



March 2009

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

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Monday, May 4 at 7:00pm
 Blach Multi (old gym)

Math Testing

Covington (Admin. by Egan)
 Oak, Loyola and Springer (Spring)

6th Grade Tour (Students only)

Thursday, May 28, 9:00am

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

Katie Matice

PTA Co-President
 kmatice@gmail.com
 (650) 691-1034

Kristen Brown

PTA Co-President
 KristenB33@comcast.net
 (650) 948-2658

Wendy Marshall

Bridging to Blach Editor
 bigwords@comcast.net
 (650) 941-7022

Orientation Activities

Elective Presentations: In April, Blach staff will visit Oak, Loyola and Springer schools to present information to the 6th graders about basic and elective courses, and to hand out elective sign-up sheets. Covington students should contact their school office for information on electives. *This presentation is for students only.*

Parent Information Meeting: On Monday, May 4, 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: Blach's school counselor, Dr. Judy Rothenberg, will visit Loyola, Oak and Springer schools sometime in the spring to administer a district 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 provided to all students in August. ***Next month: More on math placement.***

6th Grade Tour: Thursday, May 28, 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. For parents of students who do not attend

Loyola, Oak, or Springer this year, please contact the Blach office at (650) 934-3800 if you would like to arrange for your student to attend the tour.

From the Desk of **Leslie Crane, Principal**



Dear Future Blach Parents,

We look forward to welcoming your children to our campus in September. Blach students consistently achieve at astonishingly high levels, and are well prepared for high school when they complete 8th grade. The important factors in our success are:

- 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 children’s lives.

Sincerely,

Leslie Crane, Principal

lcrane@blachschoool.org

Blach Parent Connection

The transition to Junior High is an exciting 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.

With four to five 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 3rd period.

| REGULAR (M, T, Th, Fr) 46-minute periods | |
|---|----------------------|
| Period 1 | 8:12 - 8:58 |
| Period 2 | 9:02 - 9:48 |
| Period 3 | 9:52 - 10:41 |
| <i>BRUNCH</i> | <i>10:41 - 10:55</i> |
| Period 4 | 10:59 - 11:45 |
| Period 5 | 11:49 - 12:35 |
| <i>LUNCH</i> | <i>12:35 - 1:12</i> |
| Period 6 | 1:16 - 2:03 |
| Period 7 | 2:07 - 2:53 |

| PLANNING (Wednesdays) 38-minute periods | |
|--|----------------------|
| Period 1 | 9:00 - 9:38 |
| Period 2 | 9:42 - 10:20 |
| Period 3 | 10:24 - 11:02 |
| <i>HOMEROOM</i> | <i>11:02 - 11:13</i> |
| <i>BRUNCH</i> | <i>11:13 - 11:27</i> |
| Period 4 | 11:31 - 12:09 |
| Period 5 | 12:13 - 12:51 |
| <i>LUNCH</i> | <i>12:51 - 1:28</i> |
| 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. Students are summoned to the office to leave for appointments via student aides. By calling ahead, you will ensure that your student will be waiting to leave for their appointment on time.

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 tardiness and cuts in after-school detention or in-school detention duty. In addition, individual teachers may assign detention for infractions of classroom rules.

Clear Campus: The "Clear Campus" bell rings daily at 3:05 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 to turn off cell phones and pagers while at school, as their use interrupts instruction. If a student gets caught using their cell phone, it is taken away and they must have a parent come in to get it. Students who need to make calls may go to the office at brunch or lunch and use their phones.

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, they will probably 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?

Blach Banner: 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 posted on the Blach website on 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. In addition, Blach uses a phone messaging system to provide important alerts or notices, when appropriate.

Parent/Student Portal in Powerschool: Powerschool is the web-based data system that our district uses to keep track of student information. This portal allows parents and students to log onto the web-based Powerschool program at any time and view teachers' 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.

Homeroom: Many notices are passed out in homeroom on *Wednesdays*. 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.

Blach PTA: Want still another way to stay informed *and* have your voice heard? Blach PTA meets in the school library, usually on the third Thursday of each month, at 7:00 pm (meeting times will be posted in the Blach Banner and on the school website). 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.

Back-to-School Welcome

On the Friday before school starts, Blach is holding a Back-to-School Welcome event. Seventh graders will be invited to come in the morning, eighth graders in the

afternoon. This will be an opportunity for students to pick up their final schedules, find their classrooms, and purchase their gym clothes.

Blach PTA Opportunities

Blach is counting on you – parents of our incoming 7th graders - 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 PTA Chair positions listed in the following table. The two years here at Blach 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 Karen Zucker at 961-1667 or zucker4@sbcglobal.net.

Blach PTA Chair Positions

| Position | Responsibilities |
|--|--|
| 8th Grade Graduation Dance | Co-chairs recommended. Coordinates 8th grade parents planning party for grads the Friday night before graduation. Works with Blach School staff member to develop theme and plan. Coordinates decorations, refreshments, etc. for dance. (Dance Chaperone Chair coordinates 7th grade parents to be chaperones.) |
| 8th Grade Graduation Reception | Chaired by a 7 th grade parent. Organizes a group of 7 th grade parents to provide decorations, drinks, and treats for grads and their families. Reception is held immediately following mid-day graduation ceremony. |
| 8th Grade Picnic | Coordinates 8th grade field trip in celebration of graduation. |
| Blach Banner Newsletter | Team responsibility. Solicits articles, edits, and produces monthly newsletter, and submits it to webmaster for uploading to the Blach website. Works with Blach principal and PTA president. |
| Blach Buster Book Club | Coordinates recognition of student birthdays through the collection of donated books for our school library. |
| Book Fair | Coordinates and organizes spring event to provide students with an opportunity to stock up on books for the summer. |
| Bridging to Blach Newsletter | Organizes, edits, produces, and distributes a 3-issue newsletter to 6th grade families of Loyola, Oak, Springer, and Covington schools. Works closely with Blach principal and PTA presidents. |
| Community Food/Toy/ Blood Drive | Coordinates Blach involvement in community service. Includes Thanksgiving Food Drive and Holiday Toy Drive. |

| Position | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| Direct Appeal | Co-chairs recommended. Coordinates and promotes Blach's direct appeal campaign – a fundraiser for PTA programs and services. |
| Directory | Compiles, types and formats information for the directory. Provides camera-ready copy to be proofread and copied. |
| e-Scrip | Co-chair position. Coordinates all aspects of eScrip program. |
| Emergency Preparedness | Ensures emergency supplies are current and that Blach is prepared for emergencies. |
| Facilities/Landscaping | Works closely with staff and PTA Board to implement improvements in buildings and landscaping. Could be split into two positions – one for "Facilities" and one for "Landscaping." |
| Family Dinner | Coordinates fall social dinner. This is a family event held on the school premises in October. |
| Holiday Faire | Coordinates and organizes a student-run event 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 daily hot lunch. Co-chairs – work with vendors, take and process student orders, coordinate with team captains for serving. Team Captains – Develop and oversee teams of volunteers who serve hot lunch on particular days 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, coordinate 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 (parcel tax, bond measures). |
| Lost and Found | Displays and donates unclaimed items, approximately 3 times per year. |
| Mardi Gras – 8 th Grade only event. | Works with French and Spanish teachers to celebrate Mardi Gras/Carnaval. |
| Marquee (school sign) | Responsible for current event updates. |

| Position | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| Music Liaisons (Instrumental and Choral) | Work with music teachers to help coordinate activities/programs throughout the year. |
| Membership | Coordinates PTA membership drive in the fall. |
| New Family Liaison | Works with office; contacts families new to Blach during 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. |
| Public Relations | Works directly with the Town Crier and any other desired news organizations or media. |
| 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. |
| 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 current on the sports hotline. 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 | Works closely with Blach Principal, technology resource person, and technology teacher. |
| 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. |
| Webmaster | Keeps Blach's website current. |

| Position | Responsibilities |
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| Yearbook | Chaired by 8 th grade parents. Produces annual yearbook and organizes yearbook sales. |

Next Month's Issue

- Math program
- After school sports
- Report cards
- Food/hot lunch

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

Wendy Marshall

Bridging to Blach Editor

bigwords@comcast.net

650-941-7022

Blach Intermediate School
1120 Covington Road
Los Altos, CA 94024

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