



BLAKE BLUE NOTE

March 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. The first word in PTSA is Parents – we can’t have a PTSA without your help. Nominations will be presented at our April meeting, with elections in May. We’re in particular need for a candidate for president. It only takes a couple of hours a month and the hardest part is delegating to other incredible volunteers. Call me at 240-354-6412 or e-mail me at president@blakeptsa.org today and offer to help.

Our **After Prom** team, chaired by Lisa Hedgepeth, has prepared a fantastic event on May 9 that needs your help – financially as well as to fill volunteer slots. The After Prom offers a safe, alcohol- and drug-free environment that is supervised by Blake security, parents and Montgomery County police. See the article on page 6 and offer to help.

Senior parents: it's not too early to reserve your seat on **PTSA-chartered buses to and from Graduation at DAR Constitution Hall** on June 10. Tickets are only \$21 each and tickets are required for students. Ride in comfort and leave the driving and parking to the bus driver. A flyer announcing details will be sent by EubieMail and Edline, and handed out at the Senior Parent Meeting on April 1.

This year's **PTSA Book Sale** was a tremendous success. Proceeds will go toward student scholarships and other student programs. Thank you to our many patrons and volunteers. See the article on page 5 for more information.

Staff appreciation events are planned for April – June. Please watch EubieMail for ways you can help.

Our NAACP Parents Council meets March 17 at 6:00 p.m. in the Media Center, followed by the PTSA general meeting at 7:00 p.m. Speaking at the 6:00 p.m. meeting is Diallo Radway, a Blake parent and financial planner at the World Financial Group, who will present "The Basic Principles of Building a Financial Foundation" and also address college planning. Speaking at 7:00 p.m. is a representative of the Family Online Safety Institute on topics including digital parenting and online sexual abuse.

Reflections: Several Blake students submitted items for the National PTSA-sponsored Reflections program in the categories of dance choreography, film production, literature, music composition, photography and visual arts. Following professional judging sponsored by the Montgomery County Council of PTAs, two Blake students were recognized. An Award of Merit was granted to Samantha Chheang in the Visual Arts category and an Award of Excellence to Sam Phimpachanh in the Dance Category. Sam's work was forwarded to Maryland state competition. Many thanks to Reflections chair Sharon Mosley-Ramsey for her excellent work in reviving this program and coordinating all activities.

You'll be pleased to know that **streetlights are coming to Norwood Road**. The PTSA successfully asked Montgomery County Government to review the lack of lighting and 20 lights will be installed on poles from Blake HS to New Hampshire Avenue this spring. We're continuing to advocate for sidewalks to make it even safer for our students to get to and from school.

If you haven't joined the PTSA this year or offered to help with an activity, you still can. 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

As you undoubtedly know, March is a month that we've been spending giving the new Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) examinations. The PARCC tests have brought with them a modified schedule, wide use of Chromebooks for testing, and an awareness of the challenges that these tests present. Because there will be many upgrades and best practices we will learn from this first round of testing, my hope is that before we take the End of Year round of the PARCC test, we will be able to make better use of both our testing and instructional time. Parents have given me feedback from their children on these new tests, and many have asked who I may notify to give my perspective as a parent. As this is a state assessment, and the state of Maryland will be making decisions about the future of the PARCC assessment, I would encourage you to give your feedback to your state elected officials (members of the House of Delegates, State Senate and Governor), as well as the Maryland Department of Education. Personal letters are always more impactful than form letters, particularly when they speak about your child's personal experiences with the PARCC exams. Please let your voice be heard!

I am often asked by parents, "What is the most effective way to REALLY know how my child is doing in high school?" The question is usually followed by a story of how their child really doesn't talk as much about school as when they were in elementary and middle school. The answer is not an overly complicated one but does speak to how remaining an active parent when your child is in high school can be challenging. Let me suggest three important components to remaining in the know. First, if you have not activated your PARENT account for Edline, this is an important step to take. This does not mean you have access to your STUDENT'S account, but you've activated the one specifically for parents. Teachers will often push messages specifically to parent accounts. The next question becomes "what do you do with the information you see in Edline?" most especially concerning grades. If you see numerous "0" or "z" in the report, what is the reason for this? Students can often "explain away" why these negative marks appear, but if you're not convinced or satisfied with the answer, follow up with the teacher through an e-mail or telephone call. Verifying information in this way doesn't display a lack of trust for your student, so much as it demonstrates you need your own understanding of the grading system, the reason for certain marks, and an adult perspective on your child's progress. Teachers honestly welcome this sort of opportunity to respond in writing or over the phone, especially when it is proactive or shows concern. The worst situation in this instance is to not monitor grades at all, or to accept a simple "fine" from your child to the question, "How are your classes going?", only to discover the opposite after it's late in the marking period to make a difference. Seek clarity and information as a parent.

The second way to really have a handle on your child in high school is about being involved with school activities. Whether you're supporting a sports team, serving on a PTSA committee, helping out with a band booster activity or just attending a concert, it doesn't matter. While some of these activities might

involve direct contact with your child, others may simply allow you to understand the day in and day out norms of Blake High School. When you work alongside other parents, you gain a better understanding of how Blake High School works, what other parents here about academics and school events, and a variety of perspectives and ideas you might not get otherwise. It also affords you the opportunity to get to know members of our outstanding staff better and gain their perspective about the Blake community. Newsletters and e-mails can only tell part of the story. Your children only provide part of the story. Choose one way that best fits your schedule and interest to serve Blake, and it gives you a better understanding of the your child's everyday world.

The final suggestion I would give on really knowing how your child is doing is to seek information closest to the source, where possible. I will often field calls from parents who are seeking information about a specific class or to resolve a problem. Sometimes there is a time sensitive nature to the request. At that moment, the most solution-oriented question I usually ask is if the parent has spoken to the teacher, counselor or person closest to the issue? While starting at the top might be the most productive and expedient way to resolve issue in other parts of the world, or even elementary and middle school, starting closest to the source is best way to navigate in a high school. As administrators, we will always seek solutions and answers on your behalf, but it might take a little time for us to gather information. Blake is a very big place with 1600 students and 200 adults in the building every day. The person best in a position to get you information about a specific class, grading policy, assignment or your child's performance is the classroom teacher. If this presents a problem or you don't receive the answer you seek, the resource teacher (department chair) or counselor might have a somewhat detailed knowledge of the situation. And most importantly, if you believe an administrator is the best personal to contact, we are here most readily via phone or e-mail.

If you don't already know, Blake is now a daily presence on Twitter. I've been tweeting messages about school just about every day. Twitter is a great way to get up to the minute news and short, 140 character reminders. If you want to follow us on Twitter as over 600 members of the community do, the address is: @BlakePrincipal.

Grade 12 senior students are rounding the home stretch headed to graduation. The spring brings with it a host of senior events celebrating not only the end of the year, but the end of a school career. One of the most important events to set the stage for this is the Senior Parent Meeting, which this year takes place on Wednesday, April 1stth at 7:00pm in the auditorium. Please note this is a MAKEUP from the meeting that was snowed out on Thursday, March 5. This meeting is about as close to mandatory as they come for at least one parent of each senior. The message and topics covered are very much geared for parents as we move into what should be a validating and joyous time of year. Many frequently asked questions are answered, myths dispelled and tips provided. There will be a letter to all parents of seniors in the near future, but please mark your calendars now.

The **spring sports** season is an exciting one and often successful one for Blake athletes. Practices began on March 1 and contests are getting underway. The large number of students participating in sports and supporting each other is outstanding. 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, especially as the weather warms up.

Hard to believe, but I'll be back in the next newsletter with information on end of the year events and more. I think we're all looking forward to a great spring break now that winter finally seems to have breathed its last!

Hispanic Leadership Club Yard Sale, March 21

Please come out and support the Hispanic Leadership Club on Saturday, March 21st, from 9:00 to 3:00 pm, for the first annual HLC Yard Sale! Get great deals on gently used electronics (Kindle, Wii, Nintendo DS), housewares (Pier 1, Crate and Barrel, World Market), brand-name clothing, framed art, baked goods, and so much more. All proceeds benefit the Hispanic Leadership Club Scholarship Fund. Please contact Ms. Abuliak for donations and more information: Monica_abuliak@mcpsmd.org

Follow the Yard Sale signs to 14525 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring MD, 20905

Athletic Booster Club Mulch Sale, March 28

The Blake Athletic Booster Club is happy to announce that the annual Mulch Sale is back! Now that the snow is melting, Spring is right around the corner. We will hold our annual Mulch Sale on Saturday, March 28. Mulch is available for delivery or pick up.

Ordering information can be found online:

<http://blakeathletics.org/index.cfm?action=main.otherbooster&id=255790>.

We are also in need of numerous parent and student volunteers that day. Parents – we especially need anyone who has access to a truck, van or trailer and can assist in delivering mulch. Parents, please sign up to help out here: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084eada62a1-blake3>.

We will send out reminders as it gets closer to the date... but order now and sign up to volunteer! If you have any questions, please contact Jared Fribush, Athletic Director, at Jared_B_Fribush@mcpsmd.org or 301-879-1333.

Blake PTSA Book Sale a Success!

From humble beginnings in the Blake cafeteria, this PTSA fundraiser has grown to be a successful way to provide money for student recognition, scholarships, mentoring and more. Thousands of books were available with offerings of children's literature, fiction, non-fiction, reference, rare books and more. Approximately \$4,000 was brought in by this three week event.

A group of tireless volunteers assisted customers and worked to keep the books neat after voracious readers had plowed through, looking for their favorite authors and subjects. Thank you in particular to Orit Chicherio for her leadership and guidance in this process!

Blake HS NAACP Parents' Council Announcements

Next meeting : March 17, 2015 @ 6:00 pm, Media Center

Mr. Diallo K. Radway, Blake parent and Financial Planner at the World Financial Group, will speak at our March meeting. His presentation "The Basic Principles of Building a Financial Foundation" will include college planning as well.

We will also get a short update on the Blake Academic Intervention Program, and the forthcoming Q3 celebration, along with the Year-End Honor Role celebration. The PTSA meeting will follow at 7:00 p.m., also in the Media Center.

Sheila Holmes

Crystal Lee

sheilaholmes@alumni.princeton.edu

crysllee@comcast.net

NAACP Parents' Council representatives to Blake High School

After Prom Needs Your Help!

On Saturday, May 9 at 12:30 a.m., 500+ Blake juniors, seniors and guests, will be at After Prom having fun and making memories in an environment that will keep them safe, sober and alive.

This year's After Prom will be at the Mid County Rec Center, off of Layhill Road at Queensguard Road. We will have casino tables, inflatable games, tarot card reading, relaxation rooms, a photo booth, a roving hypnotist, basketball, pool, ping pong and plenty to eat! Amazing raffle prizes will be given away throughout the night to entice our students to stay all night.

Prom-goers don't pay anything additional to attend the After Prom. Students who come only to the After Prom pay \$20/ticket. We are raising money to cover costs, which work out to be approximately \$40 per attendee. That's \$8 per hour to provide all of these activities, food, and prizes. Most important, it's a safe, structured and supervised alternative to house parties and kids being on the road during the most dangerous hours of the night.

We're approximately \$7,500 from our goal. How can you help?

We have sponsorship opportunities available. Your business, your employer or your friend's business can be featured on our t-shirt and banner. Consider joining Fitzgerald Automotive, Greene Turtle, Brooke Grove Retirement Village, Med-star Montgomery Hospital, Smart Mom Jewelry, Jill's Cookie Cart and Linda's Luncheonette as sponsors at the \$750, \$500 or \$300 level.

To date, twenty nine Blake families have donated \$100 as Legacy Family Sponsors. Your support will make a tremendous difference.

We are asking for both financial donations and gift cards or other in-kind contributions. More than 100 adult volunteers will be recruited to help before during and after the event to make it run smoothly. There's something for everyone.

Donations can be made online via PayPal @ <http://www.blakeptsa.org/after-prom/>

Everyone's participation is needed and very much appreciated. If you have questions about how you can help or if you need a sponsorship form, please email Lisa H. at frankie615@aol.com.

Career Day a Huge Success

A huge thank you for all of those that helped make Blake's 1st Annual Career Day a huge Success. On February 27th we had over 100 professionals come to Blake to speak to students about their careers. Many of those speakers were alumni and parents. The morning began with two keynote speakers, Captain Steven Holloway and Lance "Claysmile" Smith, motivating the students to prepare themselves for their career and find passion in their dreams. Following those presentations students attended their classes where they heard from a number of people about their careers, the education and paths they took to get there, and their successes as well as obstacles that got in their way. The feedback from this event was very positive so we are hoping to do this again next year. If you didn't get to participate this year but may be interested next year please email Cindy Gleason at [Cynthia M Gleason@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Cynthia_M_Gleason@mcpsmd.org) to be added to the mailing list.

AFS Host Families Needed

AFS International Student Exchange has opportunities for about 12 Montgomery County families to host international high school exchange students for the 2015-2016 year. Won't you consider it?

These are great, carefully screened kids. They come from over 90 different countries, and are eager to learn about America and take part in the activities of the host family and local high school. When you welcome a student from another country into your home, your children and family learn about the world, your AFS student takes home a part of America, and you make a personal contribution to world peace and understanding. Two and single parent households, with or without kids, are eligible. The family provides a place to sleep (not necessarily a private room) and provides meals. Students bring their own spending money and have excellent health insurance.

Now is the time to start making the arrangements. Working with an AFS volunteer, you'll select a student who is a good match for your family's interests and lifestyle. All AFS students do well in school and speak English. To learn more, talk to current Blair exchange student Julia Spies (Germany), contact AFS volunteer Bob Rushing at 301-236-6809 (rushingrw@hotmail.com), or visit the AFS website at www.afsusa.org/.

Summer School Fees Set for 2015



The Board of Education approved summer school fees for the coming summer, keeping the fees at the same level from last year. Full fees remain at \$355 for elementary courses, \$300 for high school core courses and \$310 for high school online courses. Reduced fees will remain at \$85 or \$120, depending on family income. MCPS provides summer school programs for intervention, enrichment and acceleration of academic instruction for students through four elementary regional centers, four high school regional centers and local school programs. Registration is scheduled to begin in April.

For more information, see <http://news.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/quicknotes/summer-school-fees-set-for-2015/>

SSL Opportunity at the C & O Canal, Saturday, April 11

SSL Approved opportunity for students with C&O Canal Association on April 11, 2015. Here is a link to the opportunity on the Volunteer Center website:

<https://volunteer.truist.com/mcvc/org/opp/10855150516.html>. For more information, contact Kimberly Bloch-Rincan, Coordinator, Student Service Learning, Montgomery County Public Schools, office: [301-279-3454](tel:301-279-3454); e-mail Kimberly_A_Bloch-Rincan@mcpsmd.org.

Counseling Calendar

March 18-HBCU Symposium

March 21-Let's Get It Started Youth Job Fair, Mock SAT/ACT Combo Test

March 24-College Daze Program

April 6-Registration deadline for May 2 SAT

April 15-Final Accuplacer Test for Montgomery College given

April 18-ACT test date

April 21-National College Fair

April 25-26-Catalyst Prep SAT Boot Camp

May 2-SAT test date, College Success, Preparation, and Scholarship Fair

May 8-Registration deadline for June 13 ACT

May 18-Colleges That Change Lives Fair

May 20-Academic Awards Ceremony

May 30-31-Catalyst Prep ACT Boot Camp

June 1-College Essay Writing Clinic

June 13-ACT test date

HBCU SYMPOSIUM – March 18, 2015, 10:00 am - Have you ever wanted to talk about the college experience with those who have attended Historically Black Colleges? Well here is your chance! On

March 18th at 10 am Blake alums who attended HBCUs have volunteered to participate in a panel discussion with Blake students in **Gr. 10-12**. Alums will talk about how attending an HBCU helped to prepare them for the workforce, as well as their college experiences. Students **who wish to attend must obtain a pass by March 16th** from the Counseling Office. In the event that school is cancelled due to weather, the event will be scheduled for March 19th.

LET'S GET IT STARTED YOUTH JOB FAIR - Saturday, **March 21, 2015**, 11:00 a.m. -2:00 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building, One Veterans Plaza in Downtown Silver Spring. This is a job fair for students ages 16 to 20. Come prepared with several copies of your resume, a pen, social security number (required for many job applications) and a positive attitude. Employers who have already signed on to be there: Montgomery County Department of Recreation, National Park Service, American Pool, Community Pool Services, State Farm, Securitas Security Systems, etc. For more information: www.letsgetitstartedyouthjobfair.com

COLLEGE DAZE PROGRAM, March 24, 2015 – for **Juniors and their parents**. 6:30-7:00 p.m. Test Prep Companies will exhibit their offerings; 7:00 p.m.: Counseling Staff demonstrate the college search and application process using Naviance/Family Connections; 7:35-8:30 p.m.: Sean Lewis, Regional Enrollment Manager for University of Dayton discusses “Finding the Right Fit and Affording It.” Bring all your questions to be answered at the end.

MOCK SAT/ACT Combo test - March 21, 2015, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.- Here is an opportunity (especially for JUNIORS) to take a practice SAT/ACT Combo test for just \$5.00. Participants should arrive at **8:30 a.m.** for check-in with two #2 pencils, calculator and your receipt in hand. Register and pay online today at: <http://tinyurl.com/blakecombotest3-21>. Kaplan Test Prep will provide score interpretations on Thursday, **April 2, 2015 at 7:00 pm** in the Blake amphitheatre. It's time for juniors to begin preparing for these college entrance exams!

CATALYST PREP ACT & SAT BOOT CAMPS – A weekend **SAT test prep Boot Camp** will be offered at Blake from 9:00-1:00 **on April 25-26, 2015** to prepare students for the **May 2 SAT** test. Likewise, an **ACT weekend bootcamp will be offered on May 30-31, 2015** from 9:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m. to prepare students for the **June 13 ACT** test. Cost is **\$175** and you can register/pay online: www.catalystprep.com. This crash course is meant to boost confidence and momentum by teaching students how to outsmart every type of question. Participants receive a workbook, self-study materials, diagnostic tests and even copies of the essays that have earned perfect scores on actual SATs or ACTs.

FINAL ACCUPLACER TEST – **April 15, 2015** – Seniors who applied to Montgomery College prior to the March 1 deadline will be able to take the final Accuplacer test at Blake on Wednesday, April 15 during school, provided they know their MC I.D. number. If you would like to reserve a seat, please sign the clipboard in the Career Center.

NATIONAL COLLEGE FAIR (field trip) – **April 21, 2015** – This annual college fair is held at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds in Gaithersburg, Maryland on April 21-22. Blake juniors are invited to attend on Tuesday, April 21 with their classmates from 9:15 – 11:30 a.m. for a fee of \$6.00 to cover

MCPS bus transportation. Students may obtain a permission form from the Counseling Office to complete & return by April 14. Online registration is required as well: <http://www.gotomyncf.com>. Note: Parents & students may attend on their own during the evening hours on 4/21 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.. For more information, visit the Career Center.

COLLEGE SUCCESS, COLLEGE PREPARATION AND SCHOLARSHIP FAIR- Saturday, **May 2, 2015**, 1:00-4:00 p.m. - hosted by MCPS, MC and USG will be held at the Universities at Shady Grove campus, 9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, MD 20850. Students in Grades 6-10 are encouraged to attend with their parents.

COLLEGES THAT CHANGE LIVES FAIR - Monday, **May 18, 2015**, 2:00 p.m. - CTCL fairs are offered all over the U.S. They are coming to the DC area in May. Location: Ritz Carlton, Tysons Corner, VA. Featured are the 40 colleges that Loren Pope wrote about in his exceptional college resource book, Colleges That Change Lives. For a list of participating colleges, specific sites and pre-registration visit the website: www.ctcl.org.

ACADEMIC AWARDS CEREMONY – **May 20, 2015, 7:00 p.m.** - This annual event will take place in the Blake Auditorium. Students who are receiving awards will be notified in advance to attend along with their family supporters.

COUNSELING ASSIGNMENTS

9th graders - Mr. Kim Tolbert & Ms. Jean Smith

10th-12th graders -

A to C > Mrs. Christina Kiedrow

D to H > Mrs. Jeannette Hayes

I to Mp > Mrs. Jaime Baer

Mq to Se > Ms. Katryn Costenbader

Sf to Z > Ms. Jessica Center

ESOL Counselor - Mrs. Lulu Fetzer-Munoz

College and Career Coordinator - Mrs. Kathy Moore



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:



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.