

Blackchat

Parent Newsletter



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2015 Issue 4: Term 4

School Calendar

2016 School Term Dates

Term 1:
28 January –8 April

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Term 2:
27 April–1 July

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Term 3:
19 July–23 September

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Term 4:
10 October–16 December



Just like that, the 2015 school year has reached its conclusion. An inspiring year of journeys, discoveries and amazing accomplishments in sports, academics and the fine arts has now come to an end. Our students have impressed us with their talents all year and have earned a joyous, relaxing summer holiday. Here are some of the Term 4 highlights featured in this final issue of *Blackchat* for 2015:

- Blacktown Girls continues to shine in the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) in Mathematics, with a significant number of students receiving Distinction, Credit and Merit Certificates.
- Year 7 classes have been involved in a number of creative excursions. 7L participated in the Collaborative Classrooms program at Sydney Business Park and 7B assisted pre-schoolers in arts and crafts activities at The Blacktown Public Library and engaged in a storytelling workshop.
- Students were quite busy with creative and performing arts projects, including excursions to the Sydney Art Gallery, Archibald Prize exhibition and Museum of Contemporary Art; the finalization of sculptures, paintings and drawings for the end of year art exhibition; original, high-energy dance performances in a variety of cultural styles at the Showcase evening and a plethora of African tribal drumming performances at festivals, fundraisers and other community events throughout the greater Sydney region.
- PDHPE was also buzzing with activity, with students attending excursions to Bondi Beach to train with members of the Royal Lifesaving Society and Long Reef Beach for a “surfing safari.” Students also attended swim school, were instructed in physiotherapy skills by a local professional and gained outdoor survival skills, learning how to cook damper in a fire pit.

Happy reading and best wishes for an enjoyable summer holiday. See you in 2016!

Rude vs. Mean vs. Bullying: **Defining the Differences**

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/signe-whitson/bullying_b_2188819.html?ir=Australia

A few weeks ago, I had the terrific fortune of getting to present some of the bullying prevention work that I do to a group of children at a local bookstore. As if interacting with smiling, exuberant young people was not gift enough, a reporter also attended the event and wrote a lovely article about my book and the work I do with kids, parents, educators and youth care professionals. All in all, it was dream publicity and since then, has sparked many conversations with people in my town who saw my photo in the newspaper and immediately related to the examples of bullying that were discussed.



Photo: Gabriela and Philipp Fickler

RUDE vs MEAN vs BULLYING
Defining the Differences
By Signe Whitson, The Huffington Post

I have been brought to tears more than once since the article ran, while listening to parents share their feelings of outrage and helplessness over their kids' experiences with bullying in school. One gifted but socially awkward middle school student blew me away with his articulate, poised, yet searingly painful accounts of relentless physical and verbal bullying on his school bus. An elementary school-aged girl described how she had to learn to shed her Australian accent within a month of entering U.S.

schools because of how she was shunned by her classmates. The commonness of it all routinely astounds me with every new account; the pervasive cruelty makes my jaw drop every time.

It is important for me to begin this article by establishing that without doubt, many of the stories of bullying that are shared with me are horrifying and some are unspeakably cruel. But now, I also want to be honest and share that some of the stories are... well... really not so bad.

Take this story recently shared with me by an acquaintance who read about my professional work:

"Signe, I saw your picture in the paper last week. Congratulations! I didn't know you worked with bullied students. It's so important that you do -- things have gotten so bad! Last week, my daughter was bullied really badly after school! She was getting off of her bus when this kid from our neighborhood threw a fistful of leaves right in her face! When she got home, she still had leaves in the hood of her coat. It's just awful! I don't know what to do about these bullies."

"Was she very upset when she got home?" I empathized.

"No. She just brushed the leaves off and told me they were having fun together," she said.

"Oh," I answered knowingly, aware that oftentimes kids try to downplay victimization by bullies from their parents, due to the embarrassment and shame they feel. "Did you get the sense she was covering for the boy?"

"No, no. She really seemed to think it was fun. She said that she threw leaves back at him, which I told her NEVER to do again! The nerve of those kids."

"Those 'kids,' I clarified. "Was it just the one boy throwing leaves or were there a bunch of kids all ganging up on her?"

"No, it was just this one boy that lives about a block from us," she assured me.

"Is he usually mean to her? Has he bothered her after school before?" I asked, eager at this point to figure out what the bullying issue was.

"No. I don't think so at least. That was the first time she ever said anything about him. It was definitely the first time that I noticed the leaves all over her coat. But it better be the last time! I won't stand for her being bullied by that kid. Next time, I am going to make sure the Principal knows what is going on after school lets out!"

While I always want to be careful not to minimize anyone's experience (it's the social worker in me!) and a part of me suspects that the sharing of this particular story may have been simply this parent's spontaneous way of making conversation with me in a store aisle, I hear these "alarming" (read: benign) stories often enough to conclude that there is a real need to draw a distinction between behavior that is rude, behavior that is mean and behavior that is characteristic of bullying. I first heard bestselling children's author, Trudy Ludwig, talk about these distinguishing terms and, finding them so helpful, have gone on to use them as follows:

Rude = Inadvertently saying or doing something that hurts someone else.

A particular relative of mine (whose name it would be rude of me to mention) often looks my curly red hair up and down before inquiring in a sweet tone, "Have you ever thought about coloring your hair?" or "I think you look so much more sophisticated when you straighten your hair, Signe." This doting family member thinks she is helping me. The rest of the people in the room cringe at her boldness and I am left to wonder if being a brunette would suit me. Her comments can sting, but remembering that they come from a place of love -- in her mind -- helps me to remember what to do with the advice...

From kids, rudeness might look more like burping in someone's face, jumping ahead in line, bragging about achieving the highest grade or even throwing a crushed up pile of leaves in someone's face. On their own, any of these behaviors could appear as elements of bullying, but when looked at in context, incidents of rudeness are usually spontaneous, unplanned inconsideration, based on thoughtlessness, poor manners or narcissism, but not meant to actually hurt someone.

Mean = Purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone once (or maybe twice).

The main distinction between "rude" and "mean" behavior has to do with intention; while rudeness is often unintentional, mean behavior very much aims to hurt or depreciate someone. Kids are mean to each other when they criticize clothing, appearance, intelligence, coolness or just about anything else they can find to denigrate. Meanness also sounds like words spoken in anger -- impulsive cruelty that is often regretted in short order. Very often, mean behavior in kids is motivated by angry feelings and/or the misguided goal of propping themselves up in comparison to the person they are putting down. Commonly, meanness in kids sounds an awful lot like:

- "Are you seriously wearing that sweater again? Didn't you just wear it, like, last week? Get a life."
- "You are so fat/ugly/stupid/gay."
- "I hate you!"

Make no mistake; mean behaviors can wound deeply and adults can make a huge difference in the lives of young people when they hold kids accountable for being mean. Yet, meanness is different from bullying in important ways that should be understood and differentiated when it comes to intervention.

Bullying = Intentionally aggressive behavior, *repeated over time*, that involves an imbalance of power.

Experts agree that bullying entails three key elements: an intent to harm, a power imbalance and repeated acts or threats of aggressive behavior. Kids who bully say or do something intentionally hurtful to others and they keep doing it, with no sense of regret or remorse -- even when targets of bullying show or express their hurt or tell the aggressors to stop.

Bullying may be physical, verbal, relational or carried out via technology:

- Physical aggression was once the gold standard of bullying-- the "sticks and stones" that made adults in charge stand up and take notice. This kind of bullying includes hitting, punching, kicking, spitting, tripping, hair pulling, slamming a child into a locker and a range of other behaviors that involve physical aggression.
- Verbal aggression is what our parents used to advise us to "just ignore." We now know that despite the old adage, words and threats can, indeed, hurt and can even cause profound, lasting harm.
- Relational aggression is a form of bullying in which kids use their friendship--or the threat of taking their friendship away--to hurt someone. Social exclusion, shunning, hazing, and rumor spreading are all forms of this pervasive type of bullying that can be especially beguiling and crushing to kids.
- Cyberbullying is a specific form of bullying that involves technology. According to Hinduja and Patchin of the Cyberbullying Research Center, it is the "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." Notably, the likelihood of repeated harm is especially high with cyberbullying because electronic messages can be accessed by multiple parties, resulting in repeated exposure and repeated harm.

So, why is it so important to make the distinction between rude, mean and bullying? Can't I just let parents share with me stories about their kids?

Here's the thing; in our culture of 24/7 news cycles and social media sound bites, we have a better opportunity than ever before to bring attention to important issues. In the last few years, Americans have collectively paid attention to the issue of bullying like never before; millions of school children have been given a voice, 49 states in the U.S. have passed anti-bullying legislation, and thousands of adults have been trained in important strategies to keep kids safe and dignified in schools and communities. These are significant achievements.

At the same time, however, I have already begun to see that gratuitous references to bullying are creating a bit of a "little boy who cried wolf" phenomena. In other words, if kids and parents improperly classify rudeness and mean behavior as bullying -- whether to simply make conversation or to bring attention to their short-term discomfort -- we all run the risk of becoming so sick and tired of hearing the word that this actual life-and-death issue among young people loses its urgency as quickly as it rose to prominence.

It is important to distinguish between rude, mean and bullying so that teachers, school administrators, police, youth workers, parents and kids all know what to pay attention to and when to intervene. As we have heard too often in the news, a child's future may depend on a non-jaded adult's ability to discern between rudeness at the bus stop and life-altering bullying.

Signe Whitson is a licensed therapist, national educator on bullying, and author of three books including *Friendship & Other Weapons: Group Activities to Help Young Girls Cope with Bullying*. For more information or workshop inquiries, please visit www.signewhitson.com

INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS AND ASSESSMENTS for Schools (ICAS):
Mathematics Competition Results 2015

96 students from BGHS participated in the ICAS Mathematics 2015 and achieved outstanding results. **15** students earned Distinction, **46** students earned Credit and **7** students earned Merit Certificates.

The following students were awarded a **Distinction** Certificate and ranked in the top **2-10%** of the state:

Ninuri Mahagoda
Jenna Huynh
Thusitha Srineelavannan
Sia Sachdeva
Jasmine Singh
Aisha Nauman
Charlene Melencion
Nafisa Khondokar

Haichen (Hellen) Jiang
Rhalize Cereno
Muznah Naeem
Sylvia Charles
Simran Hothi
Dorcas Kotti
Ferah Redjeb

The following **Credit** Certificate winners, **46** students, ranked in the top **11-35%** of the state:

Dahmya Gajanayake
Kirsten Vega
Vaishavi Doctor
Melissa Artwoeger
Chinnu Anil
Sunidhi Gupta
Paridhi Agarwal
Annisha Yogarajah
Prithika Yogarajah
Kamaya Jambhale
Youngju Wee
Anusha Vakeesan
Eustacia Surjanto
Nabila Srotaswini
Bethany Southam
Anjhana Murugesan

Malika Kang
Danya Balakrishnan
Jashanpreet Bola
Hanshana Nath
Ashreena Oberoi
Selina Rebello
Deevanshika Thaman
Ramneek Thind
Kaushanah Thivagarupan
Kimiko Trinidad
Chelsie Uthayakumar
Khushi Wadhawan
Dheeptha Lal
Sukhleen Khalsa
Zainab Nisar
Harjot Virk

Anosua Roy
Sanjana Rana
Jessie Ma
Christel Gonzales
Miranda Cunanan
Angela John
Yvette Sequira
Indussa Gunaseelan
Shuharat Ahmed
Sara Uy
Udani Hewadewage Fernando
Vandita Raghunandan
Lepesha Jegatheeswaran
Gloria Lee
Malika Kang

We wholeheartedly congratulate all of this year's participants!

Mrs. S. Kaur
ICAS Mathematics Competition Organiser

7L Mathematics Excursion to Sydney Business Park

Blacktown Girls High School has been involved with the new BEACON initiative this year, where various local businesses have partnered with our school to provide an intensive connection between school and work. They partner with our students to provide work-related support, such as writing resumes, developing skills required for successful work interviews and participating in mock interviews. BEACON provides information about careers and motivates students to choose courses that will allow them to make a smooth pathway into work or further education.

In collaboration with the BEACON program, the STEM program has a focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, inspiring students to participate in ever-increasing opportunities in this career path.

In connection with STEM, the 7L Mathematics class was invited to participate in the Collaborative Classrooms program at Sydney Business Park. Mathematics teacher Ms. Thangasamy collaborated with civil engineer Mr. Michael Gray (Infrastructure Director) to develop a teaching sequence around concepts of perimeter and area. Once the lesson was planned, Ms. Thangasamy spent a number of weeks teaching students the formulae for working out perimeter and area. Mr. Gray visited one of 7L's Maths lessons to show them the plans for the site and give them more information about how to read the scaled drawing of the park. Students used their formula to work out the area of the block and then converted this into hectares.



On November 17, students took part in an excursion to Sydney Business Park to put their learning into practice. Students used a trundle wheel and a theodolite to measure the dimensions of one block in the actual site. Mashaim Zaheer and Chloe Martin were rewarded with a chocolate for the most accurate measurement with the trundle wheel: they recorded a measurement within one metre of the actual measurement on the plan.



The excursion also included a look at the Lindt factory, where students were taken on a tour of the entire factory, including the baking areas, chocolate packaging sections, warehouse and storage areas. As a bonus, at the end of the tour students were given a packet of Lindt chocolates, which was very much appreciated.



Many thanks to Mark Johnson for driving the bus, Satwinder Kaur and Cheryll Koop for accompanying the students and Udaya Thangasamy for coordinating the tour.

7B Blacktown Library Excursion: Storytelling Workshop

On Friday the 20th of November, Mrs Cracknell and Mrs Ericksen organised an enjoyable trip to the Blacktown Public Library for our 7B English class. We joined in a pre-school program which involved storytelling and arts & crafts. The children were totally engaged in the stories and activities. We were paired up with the pre-schoolers and assisted them in their craftwork. We had a delightful time.

Next, it was our turn. The Youth Development Officer, Lee, explained how a storyboard is essential for planning the plot of a story. She demonstrated how useful storyboarding can be, especially for a complicated storyline. While Lee told us a story, we followed her instructions to fold a piece of paper. Each fold represented a section of the plot. This is how we were able to remember the entire story.

We enjoyed this experience and learnt how to express our story ideas in a unique, exciting and different way.

By Najlaa Karimi and Hridhima Dhakal, 7B



A Busy Term 4 for Visual and Performing Arts

This term has seen the finalisation of many major projects for Visual Arts students from Years 7-12. In preparation for the end-of-year exhibition which drew positive comments from all of its visitors, students were involved in the following activities:

- Year 7 completed their ceramic masks and tonal studies.
- Year 8 decorated ceramic containers and completed canvas paintings based on their “Growth and Decay” topic.
- After an insightful visit to the Archibald Prize exhibition at the Sydney Art Gallery and contemporary works at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Year 9 worked hard to create staff portraits in the style of a selected artist.
- Year 10 also visited the Archibald Prize exhibition and the Museum of Contemporary Art, engaging in animated discussion that added to their understanding of what art can be. More recently, they finished canvas painting appropriations and added the final touches to their ceramic fantasy shoes.
- Year 11 finalised a sculpture unit and began planning for their Higher School Certificate body of work.



Our exhibition recorded the processes involved in the development of art-making skills and creative problem-solving, providing the audience with a comprehensive view of what Visual Arts studies involve. Congratulations are extended to all of our hardworking, talented students whose achievements (both personal and collective) were on display for all to see.

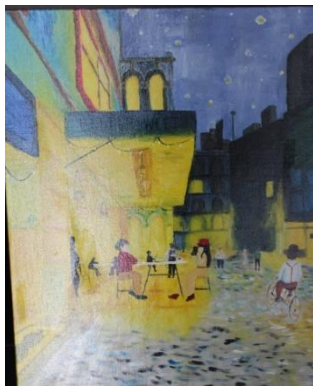
Congratulations are also extended to Natalie Khalil of Year 8 who was this year’s high school winner in the Fairfax Media “Design an Ad” competition. Natalie was officially awarded her prize and medal at an informal ceremony at Westpoint, Blacktown last month.















Dance

As part of the annual Showcase evening this term, the Blacktown Girls High School Dance Ensemble performed a contemporary dance work, "Read All about It." The Bollywood dance ensemble and Hip Hop crews also performed their energetic and exciting dance works. The Year 9 and 10 Elective dance classes performed a number of jazz, hip hop and contemporary group items. In particular, the Year 10 Dance Elective Class performed a completely student-devised, choreographed and sound-engineered dance work, "Hidden Talent." There were many other group and solo dance items from a range of different dance styles including Cook Island dance, tap dance and Classical Indian dance. Congratulations to all of our performers and backstage crew!

Music

Music students have had numerous performance opportunities this year at a variety of occasions. School-based performances included Showcase, the BEACON Charter Signing, Formal Assemblies, Presentation Day and the Principal's Conference. Elective music students have demonstrated their impressive vocal and instrumental skills in solos and ensemble performances on each of these occasions.

Tribal Drum had the opportunity to perform for the wider community on many occasions. Many of these performances have involved community service aspects including a fundraiser for a school in Zimbabwe, the One Walk & If You've Got It Flaunt It fundraisers for Juvenile Diabetes Research, International Women's Day celebrations at the Blacktown RSL Club, One Billion Rising at Blacktown to raise awareness of domestic violence issues, Open Day for the Blacktown Women's and Girl's Health Centre, the Blacktown Area Baton Relay to celebrate the anniversary of 100 years of women in policing and the Wellbeing program run by Catholic Care. Other drumming performances included the Embrace Life Festival at Penrith and Untold Egypt at Mulgoa. It is wonderful to be able to represent the school and support the local community in this way.

Tribal Drum also experienced a dynamic and challenging workshop with Sibou Bangoura, a West African master drummer. This workshop enabled the girls to deepen their understanding of the phrasing and feeling of West African music.

The highlight of all our performances would have to be our recent performance at the West African Festival in Marrickville. Our Tribal Drum students were the only school group to perform at this festival. It was an amazing experience for the girls to be immersed in West African culture and to perform alongside professional musicians. Their performance was spectacular!

Our beginners drumming group has also performed, now under the name of "Tribal Beats." Their performances included the Open Day at Blacktown Women's and Girl's Health Centre, Mental Health Awareness Month celebrations at Penrith and Showcase.

Many thanks must go to our patient and reliable bus drivers who have looked after us on numerous occasions and also to the CAPA faculty who have provided wonderful support.

I look forward to working with all of these talented students again in 2016.

–Sue Kennedy

Spotlight on PDHPE: Term 4

Term 4 has been a busy one for the PDHPE faculty, with the warmer weather allowing the opportunity for students to engage in a number of outdoor experiences.

The **Year 11 PDHPE** class concluded the First Aid and Fitness Choices options of the Preliminary Course with a trip to Bondi to meet the Bondi life guards and experience a different type of fitness activity with a leisurely walk from Bondi to Bronte along the beautiful coast line.



The majority of the Year 11 PDHPE class took on the challenge of a first aid course which was conducted by the Royal Life Saving Society. It involved students engaging in quite a lengthy theoretical component, where they completed an array of modules in a theoretical book. Students then undertook a day of practical activities, including demonstrating CPR. The first aid certificate is current for 3 years, and as students needed to log in with a USI (Unique Student Identification) Number, it is recognised as a TAFE qualification and is transportable throughout their careers.



The Year 11 PDHPE class knuckled down to the HSC course in Term 4, commencing with the Sports Medicine option, and we were extremely lucky to have a visiting physiotherapist, Ben Black from Lexington Physiotherapy, demonstrate how to stabilise an ankle, finger and thumb injury through taping. The girls then had the opportunity to tape an ankle themselves, with mixed results on the day, but a lot of fun practising.



The **Year 7 and 9 Swim School** was a great success. All staff who attended were extremely pleased with the way that students embraced the opportunity to improve their skills and confidence in the water. The progress of all students was immense regardless of their starting ability. As well as the opportunity to improve swimming ability, the students were given instruction regarding safety around water, first aid and resuscitation, as well as the most practical method to utilise when rescuing people. As a result of discussion with staff and students regarding their lack of experience and knowledge of the ocean and surf safety, Year 8 will travel to the beach next year to learn how to spot dangers in the ocean, including rips and dangerous currents. Further information regarding swimming lessons for students over the school holiday period and beyond can be found at www.aqualearntoswim.com.au





The **Year 9 and 10 Physical Activity and Sports Studies (PASS)** classes have been involved in a number of new experiences this term.

The Year 9 classes have been studying Outdoor Recreation and honed their outdoor cooking skills by cooking damper in an open fire. Students collectively dug fire pits and gathered firewood from around the school. They were involved in starting the fire using kindling and then larger branches to make coals with which to cook the damper. The girls then made the damper from flour, milk, butter and sugar, wrapping them in foil and placing the dampers in the pits, surrounding them with coals.

After approximately 25 minutes the dampers were removed and the fruits of their labours were revealed. The girls were really surprised that they tasted so good and proudly showed off their efforts to the Principal, Mr. Flowers.

After eating the damper with a generous serving of jam, the girls set about toasting marshmallows over the fire.



On Tuesday the 8th of December, an eager group of Year 9 and 10 PASS students embarked on a “surfing safari” to Long Reef Beach. They were instructed on aspects of surf safety such as how to read surf conditions and the safest place to surf. They were then taken into the water by the experienced instructors and given an opportunity to practise boogie boarding and surfing. The girls had a lot of fun on the day and had varying degrees of success in managing to push up and ride the waves.

