

Bridging to Blach

March 2007

For the sixth grade families of Covington, Loyola, Oak, and Springer Schools

Welcome to *Bridging to Blach*, a newsletter designed to help prepare you and your family for the exciting differences between elementary and middle school. It is our hope that these newsletters, sent in March, April, and May, will inform you of pertinent issues relating to incoming 7th graders. If you have further questions regarding Blach PTA or the *Bridging to Blach* program, please feel free to contact us and we will be happy to assist you. We look forward to welcoming you into the Blach community!

Best Wishes,

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In This Issue

Orientation Activities
Letter from the Principal
Blach Parent Connection
Daily Schedule
Staying Informed
Blach PTA Opportunities

Important Dates for Parents

Information Meeting
Mon, April 30 at 7:00pm
Blach Multi (old gym)

Important Dates for Students

Elective Presentations

Oak	Mar 19	12:50 pm
Loyola	Mar 20	1:30 pm
Springer	Mar 23	11:00 am

Math Testing

Covington	(Admin. by Egan)
Oak	late April
Loyola	late April
Springer	late April

6th Grade Tour

Thursday, May 24 morning
This is not a parent event

Orientation Activities

Elective Presentations

On March 19, 20 and 23, respectively, Blach staff will visit Oak, Loyola and Springer to present information to the 6th graders about basic and elective courses, and to hand out elective sign-up sheets. *This presentation is for students only.*

Parent Information Meeting

On Monday, April 30 at 7:00 pm in the Blach Multi (old gym), Blach staff and a panel of current students will meet with parents of incoming students to share information and answer questions about our programs, curriculum and facility.

Math Testing

In late April, Blach's school counselor, Dr. Judy Rothenberg, will visit each feeder school and administer a math placement test to all 6th graders. Results of this test (along with teacher input, grades, and other test results, such as those from STAR) help Blach place students in the most appropriate level of the math program. *No special preparation for this test is required.* Math placement notification will be included in the information packets mailed to all students in August. *Next month: More information on math placement.*

6th Grade Tour

On Thursday, May 24, 6th grade teachers and their classes will visit Blach in the morning. The objective is to help the incoming students feel familiar and comfortable with the Blach campus.

From the Desk of Leslie Crane, Principal

Dear Future Blach Parents,

We have now lived in our modernized facility for almost five years. We are proud of its appearance, appreciative of its vastly improved functionality, and grateful for the community support which made it possible.

But the building is not the program. Blach students achieve at astonishingly high levels today, and they achieved at similar levels ten years ago. Good lighting and clean bathrooms certainly contribute to morale, but the important factors in our success are not hard to describe:

- What our students “bring to the table,” in terms of solid preparation from the elementary program, rich life experiences, and intellectual ability;
- The attention, caring, and support of their families;
- The expertise, devotion, and knowledge of the Blach staff.

I have been extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work with one of the finest faculties anywhere, and I hope and trust that your experiences with them during the next two years will be rewarding and enjoyable. They are committed to helping every child succeed, and will make every effort to ensure that your children make a smooth transition to the more complex intermediate school program.

I hope that our orientation programs, including the information presented in this and future newsletters will help you understand and support our efforts on behalf of your children. I look forward to sharing with you this sometimes difficult, but often extremely rewarding, time in your child’s life.

Sincerely,
Leslie Crane, Principal
lcrane@blachschool.org

Blach Parent Connection

The transition to Junior High is exciting – no question. It’s a time of many changes. It can also sometimes seem a little daunting, especially for parents. The Blach Parent Connection was created to ease the way.

Blach students are becoming more independent, meeting new friends, and adjusting to several new teachers. All of those are good things, but can make it a little more difficult for parents to get to know their children’s friends and teachers. Our children are growing and changing at lightning speed and may be less inclined to share things with us. We all have lots of questions.

Through approximately four meetings spaced throughout the year, Parent Connection will cover several topics, some of which might include adjusting to Junior High, study habits and homework, peer pressure, social norms, cliques and curfew. We may also look at issues that our children will encounter as they grow, such as values, decision-making and what to do if they encounter drug/alcohol use among older children in social situations.

Daily Schedule and Other Logistics

Daily schedule: School starts at 8:12 am and ends at 2:53 pm. On Wednesdays, school starts at 9:00 am to give the staff a regular time to collaborate with each other. Your 7th grader will certainly appreciate the opportunity to catch up on some sleep that morning! Also on Wednesdays, an 11-minute homeroom period is added to 5th period.

REGULAR (M, T, Th, Fr)	46-minute periods	PLANNING (Wednesdays)	38-minute periods
Period 1	8:12-8:58am	Period 1	9:00-9:38am
Period 2	9:02-9:48	Period 2	9:42-10:20
Period 3	9:52-10:41	Period 3	10:24-11:02
BRUNCH	10:41-10:55	HOMEROOM	11:02-11:13
Period 4	10:50-11:45	BRUNCH	11:13-11:27 am
Period 5	11:49-12:35pm	Period 4	11:31-12:09 pm
LUNCH	12:35-1:12	Period 5	12:13-12:51
Period 6	1:16-2:03	LUNCH	12:51-1:28
Period 7	2:07-2:53	Period 6	1:32-2:10
		Period 7	2:14-2:53

The seven periods consist of (in varying order depending on your child's schedule) math, English, history, science, PE, and two periods of electives. The students have 4 minutes to pass from one class to the next.

Appointments: Blach is a "closed campus." Students may not leave during school hours without permission (this includes Brunch and Lunch). If students need to leave school during the day, a parent must write or call the office, indicating the time, place, and length of the appointment.

Attendance: If the student is unable to attend school, a parent should call the school's Voice Mail to report the absence *each day the student is out*, preferably before 8:00 am.

Detention/Tardiness: Students make up tardies and cuts in after-school detention. In addition, individual teachers may assign detention for infractions of classroom rules.

Clear Campus: The "Clear Campus" bell rings daily at 3:10 pm. Students are expected to leave the campus by this time, unless they have an appointment with a teacher or are participating in a supervised school activity.

Emergency Calls: Although we try to avoid interrupting instruction as much as possible, emergency messages from parents to students will always be delivered promptly. Students are asked not to bring cell phones or pagers with them to school, as their use interrupts instruction. There is a pay phone on campus, which students may use for outgoing calls only. Many students keep a regular supply of 'phone change' in their backpacks.

Staying Informed

Your 7th grader will no longer be bringing home papers from school in a nice folder from their teacher and telling you everything that happened that day over snack or dinner. Instead, he/she will likely stuff notices from seven teachers somewhere in their folder or backpack and will somehow have forgotten many things going on at school. How can you keep informed?

- The **Blach Banner** newsletter is your key to information. In it you will find a monthly calendar, a message from the principal, PTA news and more. The Banner is mailed to your home the first of each month. Stay informed—read the Banner!
- **Mass email Distribution**– Throughout the school year, it may be necessary for Blach School to contact all school families. Blach uses a mass email distribution list to pass along information to parents. We gather your email addresses from the forms that you fill out at the beginning of the school year.
- **Parent/Student Portal in Powerschool** - Powerschool is the web-based data system that our district uses to keep track of student information. Last year, Blach School piloted the Parent/Student portal in Powerschool. This portal allows parents and students to log onto the web-based Powerschool program to view teacher’s grade books in order to monitor student progress. In September, every family will receive their passwords and directions about how to log onto the Parent/Student portal.
- Many notices are passed out in **homeroom on Wednesday**. If you remember to ask your child on Wednesday evenings, chances are they’ll remember what was discussed and which notices they were supposed to take home.
- **Website** - Blach has a website that contains interesting and useful information—from a listing of the teachers to links to student web pages; from a monthly calendar to the minutes of the PTA meetings. Some teachers even post nightly homework assignments on the web! Be sure to visit the site at www.blachschool.org .
- Want still another way to stay informed *and* have your voice heard? **Blach PTA** meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm in the school library. The PTA supports the program and staff with volunteers and funding. Each year, the PTA votes on specific goals. Funds are then raised to support the program and to reach these goals. In a two-year program, it is essential that parents commit their involvement early in order to receive maximum benefit while their student is still attending Blach.

Blach PTA Opportunities

As the parents of incoming 7th graders at Blach, we are counting on you to continue to be vital supporters of the PTA, just as you have been in elementary school. Please consider volunteering or recommending someone for the following PTA Chair positions. The two years will be over before you know it, so jump right in and get involved! It's a great way to meet parents from the other schools and learn more about Blach. If you're interested or have more questions, please contact Sue Godfrey at (650) 559-0462.

Blach PTA Chair Positions

8th Grade Graduation Dance - 8th grade parents coordinate the party for grads the Friday night before graduation. Work with Blach School staff member to develop theme and plan. Coordinate decorations, refreshments, etc. for dance. (Dance Chaperone Chair coordinates 7th grade parents to be chaperones.) Co-chairs recommended.

8th Grade Graduation Reception - Organize a group of 7th grade parents to provide decorations, drinks, and treats for grads and their families. Reception is held immediately following mid-day graduation ceremony. Chaired by a 7th grade parent.

8th Grade Picnic - Coordinates 8th grade field trip in celebration of the graduation.

Blach Banner Newsletter – Team responsible for soliciting articles, editing, producing, and distributing Blach's monthly newsletter. Works closely with Blach principal and PTA president.

Distribution - Coordinates the monthly mailing of the newsletter, includes folding and labeling.

Editor - Edits and formats monthly newsletter providing print ready copy.

Bridging to Blach Newsletter – Organizes, edits, produces, and distributes a newsletter to 6th grade families of Loyola, Oak, Springer and Covington schools. Works closely with Blach principal and PTA president. Newsletter is produced monthly from March to May.

Community Food/Toy/Blood Drive - Coordinates Blach involvement in community service. Includes Thanksgiving Food Drive and Holiday Toy Drive.

Direct Appeal - Coordinates Blach PTA's single fundraiser. Co-chairs recommended.

Directory - Compiles, types and formats information for the directory. Provides camera-ready copy to be proofread and copied.

e-Scrip – Co-chair positions to coordinate all aspects of eScrip program.

Emergency Preparedness - Ensures emergency supplies are current and that Blach is prepared.

Facilities/Landscaping – Works closely with staff and PTA Board to implement improvements in buildings and landscaping.

Family Dinner - Coordinates our fall social dinner. This is a family event held on the school premises in October.

Holiday Faire - Coordinates and organizes a student-run, all day event held in early December.

Hospitality - Provides coffee and goodies at monthly PTA meetings and some other PTA sponsored events.

Hot Lunch – An extensive team of volunteers is needed to provide hot lunch to our students daily. **Co-chairs** – work with vendors, take and process student orders, coordinate with team captains for serving. **Team Captains** – Develop and oversee a team of volunteers who serve hot lunch on a particular day of the week. 6-8 captains needed. **Servers** – Serve lunch to students.

LAEF Representatives – Three individuals represent Blach at monthly LAEF meetings, work with the Principal to define needs for Blach, coordinates Blach volunteers for annual phone-a-thon.

Laminator - Once a week, Friday afternoon, two-hour commitment. Picks up work to be laminated from the Blach office and laminates at the District office on Covington.

Legislation - Coordinates Blach involvement in legislative issues, i.e., parcel tax, bond measures.

Lost and Found – Display and donate unclaimed items, approximately three times per year.

Mardi Gras – 8th Grade only event. Works with French and Spanish teachers to celebrate Mardi Gras/Carnevale.

Marquee (school sign) Caretaker – Responsible for current event updates.

Music Liaisons (Instrumental and Choral) – Work with music teachers to help coordinate activities/programs throughout year.

Renaissance Fair – 7th Grade only event. Works with History teachers to create an event that transports students back to the Middle Ages. Coordinates feast, crafts and entertainment. This event is held in the spring.

Membership - Coordinates PTA membership drive in the fall.

New Family Liaison - Works with office; contacts families new to Blach throughout the school year.

Opening Day Coffee - Coordinates a parent social for the first day of school. Includes coffee and pastries.

Parent Connection - Works closely with principal and school psychologist; arranges Parent Connection (parent discussion groups) and other appropriate parent education events.

Parent Connection Refreshments – Provides refreshments at Parent Connection meetings during the school year

Public Relations - Works directly with the Town Crier and any other desired news organizations or media.

Site Council - PTA representatives attend once a month committee meeting. The Site Council also currently serves as the advisory committee for the modernization project.

Spirit Week - Works closely with Teacher-in-Charge to coordinate activities during this October event.

Sports Boosters – Supports after-school sports program working with PE Dept. Keeps recorded messages on the sports hotline current. Represents program to the PTA.

Staff Appreciation - Provides refreshments once a month for teachers and staff to express appreciation. Provides a PTA sponsored breakfast for the teachers and staff in the spring.

Sweat Suit Sales – Works with PE teachers to coordinate Blach sweatshirt and sweatpant orders in the fall. Distributes them when they arrive.

Tab Book Orders - Coordinates monthly book club orders.

Technology Committee - Meets once a month. Works closely with Blach technology teacher. Various positions available: grant writing, networking, etc.

Walk-to-School/Safety Coordinator– Coordinates International Walk-to-School Day for Blach in October to encourage walking, biking and carpooling. Promotes a safe environment for students.

Webmasters - Keep Blach's website current.

Yearbook – Chairs produce annual yearbook and organize its sales. Should be 8th grade parents.

Next Month's Issue

- Math program
- Getting to/from school
- After school sports
- Report cards
- Food/Hot Lunch
- Music program

If you have any questions or story suggestions for future issues, feel free to contact me.

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