake Main Office or Counseling office or Blake's website. You can also register online at www.pay4schoolstuff.com. Create an account, find Blake HS, click on HS 101 to register!

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Mrs. Christina Kiedrow
Program Director
School Counselor
301-879-1310

Christina_R_Kiedrow@mcpsmd.org

PARENTS ARE SAYING:

"Great way to break the ice and introduce our son to the school. It took the anxiety out of orientation and school in general."

"The best part was helping my child complete her summer assignments. Also, my child was able to learn more about what to expect when starting high school."

"It got her excited about clubs and sports."

"The Blake faculty is remarkably warm and welcoming. They make the freshman feel very welcome. This is our second time in the Freshmen 101 program."

"Yes, I truly believe that it helped this new transition immensely – thank you so much!"

James Hubert Blake High School
300 Norwood Road
Silver Spring, MD 20905
301-879-1300

Many thanks to the Blake Athletic Booster Club for their partnership with the Summer 2015 High School 101 program.



PLANTING THE SEEDS, ADVANCING TOWARD COLLEGE SUCCESS



College Preparation and Scholarship Fair

Saturday, May 2, 2015
1-4 p.m.

The Universities at Shady Grove
9630 Gudelsky Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Save the date for a special collaborative event for middle and high school students and their parents!

- Learn what you can do to start your path to successful college experiences
- Meet representatives from various careers, colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations
- Learn about financial aid and scholarship opportunities

**Registration is
available through the
Parent Academy.**

www.mcsparentacademy.org

Check-in from 12-1 p.m.



Scan for Video!

This event is coordinated by the following educational institutions:

