Blair to have freshman wing

By Han Hu

Starting next year, most of Blair's freshman classes will be concentrated in one area of the building as part of the administration's efforts to raise freshman academic performance.

Blair plans to group all freshman Connections, English, math and social studies classes in the 250s to 270s hallways and freshman science classes in a few rooms in the 340s to 370s hallways, according to Science Resource Teacher Jennifer Kempf, who is involved in the planning process.

The number of teachers who will have to switch classrooms as a result of the new policy is currently unknown, said Kempf.

Room changes resulting from the new policy may seriously impact certain staff members, Principal Philip Gainous admitted. “All these changes may be traumatic to some staff members,” especially to those who have been in the same classrooms for years, he said.

Students’ transition to high school has been problematic at schools nationwide, according to Gainous, with many students “falling through the cracks” and not receiving adequate guidance and care.

After recent research findings showed that grouping freshmen and their teachers together improved students’ performance, the Blair administration’s efforts to raise freshman academic performance.

Jumping to victory

Junior Chris Wilhelm of Blair’s Ultimate Frisbee team grabs the frisbee in Blair’s 15-3 win over Wilson High School on March 28. Photo by Sebi Brown

Hard drugs at high costs

A handful of Blazers experiment with cocaine

By Brittany Moyer

Where only first names appear, names have been changed to protect the identities of the sources.

Parked quietly on a Takoma Park side street, Tim, a senior, takes a small cocaine-filled bag from the car’s cup holder, carefully pours its contents onto the dashboard in front of him and uses his school ID to move the powder into a single, white line. When his friend in the passenger seat, Jason, also a senior, has done the same thing, they each stick a rolled-up 20-dollar bill up one nostril, plug the other one and “go down the line,” swiftly snorting the drug from the dashboard, through their noses and into their systems.

Instantly, Jason feels cocaine’s trademark “drip” sensation slide down his throat as the drug is quickly absorbed through his nasal tissues and into the bloodstream.

Students’ transition to high school has been problematic at schools nationwide, according to Gainous, with many students “falling through the cracks” and not receiving adequate guidance and care.

After recent research findings showed that grouping freshmen and their teachers together improved students’ performance, the Blair administration’s efforts to raise freshman academic performance.

MCPS schools fail to follow flushing directive

All nine MCPS schools tested for lead so far have been found to have lead-contaminated water. At least five of those schools did not flush water fountains for 30 seconds before the beginning of every school day as required by a 1989 directive.

Blair began flushing its water fountains after the discovery of lead in Washington, D.C., schools and will eventually be tested for lead contamination. But because the school was recently constructed, MCPS considers Blair less likely to have pipes that would leach lead into its drinking water and Blair may not be tested this school year.

Former Blair student Amos Antonio Morel-Ruiz, 20, was shot and killed during a dispute on March 20 in the Mckenney Hills community of Silver Spring. Another former Blair student and one current Blair student were also injured in the shooting but sustained non-life-threatening wounds.

On the same day, 18-year-old Angel Toledo was arrested for the murder, which was the result of a dispute precipitated by a reason police have yet to determine, according to Montgomery County Police Department spokesperson Lucille Baur.

Former Blair student Amos Antonio Morel-Ruiz, 20, was shot and killed during a dispute on March 20 in the Mckenney Hills community of Silver Spring. Another former Blair student and one current Blair student were also injured in the shooting but sustained non-life-threatening wounds.

On the same day, 18-year-old Angel Toledo was arrested for the murder, which was the result of a dispute precipitated by a reason police have yet to determine, according to Montgomery County Police Department spokesperson Lucille Baur.

Before 2:50 a.m. on the 2100

¡Hola, Cuba!

Clockwise from top: Blazers pose in front of the Cuban Ministry of Interior during their April 3-10 trip to Cuba sponsored by teacher David Swaney; a state cemetery in Havana; a billboard reads, “A better world is possible.” Photos courtesy of Noel Berman and Elizabeth Finn.
Last year, Blair’s Health and PE department dealt with allegations of sexual harassment. In response to the accusations, Blair has created a policy that makes students even more vulnerable to harassment and molestation. The policy was instituted only to protect Blair from lawsuits, not to actually protect students.

PE policy fails to protect students

By Roxana Hadad

An opinion


To the average Blazer, the names of these novels don’t ring a bell, not because these books are unpopular but because they don’t seem to exist within the walls of Blair’s English department.

Instead of teaching contemporary, multicultural or controversial literature, Blair forces students to read novels which are outdated and irrelevant that the average Blazer cannot relate to them.

The purpose of high-school literature is to find characters which students can learn from; in this day and age, it is more commonplace to find such role models in more recent and diverse novels.

English is a classic, timeless writer, but while some Blair students are forced to read up to six of their works, they are only allowed a few opportunities to read a modern piece of literature (like Catcher in the Rye) by J.D. Salinger, whose themes of adolescent struggle with power, authority, responsibility and belonging are ones which every teenager can identify with.

If more contemporary works such as Salmoner’s were added to the reading list, Blues would have a multitude of literature that they could associate with.

The Blair reading list also fails to deliver the amount of diversity in literature that would be expected from such a multicultural school. Currently, the Blair reading list is composed of approximately 60 percent white authors and only 40 percent of black, Hispanic and Asian American authors combined.

In contrast, Sherwood High School allows students to pick books of their choice from a list of international novels, including authors from Puerto Rico, Vietnam, Kenya and approximately 60 other countries. Reading lists should incorporate authors like Nelson Mandela and Xiao Dizhu to accompany standbys Richard Wright and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

With Blair’s reputation as a controversial school that continuously takes chances—whether it is the Blair Magnet and Communication Arts Program, classes such as Peace Studies and clubs such as the Gay/Straight Alliance—it is a mystery as to why the English department has not taken more chances with its reading list.

Currently, other Montgomery County high schools have such controversial books as Catch-22 by Joseph Heller and even the King James version of the Bible on their reading lists. High school is the last chance for English teachers to inspire students to read—risks must be taken to promote teenagers to take interest in literature.

Until students at Blair are allowed to incorporate Mandel, Heller and Dizhu into the reading list of Shakespeare, Crane and Wright, the opportunity for students to explore the world of literature could be lost.

The English department should catch up with the times and adapt the Blair reading list to represent the student body, and give Blazer the type of diverse, controversial and contemporary change they so desperately need.
Classroom attitudes promote stereotypes of women

By Ashley Jurinko
An opinion

In her NSL class, sophomore Nolan Burke's teacher assigns a brainstorming project. The teacher says that someone needs to be the recorder, and Burke's group of mostly boys looks in her direction. "I guess I'll put some paper," she says.

Burke's situation is typical of burgeoning girls. Teachers stereotype them as passive, not leadership roles. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, about three in four women work in managerial or clerical work. In the workplace, CEOs are looking for "go-getters," people willing to be part of the team. The workplace is not the equal opportunity it was supposed to be.

Nolan Burke's teacher assigns a writing task. "You're good for more than clerical work. In the 'recorder' position, they're barking up the wrong tree." It is possible for some underfunded, overpopulated and all-too-often-overlooked institution to compensate for historical and systemic inequalities in society.

Demography and geography

The task is especially difficult for a school system faced with the types of extremes with which MCPS must cope. The Walt Whitman High School's students in Bethesda are hauling $30,000 Kevlars down to the Potomac as part of a crew team backed entirely by intensive communal fundraising efforts, administrators at Kennedy High School in Silver Spring struggle to get funding for their increasingly desperate "learning community" initiatives. While families in one part of the county have the resources to teach their students to stroke in fast track towards a first-rate education, those in another are struggling to stay afloat.

Exchanging the boundary lines that create one parent body able to contribute $20,000 to a general school fund annually (Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in 2003) and another that has yet to break the $3,000 mark (Kennedy in 2003), it's easy to cry foul play. In such a diverse county, what kind of school-system gerrymandering must it have taken to create such a concentration of wealth? But the real tale is one of an uphill battle against demographic factors that dwarf the school-system's efforts at fairness.

The average income in Bethesda, home of B-CC and Whitman, is $130,160, more than double the average income in Silver Spring ($60,631), according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The repercussions of our wealth inequities and raise standards of expectations to an equal high for all students, the widening gap in income and achievement between the poor and rich in the outside world would continue to create a stronghold of low expectations for low-income citizens that the school system cannot fight.

Parents like Gold's, who are on the upper end of this demographic spectrum, have the assertiveness, background knowledge and time it takes to gather information about an increasingly complex school system and create success stories for their children. They know how to put their children on the fast track towards a first-rate education, by teaching their children to read at an early age, arguing their children out of their cycle of poverty. Public education is the one shot at escape America offers to kids born into the prison of poverty. It's the one factor that's supposed to level the playing field, even the odds, close the gap and it's not working. Where 19 percent of students from lower-income families will get suspended or expelled, only nine percent of middle- or upper-class students will be similarly punished; where 13 percent of poor students will be forced to repeat a grade, only six percent of upper-class students will do so, according to a study by the Children's Defense Fund.

But when critics call on the public-school system to "raise the bar and close the gap," they're barking up the wrong tree. It's impossible for one underfunded, overpopulated and all-too-often-overlooked institution to compensate for historical and systemic inequalities in society.

The cycle of poverty

In a society that purports social mobility, the fact is that a family's income will likely stay static over generations. Ninety-five percent of those born into the poorest 25 percent will live in that bracket all their lives, according to a January 2004 Business Week study by the Children's Defense Fund. Ninety percent of those born into the poorest 25 percent will live in that bracket all their lives. According to a January 2004 Business Week study by the Children's Defense Fund.

Ninety percent of those born into the poorest 25 percent will live in that bracket all their lives. The cycle of poverty is one shot at escape America offers to kids born into the prison of poverty. It's the one factor that's supposed to level the playing field, even the odds, close the gap and it's not working: Where 19 percent of students from lower-income families will get suspended or expelled, only nine percent of middle- or upper-class students will be similarly punished; where 13 percent of poor students will be forced to repeat a grade, only six percent of upper-class students will do so, according to a study by the Children's Defense Fund.

But when critics call on the public-school system to "raise the bar and close the gap," they're barking up the wrong tree. It's impossible for one underfunded, overpopulated and all-too-often-overlooked institution to compensate for historical and systemic inequalities in society.

The task is especially difficult for a school system faced with the types of extremes with which MCPS must cope. The Walt Whitman High School's students in Bethesda are hauling $30,000 Kevlars down to the Potomac as part of a crew team backed entirely by intensive communal fundraising efforts, administrators at Kennedy High School in Silver Spring struggle to get funding for their increasingly desperate "learning community" initiatives. While families in one part of the county have the resources to teach their students to stroke in fast track towards a first-rate education, those in another are struggling to stay afloat.

Exchanging the boundary lines that create one parent body able to contribute $20,000 to a general school fund annually (Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in 2003) and another that has yet to break the $3,000 mark (Kennedy in 2003), it's easy to cry foul play. In such a diverse county, what kind of school-system gerrymandering must it have taken to create such a concentration of wealth? But the real tale is one of an uphill battle against demographic factors that dwarf the school-system's efforts at fairness.

The average income in Bethesda, home of B-CC and Whitman, is $130,160, more than double the average income in Silver Spring ($60,631), according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The repercussions of our wealth inequities and raise standards of expectations to an equal high for all students, the widening gap in income and achievement between the poor and rich in the outside world would continue to create a stronghold of low expectations for low-income citizens that the school system cannot fight.

Parents like Gold's, who are on the upper end of this demographic spectrum, have the assertiveness, background knowledge and time it takes to gather information about an increasingly complex school system and create success stories for their children. They know how to put their children on the fast track towards a first-rate education, by teaching their children to read at an early age, arguing their children out of their cycle of poverty. Public education is the one shot at escape America offers to kids born into the prison of poverty. It's the one factor that's supposed to level the playing field, even the odds, close the gap and it's not working: Where 19 percent of students from lower-income families will get suspended or expelled, only nine percent of middle- or upper-class students will be similarly punished; where 13 percent of poor students will be forced to repeat a grade, only six percent of upper-class students will do so, according to a study by the Children's Defense Fund.

But when critics call on the public-school system to "raise the bar and close the gap," they're barking up the wrong tree. It's impossible for one underfunded, overpopulated and all-too-often-overlooked institution to compensate for historical and systemic inequalities in society.

The task is especially difficult for a school system faced with the types of extremes with which MCPS must cope. The Walt Whitman High School's students in Bethesda are hauling $30,000 Kevlars down to the Potomac as part of a crew team backed entirely by intensive communal fundraising efforts, administrators at Kennedy High School in Silver Spring struggle to get funding for their increasingly desperate "learning community" initiatives. While families in one part of the county have the resources to teach their students to stroke in fast track towards a first-rate education, those in another are struggling to stay afloat.

Exchanging the boundary lines that create one parent body able to contribute $20,000 to a general school fund annually (Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in 2003) and another that has yet to break the $3,000 mark (Kennedy in 2003), it's easy to cry foul play. In such a diverse county, what kind of school-system gerrymandering must it have taken to create such a concentration of wealth? But the real tale is one of an uphill battle against demographic factors that dwarf the school-system's efforts at fairness.

The average income in Bethesda, home of B-CC and Whitman, is $130,160, more than double the average income in Silver Spring ($60,631), according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The repercussions of our wealth inequities and raise standards of expectations to an equal high for all students, the widening gap in income and achievement between the poor and rich in the outside world would continue to create a stronghold of low expectations for low-income citizens that the school system cannot fight.

Parents like Gold's, who are on the upper end of this demographic spectrum, have the assertiveness, background knowledge and time it takes to gather information about an increasingly complex school system and create success stories for their children. They know how to put their children on the fast track towards a first-rate education, by teaching their children to read at an early age, arguing their children out of their cycle of poverty. Public education is the one shot at escape America offers to kids born into the prison of poverty. It's the one factor that's supposed to level the playing field, even the odds, close the gap and it's not working: Where 19 percent of students from lower-income families will get suspended or expelled, only nine percent of middle- or upper-class students will be similarly punished; where 13 percent of poor students will be forced to repeat a grade, only six percent of upper-class students will do so, according to a study by the Children's Defense Fund.
Cicada invasion: Beware of the bugs

After 17 years, invading insect-swarm surfaces for a fun summer in your backyard

By DAN GREENE
Humor

天下 are coming for me. Millions and millions of them, enough to block out the sun or at least blanket my azaleas. The 17-year cicadas will be here in a month, in all their noisy glory. And may their score be good, whom I’m sure we’ll all be worshipping soon, have mercy on us all.

“About a million per acre,” enthuses Cindy Allen, who estimates of the swarm’s size, without the fear most people reserve for approaching clouds of creepy-crawly. These periodical cicadas will arrive mid-May and set camp in your yard for the better part of a month, so roll out the welcome mat for a few million guests.

I’m quaking in my new bug-repellent boots, and I’ll tell you why. Whether you were here for the last invasion or not, you’re still probably not ready for...

The Attack of Brood X
In and around our nation’s capital, cicadas show up every summer, like old friends, idling, long-antennae, winged friends with blood-red insect eyes that lay their eggs underground and burrow out when it’s hot (a bit too late, due to the cicada mating song, so if you see a few thousand insects try to mate them, it’s okay for us). So far we’re fairly used to a little bug music in summer and fall. But the biblical swarm headed our way is different. These are the biggest (about an inch and a half long) and loudest cousins of the swarm, plus, there’s millions more.

This year’s cicada visitors belong to the charmingly named Brood X, a title fit for a drive-in movie like The Slime Creature From Pluto! They are the largest 17-year brood, so you only had that easy for us.

Ready for the invasion?
By now you may be understandably worried about the cicadas, their numbers and their noise and wondering what steps you can take. Well, the most effective way to safeguard your plants and, theoretically, yourself is to find a food-insecticide or some physics students like cheesecloth, which cicadas cannot penetrate. What cheesecloth is, I’m not entirely sure, but it sounds good.

And while we’re on food, Allen notes that a large number of people actually are quite enthusiastic about the coming swarm, happy for an opportunity to test out recipes for cicada pizza, cicada stir-fry, toasted cicada and other crunchy, protein-filled bug meals.

If you’re up for a little excitement, you can have fun with the cicadas, too. Some lawn equipment runs with a sound at the same pitch as the cicada mating song, so if you play your cards right, you can see a few thousand insects try to mate out there. It’s a power-saw or lawn mower.

But the million-dollar question of billion-cicada question, as it were: How dangerous are the bugs? All reports indicate that the cicadas cannot bite or sting, and the only damage that they will do is to younger plants, through sheer weight of numbers.

But we can be sure that they’re harmless. I still have suspicions; you don’t lay low for 17 years without planning something. On the off chance that the cicadas are invading, Allen says that she would definitely prefer being enslaved in cicada tree-mine to being processed into food for the bug overlords.

It’s a tough decision, I know, but it’s one you can carefully consider as we approach a month of swatting cicadas out of our trees and personal space. Good luck. As for me, I’ll be in my tasty cheesecloth teepee.

Grading policy aids accountability

New MCPS policy will accurately reflect a student’s real knowledge

By ANNA SCHOENFELDER
An opinion

The MCPS Board of Education’s policy to make course grades more objective. The new policy specifically eliminates courses and homework graded for completeness, which for years has inflamed course grades for students at Blair and across the county. If it is effective, the policy will make course grades a more accurate reflection of students’ poor exam scores.

Teachers curriculum and manipulate grades for reasons which are generally well-meaning and accepted. For example, a teacher may use extra credit as a balance for a particularly difficult test. Or, an easy A on a homework assignment graded for completion, not accurately, could boost a student’s dismal understanding of the subject.

Physics teacher Karen Hillmer says she has noticed many teachers giving fluff points in math and science classes. “I’m not doing that. At the same time, I’m giving a lot of fluff for holding the line,” Hillmer says. Meanwhile, says Hillmer, math skills have deteriorated to the point where some physics students are baffled by simple algebra. Hillmer attributes this to some math teachers’ emphasis on effort on various projects rather than test scores. The new policy will give much-needed support to teachers who hold students accountable for a solid understanding of the curriculum.

Math teacher Julie Greenberg says that grade inflation is due in part to “philosophical differences” between teachers. Some students try hard in math, but it becomes clear to the teacher that they won’t pass the exam. This is due in large part, says Greenberg, to social promotion, an unofficial policy that passes struggling students in basic elementary- and middle-school courses, making them shaky at best in most subjects and downright lost in math. Social promotion reflects a strong desire by teachers, administrators and parents to keep kids “on track” and on grade level. However, grades lose their meaning when students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math. By the time students are falling Algebra II, Greenberg says, it’s too late, due to the cumulative nature of math.

Senior Esey Kidane admits that he got consistent A’s and B’s in his math classes throughout high school while getting D’s and E’s on his math exams. Kidane is not alone: 40 percent of non-magnet Blazers failed their first semester math exams last year. While some students blame the failure on bad written tests, Greenberg says that she, in fact, never seen a failure that can be attributed to a misaligned test. “If you can’t get a respectable score on an exam then you have been cheated,” Greenberg says.

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.

In effect, the new grading policy is based more purely on what students actually know and understand than on how hard they have worked. With the policy, the Board may be able to end the pattern of social promotion and ensure students have a solid foundation in basic math to make good grades.

In defense of the Connections class

By BETHY COSTLO

The recently approved grading policy will, if nothing else, help teachers to know the average student has on core academic subjects. Without curves, extra credit or homework graded for completion, students will no longer be able to scrape by by acing that end-of-semester math “art project.” At least, the policy will force students to understand the basic objectives and have a solid foundation in basic math in order to make good grades.
Blazers sound off on school issues

Does the school reading list contain enough diversity? » see story, page 2

The school reading list does not have enough diversity in it. Titles are restricted to high-brow “classics” with esoteric meanings. While these books are certainly important in education, more contemporary writers are no less important and would give readers a different perspective and help to foster a love of reading that drier titles discourage.

-Junior Alan Bateman

I think the school reading list could use some more diversity. I mean, does everything have to have a sad ending? At least one main character has died in every book I’ve read this year. I think, mean, does everything have to have a sad ending? At least one

-Freshman Antonio Pianio

Would you be willing to leave your home and family to get a good education? » see story, page 25

I would be willing to leave my home and family to get a good education. Getting an education and learning is so important. If you don’t have that in life, you won't be anybody. Without an education you can’t have a job that will give you decent wages. I want to get my education, find a job and get paid so I can go back to my family and support them if they need me to.

-Freshman Angeline Anthony

I wouldn’t leave my home or family to get a good education because that’s where and who I grew up with. I wouldn’t leave because I have a roof over my head and could go to a university or college in Maryland, and it wouldn’t be that far away. My family is almost all that I have. I can understand losing a friend, but not my family.

-Sophomore Maria Cortez

Do you think plagiarism is a problem at Blair? » see newsbrief, page 11

Yes, I think plagiarism is a problem at Blair. Students usually use plagiarism because they’re lazy and they don’t want to put in the effort to do the work themselves. Students should rephrase what they found in their own words.

-Freshman Jennifer Cao

Plagiarism is not a big problem at Blair. Although the Internet now makes it easy for someone to cut and paste an essay together, most students are more inclined to be lazy than dishonest. They would simply not do the assignment than do it half-way.

-Junior Jeff Gu

I think plagiarism is a problem at Blair because it’s a bad habit for students. It must be stopped. Otherwise, in the real world, the suspect will be sued.

-Freshman Hao Pham

Should gay couples be allowed to raise children? » see story, page 13

Gay couples should definitely be allowed to raise children because everyone who has the will, need and capabilities to raise and love a child should be able to. There are so many orphan children in need of love and care in this world that to deny them parents is not only a disservice to them but to our society as a whole. To deny individuals the right to give children a loving home based on discrimination is not only unconstitutional but immoral.

-Senior Denise Sylla

No. That is a very bad idea. It is bad enough that there are gay couples. Children raised by gay couples will likely turn gay. They will face social problems like blending in with other people. Most important is that they will see a very irregular version of parenting.

-Freshman Errata Obosha

Due to my religious beliefs, I feel that gay couples should not be able to bring up children.

-Freshman Shanice Ruffin

Yes, of course gay couples should be allowed to raise children. Why shouldn’t they? If children need a male and a female role model, then what about single parents? There is no reason gay couples shouldn’t be able to raise children.

-Freshman Caitlin Arlotta

I think they should not because when the child gets older, other kids are going to be making fun and looking at the child differently. No child should go through that.

-Freshman Candace Johnson

How do you feel about keeping freshmen in a separate wing of the school? » see story, page 1

I think that keeping freshmen in a separate wing of the school would make it easier for them to get to their classes. However, it could be embarrassing for them and could turn into more of a problem than a solution.

-Sophomore Anna Chipilis

Keeping freshmen in a separate wing of the school defeats the entire purpose of being a freshman: adjusting to a big school and meeting all different kinds of people. If the freshmen were in a different side of the school, then there would be no point in them entering high school yet.

-Sophomore Morgan Luker

Quote of the issue

“I told them that my country fights, my dad died and no one is trying to help my family.”

» see “A world away from a war-ravaged past,” page 25
Water in county schools contaminated

Additional tests to be conducted after high levels of lead discovered in MCPS water

By Teens show more awareness of safe sex practices

Abstinence and precautions by sexually active youths decrease pregnancy rate nationwide

By SIMONA DANILIOVSKA

Nationwide statistics, gathered by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published in a New York Times article, show that teens are engaging in less sex and using more protection, resulting in the lowest pregnancy rate ever recorded in the U.S. The trend is in part due to efforts like MCPS' recently approved pilot program pushed for by a Blair teacher.

According to a March 22 Board of Education (BOE) resolution, a video demonstrating proper uses of contraception is to be piloted in three MCPS schools, Blair, Blake and Wheaton. The approval is largely due to the efforts of health teacher Susan Soulé, who created a county petition for the video, drew up a lesson plan, made a demonstration video and testified to the BOE in support of the video.

More protection

Research findings showed that among sexually active teenagers, condom use has soared to 65 per- cent overall and nearly 73 percent among black male students. Soulé views the approval of the video as a “positive” step toward educating students about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). “I believe kids have a right to learn how to be responsible. It’s not like, ‘Ooh! Have sex!’ It’s for protection of STDs,” said the teacher.

Sophomore Valerie Fomengia thinks the heights of school students demonstrated the situation an “anomaly” and did not test other schools.

Lead poisoning is severe and does not display immediate symptoms. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR) stated that with extended exposure, lead poisoning can cause weakness in fingers, wrists or ankles and possibly affect the memory. ASTDR also states that lead poisoning leads to anemia and organ damage.

After lead solder was identified as the cause of contamination in 1989, measures such as the directive were taken by MCPS to prevent further lead problems, according to Kate Harrison, MCPS Assistant Director for Communications. “We thought we had been pretty effective; that apparently is not the case,” admitted Harrison of MCPS' newest directive.

Many people consider the 1989 directive's expectation that janitors would remember to flush water fountains at the beginning of every school day for 15 minutes four hours until all occupants leave the building around 10:30 p.m., and classroom fountains have been flushed since then. MCPS officials are not yet sure how critical the lead situation is. “It’s going to take some time to figure out,” said Harrington.

“Just how much lead in water is a source of concern is not entirely clear. It’s something that a lot of expertise is being used in.”

“We thought we had been pretty effective; that apparently is not the case.”

April 22, 2004

NEWS
Staff training and implementation of MCPS’s revised grading plan, which was drafted in response to criticism from the community, have drawn criticism from the vast majority of high-school principals and teachers. The objections are largely due to costs involved with implementation and a provision that would grant 50 percent credit to a student who turns in no work.

At an April 13 principals’ meeting, Principal Philip Gainous said, 25 of 24 principals— all those present—affirmed the necessity for the grading policy but raised objections with the wording of the current document. “We basically said, ‘We can’t get on board with this,’” Gainous said.

The principals will push to have more teachers on MCPS grading and reporting committees and to postpone full implementation until the teachers and principals understand the policy’s “intent” more clearly, Gainous said. Each of the teachers who were unable to come to a consensus on how to respond to the Board’s grading policy. “Because we didn’t take a stand—and that’s our fault—the train has left the station,” Gainous said.

Additional sections have arisen regarding the implementation expenses. MCPS sent resource materials to all administrators and teachers—including an estimated 13,000 three-ring binders—that cost $25,000. In addition, each school received four instructional videos ($2697) and 620 copies of the book How to Grade for Learning by Ken O’Connor ($16,547). The total cost of materials to date is $44,234, according to Betty Collins of the Office of Staff Development.

Teacher training began on March 15 with the first of four meetings that will take place by the end of this school year. The meeting introduced the policy to teachers with videos and information on how to grade.

Some teachers feel that a good deal of the expenditures for training are unnecessary. “An incredible amount of money has been spent on sending out things, from videos to binders. Why do we really need those binders?” Math Resource Teacher Barbara Hofman asked.

Many who attended the first meeting were unsatisfied with what English teacher Phyllis Fleischaker said amounted to “maybe five minutes of information.”

But MCPS Grading and Reporting Implementation Committee Member Mark Kelsch said that even though most high-school teachers would already generally meet the standards of the grading policy, the county must make sure that all teachers are aware of how they should grade. “We need to make sure everyone is on the same page,” he said.

Teachers and administrators have also expressed concern over the teacher training portion of the revised plan. For example, an as-yet-unapproved part of the policy, which would have students who do not turn in assignments automatically receive 50 percent credit rather than a zero, has received fierce opposition. Teachers said that this plan would eliminate the incentive for students to turn in late work. The provision could be viewed as unfair, said Gainous. “Say I’m in class, and I’m working hard. But I’m not up to snuff. But let it be 60 percent; that’s failing,” he said.

“But Jimmy Jack over here does nothing. Zero. He gets a 50. Is that fair for those who did work and made effort?”

However, that provision is far from being approved, said Carol Blum, the director of High School Instruction and Achievement. MCPS is still gathering input from students, teachers, and principals to determine whether the policy would be beneficial. Blum said that the issue was only raised because students received a zero for a 100-point assignment “in a very deep hole.” “We’re trying to figure it out. It’s fair and so that it provides incentive to achieve success,” she said.

The revised grading policy may be too broad in subject areas such as foreign languages, where participation is often highly stressed, said foreign language resource teacher Joseph Lynch. “Participation is essential for demonstration of academic attainment,” he said. “Society expects a little more than just passing a test. It requires involvement, participation, engagement.”

“Society expects a little more than just passing a test.”

ESOL students also may be among those hurt by the policy because, although they learn in a secondary language, MCPS holds them to essentially the same standards, said Gainous. “Say a student is not up to snuff, he’s illiterate in his own country. He comes here and makes miles of progress, but because he can’t meet some objective, the student fails?” he asked.

The policy was first approved last March, and partial implementation will begin during the 2004-2005 school year with report cards that provide grades as well as evaluation, behavior, progress, attitude and participation.

Additional reporting by Izak Orlinsky
Ninth-grade classes to be concentrated

Freshmen will be centralized in administration’s effort to raise academic achievement.

Blair administration decided to create a “school within a school” for freshmen in addition to current freshman programs such as Connections. “What we had implemented was not enough to raise ninth grade achievement, so now we are taking it a step further,” said Gainous. The administration plans to not only physically concentrate freshmen and their teachers in one part of the building but also plans to create a support network with the teachers to help students succeed.

“Why isn’t my kid getting any attention until he falls off the cliff?”

The grouping, known as the “freshman teaming concept,” will facilitate communication and help teachers monitor student performance, explained Assistant Principal Pamela Shetley, who is a central figure in the ninth-grade administration.

The teaming concept has already been implemented with great success in Blair’s Magnet, CAP and ESOL programs, said Gainous pointed out. In those programs, students’ academic performance is closely monitored, and any slip in grades is immediately noticed and communicated to their teachers. Measures such as having the student attend study halls are then taken.

Parents of students not enrolled in one of those programs asked Gainous in the past why their children could not receive the same care and immediate support. “Some parents were saying, ‘Why isn’t my kid getting any attention until he falls off the cliff?’” Gainous recalled.

English teacher Megan Webb, who teaches four sections of freshmen and one section of juniors, believes the success of the policy depends on its planning and execution. “Just putting a band-aid on the freshman achievement problem will not help, but if the idea is well-thought-out and organized, it could work,” said Webb.

However, certain teachers may be restricted to teaching only ninth graders, and not all teachers want to teach only students from one grade, said Webb.

The logistics of concentrating freshmen have yet to be worked out, and it has not yet been decided if teachers will be limited to teaching only one grade level, according to Kempf.

Webb also worries that freshmen may feel isolated if they are concentrated in one area of the building. Freshman Amanuel Tilahun concurs with Webb. He believes that freshmen would have a harder time making friends with upperclassmen under the new policy.

Incoming freshman Elliot Allen, who currently attends Eastern Middle School, believes the school within a school approach has both pros and cons, because freshmen would get to know one section of the building very well but may have trouble navigating the school sophomore year. “The freshman wing would make the transition to ninth grade easier, but might make the transition to tenth grade harder,” he said.

Those sentiments were echoed by the Blair administration almost 10 years ago, when administrators first considered implementing a freshman section, according to Gainous. At the time, the administrators decided against such a policy because they thought it would only temporarily delay students’ transition to high school, as the freshmen may have trouble adapting to tenth grade after leaving the sheltered environment of the freshman wing.

However, as freshman achievement has increased, administrators are now willing to try another approach, one that recent studies have shown to be effective, said Gainous. After the second marking period of this school year, about a quarter of all Blair freshmen were deemed academically ineligible.

The concept of grouping freshman classes together in one section of the building has already been implemented at other county high schools such as Wheaton and Kennedy.

Kennedy Ninth Grade Administrator Edgar Malker called Kennedy’s Ninth Grade Academy, a program that combines freshmen in math, science, English and Connections classes in one part of the building—a “work in progress.”

“This is the second year that Kennedy has implemented the Academy, and the administration is still working out some bugs in the system, said Malker.

High failure rates on math and science exams

Teachers, administrators concerned with great discrepancy between exam scores and grades

Large numbers of on-level students failed the geometry and biology first semester exams and exam performance concerns from staff about Blair’s ability to produce graduates once standardized tests in these subjects become mandatory.

Seventy-three percent of on-level biology students failed the final exam while only 52 percent of students failed the class, said science department resource teacher Jennifer Kempf. Fifty-four percent of on-level Geometry students also failed their semester exams despite a 77 percent passing rate for the class, according to math resource teacher Barbara Hofman.

The discrepancy between students’ class and exam performance concerned both the math and science departments, particularly given Blair’s recent performance on the 2003 High School Assessments (HSAs) and Maryland State Assessments (MSAs). According to the MCPS Office of Shared Accountability, 33.1 percent of Blair students did not pass the biology HSA, while 67.7 percent of students failed the geometry MSA exam.

Assistant Principal Linda Wanner expressed disappointment with the results. “We’re extremely upset that students are failing any exam,” said Wanner. She added that students are not putting enough effort into these exams. “It’s not only the school’s and the teacher’s responsibilities, it’s the student’s,” Wanner said. “It takes two to tango.”

Compared to first semester exams in the 2002-03 school year, the final exam performances reflected a downward trend in geometry and a slight improvement in biology. The failure rate for on-level geometry increased from 42 to 54 percent. On the other hand, the failure rate for the on-level biology final exam decreased from 75 to 73 percent.

Hofman attributed the poor performance to students who do not take the exams seriously. “They know that if they have good grades in class, then they don’t have to try on the exam,” she said.

Students tend to do better in class because there are “multiple forms of assessment” on which a student can be graded, such as labs and projects, Kempf added.

However, with next year’s implementation of the new MCPS grading policy, both the exam and semester grades will be affected in various ways (see “Grading policy takes criticism,” page 8).

Currently, both the science and math departments are modeling all unit tests to the style of the county and state exams. “We have to get [students] used to the wording and the content of the test,” said biology teacher Nicole Hopkins.

Wanner added that once the HSA and MSA are mandatory for graduation, Blair will need to conduct practice tests and create remedial classes to help students fulfill this graduation requirement.

Though senior Alan Miranda passed his biology class, he failed his first-semester exam. “I don’t like taking tests, so I didn’t try,” Miranda said.

Freshman Martha Viger received a “B” in his biology class and admitted that he studied only a little bit for his final exam; he did not get a good grade. “I felt overwhelmed,” Viger said. “It was a lot to study.”

Likewise, junior Jessica Ekelund, who failed both her Algebra II class and the exam, could not keep up in the class. “[My teacher] was a good teacher, but it just went too fast for me,” said Ekelund. She is now taking night school in order to fulfill her math credit.

Other factors that contribute to the high failure rates in both the final and HSA/MSA exams are high absence rates as well as the content of the tests. “When students see how much reading there is on [the HSA], they feel overwhelmed,” said Hopkins. “Also, there are four BCs on the exam, many students only do two.”

Kempf added that, traditionally, the first semester is more difficult because there is more complex content to cover.
Sublime Silver Chips
winner of the
NSPA Pacemaker Award

7 issues for only $15

Subscribe today! Mail this form and a check to Silver Chips to the address below
Name

Address

Phone

Montgomery Blair HS
C/O Mr. Mathwin
51 University Blvd, E
Silver Spring, MD 20901
301-649-2864

Jim Dandy Formal Wear
Tuxedos and Gowns
Prom discount offered!
Visit our store today:
961 Bonifant Street
Silver Spring, MD 20910
or call (301) 585-6310

York Castle Tropical Ice Cream
Just the finest homemade and all-natural ice cream you've ever tasted!!!

HELDOS NATURALES HECHOS EN CASA
9324 Georgia Avenue
(Georgia Ave. and 16th St.)
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-589-1516

11132 Baltimore Avenue
(Route 1 and Powder Mill)
Bethesda, MD 20705
301-595-3299

email: tropicalice1@aol.com
Open Daily: 11 am - 9 pm

**Students—Mention this ad for a special discount!!!**

Great Pizza!
17 yrs. voted "Best Pizza"
Washingtonian Mag, Readers Poll
Restaurant
Carry Out
Free Delivery
301-588-3400
1909 Seminary Rd. (at Georgia Ave.)

SALE! SWIMWEAR SALE!

Bikini Splash
www.bikinisplash.com

Visit Our New Store:
Rage Splash
1069 Wisconsin Av. NW
Georgetown DC
(202) 333 1069

Match ANY size top with ANY size bottom
*Vix * Guess * BCBG * Bebe * Speedo & much more*

$ 20 OFF

FREE FLIP FLOPS WITH EVERY PURCHASE

* With purchase of non-sale merchandise. $20 or more. Cannot be combined with any other offer. One per customer.
Jazz musician to speak at graduation

Blair alumnus and jazz pianist Marcus Johnson will speak at the commencement ceremony on June 3, according to SGA President Lynn Favin. Johnson, a self-taught keyboardist, graduated from Georgetown University in 1997. He later founded Marimel Entertainment Group, Inc., in order to pioneer progressive, creative work in music and music publishing. Johnson’s most recent release, Live at Blues Alley, was released in 2002. Graduation will be held June 3 at 9:30 a.m. at the Jericho City of Praise church.

MCPS offers SAT preparation for second-semester seniors

MCPS offered “crash-course” SAT tutoring to a group of Blair seniors who may have had a strong potential to improve their scores in the three weeks leading up to the March 27 SAT. Ten students were participating in the voluntary web-based course. The course is targeted toward students with combined SAT scores between 900 and 1000 and is designed to help them score above 1000, the MCPS average. “The data shows that these intense programs, two or three weeks before the test, will give a 100 or 200 point boost,” said Principal Phillip Gainous.

Blair teachers use plagiarism software

Approximately 40 staff members have been trained in the use of Turnitin.com’s anti-plagiarism software, which has already identified at least 15 cases of student plagiarism at Blair. Business Manager Anne Alban said that Blair’s Turnitin license cost $2,230. In addition, the school must pay an annual $250 fee. The money to pay for this service comes from vending machines. Turnitin.com is licensed to almost 200 high schools in the Washington, Virginia and Virginia, D.C., according to The Washington Post.

Blazers rock the press

Many Blair students and staff were recently mentioned in The Washington Post. The April 4 Washington Post Magazine featured photos of Blair’s breakdancers in its coverage of diversity issues at Blair 50 years after the Scottsboro Boys case. Supreme Court decision. The Post also published letters to the editor from journalism teacher John Mathwin on MCPS’ lead problems and junior Roxana Hadadi about Blair’s marginalized Middle Eastern population on April 10 and 14, respectively. Shortly after receiving first place in the March 31 Food section, and senior Kent Anderson’s batting performance was praised in a March 30 newbrief. Freshman Erin Hynes was also mentioned for his website business in a March 24 article.

Lunch area restricted

Students in 3B lunch are no longer allowed to eat along Blair Blvd because they continued to leave trash in the hall, according to Principal Phillip Gainous. In an announcement before spring break, Gainous threatened to restrict 3B lunch to the SAC if students refused to clean up after themselves. Although students can no longer sit near the elevator, they are still allowed to eat lunch by the lockers. Gainous expressed disappointment in the students and said the hall would remain off limits during lunch “until I feel comfortable they will clean up.” Security guard Julie Oesch said that although students were reluctant to leave the hall, they cooperated with security. Oesch said the decision to forbid food in the hall has made a tremendous difference for building service. “There’s no trash on the floor [now],” she said.

Eligibility study ordered

Superintendent will examine Blair PTSA’s proposal

The Board of Education directed Superintendent of Schools Jerry Weast on April 15 to review the Blair PTSA’s proposal to implement a pilot program that would serve as an alternative to the current extracurricular eligibility policy.

The proposal was unanimously passed by the Blair PTSA last February and seeks to revise the eligibility policy for all Downcounty Consortium (DCC) freshmen. If the Board of Education (BOE) approves the plan, failing students would be placed on provisional eligibility status for the marking period after being declared ineligible. During this time, a student would be granted provisional eligibility and would be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities if he or she agreed to a variety of academic support measures, including study hall and one-on-one tutoring.

The BOE acknowledged research showing that extracurricular activities bolster academic performance and called on Weast to look into the feasibility of the pilot at selected school clusters.

As a result of the directive, Weast will form a task force made up of students, parents and teachers to construct an implementation timeline, to examine cost implementations and cost-neutral solutions and to determine if the majority of target communities supports the pilot. The task force will report back with an official recommendation to the BOE Policy Committee by July 2005.

The Blair PTSA’s proposal comes as a response to the current extracurricular eligibility policy, which dictates that students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average with no more than one “E” in the previous marking period in order to participate in extracurricular activities.

Should Weast eventually call for an implementation of Blair’s pilot that does not include extra funding, the plan may not be successful, said proposal co-author Ray Scannell. While such established activities as athletic teams may already have sufficient resources to effectively implement the pilot, he said, other activities would need additional funding in order to allow teacher sponsors and counselors to identify students’ problems and devise plans to remediate them.

Scannell hopes that the task force will recommend a fully-funded pilot. “Hopefully, the Superintendent’s office, as they study this, will realize that, as with many things in the educational system, the more resources that are available, the more you are able to implement change on a broader scale.”

The proposal met with unanimous agreement at an April 14 DCC meeting during which it was presented to other schools. “It was very encouraged that the DCC co-ordinators were very supportive,” said PTSA Co-President Fran Rothstein. The DCC coordinators called the Board of Education’s (BOE) order to allow teacher sponsors and students to implement the proposal for the support for the proposal.

Guidance Corner

Resource Counselor Karen Hunt reminds students of the following upcoming deadlines:

- April 26 — Re-test of Maryland Functional Reading Test
- April 29 — June 5 SAT I/II registration deadline
- May 1 — SAT I/II administration
- May 3-14 — Advanced Placement Exams
- May 7 — June 12 ACT registration deadline
- May 24-28 — Maryland High School Assessment Test
April birthdays are the best! Huge happy birthday wishes to Jaya and Jared who obviously have wonderful taste in months. You (better) know who I am.

Go class of ‘04. Peachy loves Sara-lover. Happy Birthday to me. Only 5 weeks left till we’re out! -Emilio

Seniors! Less than 30 days left of school! Tell Silver Chips what you’ll be leaving behind by writing a Senior Will in the senior issue. Ask a staff member, visit room 158 or call 301-649-2864 for more information.

Marcus, my cutie pie. Happy birthday from your wanna-be son. Please adopt me. Love, Helgeson

Oscar, Yasmin, Phemi, Vatilio, Stephanie, Karena, and Yam! Represent forest knolls.

Daozhong! Happy Birthday! You are finally turning eighteen! Hope you had a great time in high school and being in the the middle of the golden road, while practicing to write with a white pen on white paper, and working on balancing things perfectly. Good luck with your future and have a wonderful birthday!

FOR MORE SHOUT-OUTS, SEE OTHER ADS PAGES.
Senior Noam Dror’s parents bring him chicken soup whenever he has a cold. They scold him when his room isn’t clean. They nag him to finish his homework and smother him with hugs after a bad day. His two moms have done everything required of caring, loving parents, so when Dror is confronted with awkward stares and raised eyebrows because his parents are gay, he’s liable to be a bit upset.

As the controversy over gay parenting continues to grow, Dror and the other ten million children of gay, lesbian or bisexual parents in the U.S. cannot escape the ignorance and the curious questions inherent in the lifestyle. But they stress that, aside from prejudice, their lives are similar to those of children of heterosexual parents.

“I never really noticed the difference”

“He has the coolest parents,” says Dror’s friend senior Jake Riley as he leans in over the cafeteria table. The others at the table nod their heads and murmur in agreement. “They were open to the idea,” Dror explains, gesturing toward his friends. “It wasn’t like it was a big thing.”

Introducing a new friend to two moms may seem like a daunting task, but Dror insists that embarrassment doesn’t factor into the equation; they are his parents, with the same quirks,failings, strange habits and unconditional love for their son as their heterosexual counterparts, he explains.

“We even have a minivan! Except I don’t know how many other families have six cats.”

Freshman Avi Silber has “never really noticed the difference” between his family and families with straight parents, despite the fact both his biological parents are gay. Instead of dwelling on the differences, he points out the parallels. “My biological dad is more like the funny uncle,” he notes, recalling the many times that “papa” played hide-and-seek or board games with them. His other father, Art, an ex-Marine, is the disciplinarian.

To differentiate between mothers, Silber calls his biological parent “mom,” while the other is called “mima.” Chuckling, he explains that his sister mispronounced “ema” (a word meaning “mother” in Hebrew) when she was young. The name stuck. On a typical afternoon in the Dror household, six Siamese cats rummage around the house and The Simpsons plays quietly in the background while Dror’s mothers, Irith and Drorit, fiddle over dinner in the kitchen. In between their quick conversations to one another in fluent Hebrew, both parents describe how their sons’ everyday lives are the same as anyone else’s. “We are a normal family,” says Irith. “We even have a minivan!” exclaims Drorit. “Except I don’t know how many other families have six cats!”

Facing prejudice

Dror says having two moms can be “double the fun,” but it can also be double the discrimination. Though instances of overt prejudice are few and far between, according to Silber, there are those who believe parents like Dror’s and Silber’s are inherently unfit to have children, as evidenced by the political battle over gay rights they are confronted with every time they open a newspaper.

Silber’s family has taken action to demand tolerance by appearing on ABC’s 20/20 and in YM magazine. He is less inclined to correct students within school walls when they say about “that’s so gay” or “you’re a fag” across the halls, however; he says rebuking his peers won’t evoke change in them.

Occasionally, says Silber, he is thrust into situations where it is not possible to disregard the prejudice around him. During the Student for Global Responsibility debates in December, one student expressed his belief that homosexuality is a sin. When Silber calmly told the student that his own parents were homosexual, the student was shocked: “You seem so normal!” the student exclaimed.

For Dror, the only major consequence of having lesbian parents is that he has become “a more accepting and open person” than those not exposed to different lifestyles. His one wish, however, is to get to know a father. “When I hear of a dad throwing a ball with a kid, I think that’s something I want…” His voice trails off, but Dror shakes his head. “But my parents do that too,” he adds resolutely.

Recently, one of Dror’s teachers made crude comments about same-sex couples, eliciting an angry reaction from most of the class. “He said it was disgusting and nasty,” Dror says. Dror was one of several students who marched out of the classroom to the main office to recount the event to an administrator. It was Dror’s first face-to-face encounter with prejudice.

Proving the theories wrong

The strongest weapons critics of gay parenting wield are theories about the effects of the lack of one mother and one father. Psychological troubles, they cry. Difficulties socializing. Frustration over sexual identity. All are theories that are unsubstantiated, according to Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere.

The strongest weapons critics of gay parenting wield are theories about the effects of the lack of one mother and one father. Psychological troubles, they cry. Difficulties socializing. Frustration over sexual identity. All are theories that are unsubstantiated, according to Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere.

The strongest weapons critics of gay parenting wield are theories about the effects of the lack of one mother and one father. Psychological troubles, they cry. Difficulties socializing. Frustration over sexual identity. All are theories that are unsubstantiated, according to Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere.

The strongest weapons critics of gay parenting wield are theories about the effects of the lack of one mother and one father. Psychological troubles, they cry. Difficulties socializing. Frustration over sexual identity. All are theories that are unsubstantiated, according to Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere.
Wassup to Carlos, Andrew, Kelly, Erika and Elisha...HAPPY, HAPPY BIRTHDAY! It's the big 17! Rated-R movies and all that. It's all about the class of '05! Holla!

To Andrew, Tiffany and Yasmin, the best junior staff I could ask for! Thanks for a wonderful year; I don't know what I would have done without you guys! I know you'll all do amazingly next year. Love and hugs all around, Daozhong

Happy Birthday to myself! (April 14th) and to everyone else in April: Kelly, Elisha, etc. 16 years old, not much longer!! Hi to everyone else too: Kristina, Nora, Rashad, Britt, Yasmin, Alex, Rachel and anyone else I forgot!!! 05!!!

I remember the cape? RC + PM forever! DB + Lydell! Yeahhh Bill. Sophomore invasion triple date...CAPE! CAPE! M in the Bt w/ the suffragettes. The end.

Hey Everybody!! Special shout-outs to ma lunch crew: SENIORS! We're almost there.Muahah!! -Sophia

YAY FOR DAOZHONG'S BIRTHDAY! LOVE, BUSINESS STAFF.

FOR MORE SHOUT-OUTS, SEE OTHER ADS PAGES.
Kissing trust goodbye
Blazers unfaithful to their partners discover that five minutes of fun can leave a relationship undone

By JULYSA LOPEZ

For a moment in time, junior David Flores’ mind went blank; he forgot everything, except his intense attraction to the girl standing in front of him. Starting in her eyes, he was compelled by desire as he kissed her. It wasn’t until after he had left her house that it hit him—his girlfriend was back home, and he had just cheated on her. Two years later, Flores looks back on his actions and vows never to cheat again.

Infidelity is not uncommon in teenage relationships, according to psychotherapist Carol O’Brien-Heil. Infidelity has distressing effects on adults when it occurs with married couples, and Heil claims that cheating harms teenagers as well. According to Heil, the results of unfaithfulness are often devastating, especially to the person who was cheated on, and include severe self-esteem damage, feelings of worthlessness, depression and an inability to move on to another relationship.

Tears on the pillow

Sophomore XiU Nguyen claims she suffered the symptoms Heil describes when her ex-boyfriend was unfaithful to her. “I cried for like three days straight—literally,” she says solemnly of her reaction to her ex-boyfriend’s betrayal. Nguyen’s boyfriend of seven months cheated on her with a friend that had been staying with her family last year. “I just wanted to die,” she says. “It hurt so much. I’d try to hide my feelings, but when I’d see him and think about what he’d done, I’d just start crying.”

Junior Anna Murphy underwent a similar experience when her boyfriend of eight months kissed another girl. When a friend informed Murphy of the news, she confronted him. After he denied the rumors, Murphy broke off the relationship. “I couldn’t be with him if he was lying to me,” she explains. Soon after, he emailed her to confess the truth. Murphy’s initial reaction was relief, since she knew he had not ended the relationship over false rumors. “Then I went through a period when I was intensely furious and loathing. He and I had built this relationship that was so strong, and he kind of just threw it away. After that, I was just really sad for a while, and I really missed him.”

According to Heil, boys may be prone to cheating because of their tendency to have stronger sexual urges. “It may not be that they don’t like their girlfriend—sometimes, they just have a harder time controlling themselves.” Heil also cites experimentation as a reason why boys cheat. “They want to try out different things, even if they do care about their current relationship,” she says.

Although Flores cheated his freshman year, he vows not to again, and agrees with Heil, claiming that he does not believe boys cheat on their girlfriends to harm them. “You’re not trying to hurt them. It just happens.”

“Was my first love”

Heil says it is not unusual for women to cheat. She states that infidelity can happen with either partner in a relationship, although it seems more common for men to be unfaithful.

A senior who wishes to remain anonymous remembers the whispered rumors that his girlfriend of two years was cheating on him, gossip that proved to be true when he saw his girlfriend at the mall with another boy. “She was my first love, and I didn’t know what to do,” the senior says. In addition, he felt hostile toward the boy his girlfriend cheated with. “I wanted to find the guy and do something,” he says.

Heil says that the senior’s situation is not uncommon, because although girls come to terms with their situation by crying and reflecting with their friends, boys are more inclined to be aggressive and belligerent. “A guy is more likely to go want to get the guy his girlfriend cheated with. Boys are more likely to feel more angry,” she explains.

Female infidelity often results from a mixture of things, like low self-esteem, inattention or lack of affection. “It might make [girls] feel more attractive and worthy that a guy is after them,” says Heil. According to Heil, infidelity can be credited to inexperience with relationships. Infidelity can also be a result of dullness. “You’re bored with a relationship, and it’s more exciting to cheat,” she states. Cheating is especially likely when the relationship is between adolescents who have not fully matured, according to Heil.

Junior Melissa Cruz admits that lack of maturity and irresponsibility were reasons that drove her to cheating. She cheated on her then-boyfriend three different times because she claims she was bored with the relationship. “It was always the same old thing. We just didn’t connect,” Cruz says. The first two times Cruz cheated, her boyfriend had no idea. After the third time, he found out. “He was like ‘It’s over!’ At the time, it wasn’t that serious. To me, it was funny.” Cruz credits this to her immaturity. “I’ve grown up more now, and I know I wouldn’t do it again.”

Tired of teaching
Rising pressures upset educators

By SHERRY GENG

For former Blair teacher Karen Zeh, the checklist was simple: Graduate high school. Graduate college. Teach. There would be no detours to Another Career, no quick stopovers to Travel the World or Reevaluate Life. Instead, there would be early mornings and late nights, bleary-eyed students to teach and piles of papers to grade. High school, college, teaching—simple, she thought. So as her roommates one by one picked the corporate route, Zeh chose to follow her heart.

Four years later, Zeh is retracing her steps and adding another item to her list: Leaving to Explore New Options. Weighed down by the pressures of High School Assessments (HSAs) and worn thin by the daily grind, Zeh joined the ranks of the over 200,000 teachers nationwide who every year exit the revolving door that is teaching, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF).

Zeh’s chances of surviving in the teaching field were not exceptionally high: About 33 percent of all beginning teachers will not last past their third year, and nearly 50 percent will quit before the end of their fifth. A quarter of all teachers choosing to leave the profession pull out because of job dissatisfaction, according to an NCTAF report released in fall 2003, and for every one teacher who retires, almost three more leave for other reasons.

Yet when surveyed, 96 percent of new teachers claim teaching is the work they love, according to a 2000 study conducted by Public Agenda. This love-hate dichotomy reflects a common sentiment among teachers, most of who are fiercely devoted to a profession that is often beset by frustrating circumstances beyond their control.

As the growing list of frustrations threatens to push more of America’s educators out the door, increased scrutiny and heightened accountability resulting from No Child Left Behind policies have trickled down, magnifying the pressure on teachers teaching to standardized exams like the HSAs.

“Teaching seems to be headed in a much different direction because of certain laws putting more emphasis on testing, [asking] the school to be held responsible for a lot of the shortcomings of students,” says former social studies teacher Vito Vergari, who left Blair after three years of teaching to pursue a degree unrelated to education. “The pressure trickles down to everyone.”

Principal Phillip Gainous takes a two-pronged, empathetic-but-firm approach in the push to meet testing standards. “I try to give teachers a sense of urgency, but I also hope they understand that I understand,” he says. “There is so much pressure, and for teachers to feel that the fun is going out of teaching, it’s a legitimate thing to say.”

Despite strong administrative support, some teachers find these tests to be dangerously challenging, especially for ESOL students or chronic underachievers and low performers. “It was a scary thought when I had students who wouldn’t come to class, and I felt accountable for their scores,” says...
Top left, Joe’s Record Paradise looks on Gude Drive. Above, Joe’s employee showcases a record. Bottom right, inside the store, records and CDs line the walls. Photos by Adam Schuyler

 **Joe’s Record Paradise**

In a white-haired woman ранyscale alongside a town with diners. A million small shrubbery全市 at a vinyl albums. Two Latino Youth reflect the Mayan Diners, beneath a poster of The Talking Heads, just a few blocks away. The vinyl’s spaciousness, with a layout designed to comfortably accommodate the record collection, is immediately apparent. The walls are lined with records, from classic rock to indie-pop, and the store is filled with a sense of history and nostalgia. The staff is friendly and knowledgeable, and the selection of records is diverse and extensive. The store has a warm and inviting atmosphere, making it a perfect place for vinyl appreciators to browse and discover new music.
Have an ad to place?

Contact Silver Chips Business at (301) 649-2864 or visit silverchips.embhs.edu

Kenny's Barber Shop
111 University Blvd. West
(4 Corners - Next to the Chevy Chase Bank - Rear Entrance)
301.754.6444

Men's Haircut $14.00
Women's Haircut and Shampoo $17.00
We also do coloring

$7 Haircuts for Students on Tuesday's

Fine Art Photography
Silver Spring, MD
301 460-7977

Happy Birthday Conman Funes!

Love,
Deana, Karina
Julie, Elly, Nick

ALL STAR DRIVING SCHOOL

TWO LOCATIONS:
LANGLEY PARK
OLNEY- SILVER SPRING

36 hrs MVA required course
3 hrs drug and alcohol course
PSC/DIP
Bilingual classes
Flexible schedule
Low prices

Curso de 36 horas requeridas por la MVA
Programa de 3 horas sobre alcohol y drogas
Sistema de Puntos/ Mejoramiento del Conductor
Las clases son bilingües
Horarios flexibles
Precios cómodos
Se le ayuda en la obtención de placas de MD
Agentes de seguros

$10.00 OFF WITH THIS COUPON

17902 Georgia Ave., Suite 220– Olney, Md 20832– Tel: 301.774.2111
7676 New Hampshire Ave., Suite 3058– Langley Park, Md 20780– Tel: 301.434.0640– Fax: 301.434.0644

Hugo Salon-SPA-Nails

Voted “Top Salon” by Salon Today
& Washingtonian Magazine

Voted “Best of the East” by Harper’s Bazaar

OPEN
7 DAYS
A WEEK!

2901 University Blvd. W. Wheaton, MD 20895 (301) 949-2330
8231 Woodmont Ave. Bethesda, MD 20814 (301) 913-5955
Graffiti artist turns vandalism into self-expression

By JULYVA LOPEZ

Senior Andres Beriguete recalls the night when he crept through Washington, D.C., two years ago, markers, pens and spray cans in hand. Finding a vacant building wall, he quietly began to sketch curiously, sharp curves and sleek lines intertwining into intricate designs. Once he finished, he stood and admired his illustration—skillfully drawn graffiti, vandalism, yet his art.

Beriguete’s days of vandalism didn’t last very long. Beriguete has been doing graffiti since he was 12, after becoming friends with known graffiti artists at Theodore Roosevelt High School in D.C. After experiencing trouble with the police several times, Beriguete had resolved to keep his art only on paper.

Beriguete’s first chance at legal graffiti came when his old school principal, Greg Phillips, suggested that he and his friends create a school mural. For Beriguete, however, the project was cut short when he switched to Blair.

Beriguete’s fervor for graffiti could not be repressed, however, and he turned to sketching. His sketching categorizes him as a “bookworm,” one of the two types of graffiti artists, according to Beriguete. While some artists showcase their drawings on walls, bookworms only sketch in a book or journal. “Since I couldn’t do it on walls, I became mostly bookworm,” he says, showing the cluster of penned-out words in his binding, with swirls of color, dashes of ink and thick blocks of letter mesh together to form the word CENT, Beriguete’s tag name. Soon, Beriguete became known for his sketching by his fellow Blair classmates. “This girl came up to me during class when I was sketching,” he remembers, “and asked me if I would draw up a sign for the school store.”

Although a passionate and proud artist, Beriguete claims he was not quick to tell fellow Blaz-ers about his hobby. “It really disturbs some people. They automatically think it’s vandalism, but this is my way of expressing myself.” Beriguete also hesitates to tell people because he is afraid the blame for future graffiti will be put on him. “I’ve seen some graffiti at Blair, and I’ve been scared people were going to think I did it,” he says. “But I’ve never done it at Blair. Plus, the graffiti I’ve seen here wasn’t even that good.”

At home, Beriguete uses his talent to make gifts for his parents and artwork for holidays, and as a way to bond with his siblings. “I always want my sister to judge [my work],” he says.

Above, Andres Beriguete flips through his sketches on April 2. Left, samples of his personal graffiti are featured in his sketchbook along with many other pieces. Photos by Emily Hauck

The love-hate dichotomy of teaching

Zeh, who led the social studies department in 2002 after teaching National, State and Local Government (NSL), the only social studies subject tested by the HSAs.

According to social studies teacher Kevin Moose, who taught NSL for three years, Blair delivers a firm message to its teachers to perform up to par. Although Moose never felt threatened individually, he recalls meetings where the general sentiment was, “we better do a better job, or else some heads might roll.”

In the first years of state testing, Blair’s teachers “worked like hell” to bring their students up to state standards, recalls Gainous. For some of these teachers, however, even an enormous effort was not enough. "Don’t we get credit for progress?" Gainous angrily noted. "Well, you get a pat on the back for progress and a kick in the butt for not meeting the standards."

For the teachers themselves, the external and internal pressures were massive. "Teachers were crying," says Gainous. They thought, "I’ve given my blood, and it didn’t make a lot of difference."

At times, such pressure can tempt a teacher to give in. "I’ve had teachers here at Blair say, ‘Go transfer to Whitman’ where more students are meeting state stan-dards simply refuse to teach the courses under the HSAs’ microscope, pushing instead for electives,” Moore says. “You can do whatever you want, and there’s no pressure," says Moose.

Rolling with the punches

Even without the pressures of standardized assessments, teachers still face frustra-tions that, 20 or 30 years ago, their prede-ciors would not have seen. Changing times have brought “a general rise in lousy student behavior,” says Moose. One in five teachers loses four or more hours of instruc-tional time per week to disruptive behavior, according to the American Federation of Teachers.

Although some students have always shown disaffection and disinter-est toward school, English teacher Sherelyn Ernst feels that the difference lies in the increas-ing number of students “who feel that you’re not there to help them; you’re there to interrupt their social lives. It’s harder and harder to convince some that you have something to teach them, something that will get them to where they want to go,” she remarks.

Veteran English teacher Silvia Trumbower, who has taught at Blair for nearly 20 years and will retire this year, observes that the times have also brought a loss of student support for teachers. When confronting a student in the hall who threw his gum in her recycling bin, she “had to body check him to make him stop, and then the kids around him said, ‘Don’t let her push you around,’ and ‘Don’t let her tell you what to do!’” she recalls.

Student attitudes are compounded with other frustrations to drive more teachers out of the classroom: 38 percent of educators leaving due to dissatisfaction reported a lack of student motivation, and 35 percent reported student discipline problems as rea-sons for leaving. “What wears you down is the daily battle of trying to get kids who fight school and fight you to come to school every day, to get on board,” says Moose.

A loss of community

Teachers new and old to Blair often also feel a lost sense of community—a by-prod-uct of the sheer size of Blair. “Not every-one is on the same page,” says one new-comer, physics teacher James Schafer. “If there’s a commotion, do you even know the name of the teacher who is in the classroom next to you?”

Blair’s size also adds to a feeling of in-creased anonymity and decreased account-ability, says Ernst. “Kids don’t feel account-able when teachers don’t know them,” she says. “It’s a fact of life in a school this size.”

Frustrations general to the profession of teaching include overbearing, unsupportive or uncooperative parents, students who don’t care and administration unlike Blair’s that is sometimes “so paper-oriented,” according to Magnet teacher Eric Walstein, that “they claim to be concerned about education but really aren’t.”

"Not a 9-to-5 job"

To many teachers, the stresses that come with education make it an uphill job that is exhausting and often under-appreciated. “The teaching part is the easiest,” says Moose. “The hardest part comes after the bell rings.”

Staff Development teacher Suzanne Harvey, who heads the New Teachers’ Pro-gram at Blair, agrees: Teaching is a never-ending process. “It’s not a 9-to-5 job. You could work 24 hours a day and still not be satisfied,” she says. “You take it to bed

See Teachers page 20

Entertainer of the Month

April 22, 2004

Features 19

Don’t Wink (AOH)

CHIPS

STAFF

Graffiti artist turns vandalism into self-expression

April 22, 2004

Features 19

Don’t Wink (AOH)

CHIPS

STAFF
Walking the edge of the high life

A handful of Blazers snort cocaine, subjecting themselves to severe legal and health risks

For educators entering the classroom

Ever overheard something bizarre while walking down the hall? This is what Chips heard when we listened to people making HALL TALK

"Who came up with the colors for Easter? Did Jesus rise up and say "pastels, only pastels?""
April 14, 12:54 p.m., room 365

"Purple cows fly. Who's the psychotic here?"
March 24, 8:20 a.m., room 312

"No one runs from backwards man!"
March 18, 12:54 p.m., 160s hallway

CHIPS: Fighting a daily battle in the classroom

with you, I think.

Since the program’s inception over a decade ago, Harvey has worked with numerous frustrated teachers on the verge of giving up. “The first year of teaching is like the first year of marriage; you can’t do anything except live through it,” she explains.

As part of the program, Harvey seeks to identify whether the block is temporary or constant; if it’s more systemic, she will often switch a teacher to a different subject or another class. Despite her efforts, she estimates that, on average, Blair loses one out of every year’s 30 to 40 new teachers.

For these teachers, the job becomes overwhelming, and they begin to feel like “this is it; this is the last straw,” says Ernst. “They don’t have the energy to deal with it anymore.”

For Zeh, who now works in curriculum development for an affiliate of Sylvan Learning Centers, the daily grind was exhausting enough to steer her away from teaching altogether. “I started feeling that I was getting burnt out,” she says. “My patience wasn’t what it was, and I was getting tired of the regular things that are just part of the job.”

More recently, adds Harvey, people with more varied backgrounds are also entering education as their second or third careers. However, Moore, who was in the Army before working as a teacher, feels that the first year is difficult regardless of a teacher’s age or past experience. “When you walk in the hallways of Blair as a first-time teacher, you’re overwhelmed by the number of people and the things you hear and see,” he says. “The school is so big, you feel almost powerless.”

Succeeding at Blair

For educators entering the field at any age, “this job requires a certain personality,” says Moore. “If you don’t take charge of the class, the kids will.”

Then there’s the most certain type of teacher that is attracted to Blair, believes Zeh. “They tend to be relatively civic-minded, very committed, very altruistic and being very strong-minded,” she says.

“Teachers know they have to work harder, give more of themselves here than at any other schools,” adds Gainous, “and they’re willing to do that.”

Indeed, says Trumbower, who has quit twice in her teaching career, “The school is so big, you feel almost powerless.”

“Maybe I should have been more powerful to begin with,” she says. Then she seriously reconsidered her decision to go into education. “I’ve had days where I’ve thought, gee, if I had a do-over, I wouldn’t do this again,” she says. But she feels her ultimate place is in the classroom. “I really do think that I was supposed to teach.”
It's werewolf hunting in the dark depths of Eastern Europe. (May 7)

Annapolis natives Jimmie's Chicken Orgy at Nightclub 9:30, $38 (May 21)

Ani DiFranco performs at The Recher Theater, $15 (May 6)

Re.present at DAR Constitution Hall, $20 (April 27)

Mama's Bad Boy at Nightclub 9:30, $38 (May 12)

Tame Impala returns to The Recher Theater, $30 (May 19)
What's up to Norfolk State University. I'mma be throwing up that 08'!

Happy Birthday Dao and Jared! Hope your 18th's are awesomely awesome!

You don't know who I am.

April 30th – MARCUS'S BIRTHDAY! Everybody wish him a great one! Love ya tiger...now you can buy me R-rated movie tickets! HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Love, Tiffany

Keep up to date with the news at Blair. Visit Silver Chips Online at silverchips.mbhs.edu.

To mah Catalinee— I Love You! Thanks Emily for doing a shout out...Marcus and Dan STOP LAUGHING. Tiffany

I guess I might as well admit it now. I ate the purple mushroom.

The average girl would rather have beauty than brains because she knows the average man can see much better than he can think;

It is fruitless to become lachrymose over precipitately departed lacteal fluid.

FOR MORE SHOUT-OUTS, SEE OTHER ADS PAGES.
April Crossword
by Rebecca Feiden

Across
1. resident of Bangkok
5. to change
10. pig’s feed
14. maybe or per__
15. medieval attack
16. to throw
17. assistant (abbr.)
18. picture
19. length times width
20. empty TV family
23. opposite of SSW
24. past or present, for example
25. single-celled organism (alternate spelling)
28. hoisted again
31. changing circumstances: in ___ of
32. town famous for witch hunts
33. 1960s TV show
40. Baton ___ LA
41. a type of fencing sword
42. responsible
46. idiot
47. momentous occasion
48. measure of current in physics (abbr.)
49. 1960s TV show
57. ___ of Green Gables
58. gum trait
59. anger
60. groupings
61. makes money
62. side home
63. horse’s jog
64. type of cheese or chocolate
65. graceful bird

Down
1. a thing over there
2. fried potatoes: ___ browns
3. church part
4. new Constantinople
5. apart
6. kind of bean
7. Orioles, Redskins or Capitals
8. Greens ___ and Peas
9. cold-structure
10. straitened
11. enticing
12. silimunum words
13. acted a role
14. generic material (abbr.)
15. small elemental building blocks
16. math subject (abbr.)
17. Roman ORE
18. electric hub
19. group of mountains
20. another person someone ___
21. hula wear
22. Jewish king
23. very irritated
24. messy helping
25. big, spotted cats
26. IRS month (abbr.)
27. Keanu in The Matrix
28. bear’s home
29. to last again
30. more equal
31. makeshift shelter
32. to buy stock
33. horse’s home
34. to burst
35. to desert a cake
36. to defrost
37. actress ___ Garr
38. possesses
39. to look
40. ___ Enchanted
41. a type of fencing sword
42. responsible
43. idiot
44. momentous occasion
45. measure of current in physics (abbr.)
46. 1950s TV show
47. length times width
48. creepy TV family
49. opposite of SSW
50. single-celled organism (alternate spelling)
51. to buy stock
52. Mrs. in Paris (abbr.)
53. endless hole
54. decorates a cake
55. to defrost
56. horse’s home

Submit completed crosswords to room 158 by May 1. The winner will receive two free movie tickets to an AFI movie of their choice.

Death by High School
by Peter Musto

Rule the World
I tell you to rule the world!

Big Moco
by Branden Buehler and Terry Li

Come on, why don’t you try out for volleyball?

Well, I don’t really think I’d fit in. Don’t you notice anything...strange about the team?

You mean like how we all wear black shorts?

Yeah, that’s it.
Global issues hit close to home

By Karima Tawfiq

In December of 2002, sophomore Cyndy Dumay phoned her mother to wish her a happy birthday. Instead of jubilation on the other end of the line, Dumay heard her mother’s shaky voice as she described how two days earlier, men had terrorized civilians on the dusty streets of her neighborhood with tear gas. The gas had burned her mother’s skin and had also caused vomiting among her relatives back in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Dumay’s home until age 12.

For the next week, Dumay braced herself for accounts from Haiti, as her mother tried to nurse her cousins and uncles back to health. Dumay experienced the fear accompanying the violence that erupted in Haiti over the last few months, as a military coup ousted former leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide over the last few months, as a military coup begun in early March.

Graphic photos and television clips describing the violence that occurred throughout the country have shocked the dozens of Blazorized civilians on the dusty streets of her neighborhood. Dumay was turned into exile at the end of February. Graphic photos and television clips described how two days earlier, men had terrorized civilians on the dusty streets of her neighborhood. Dumay was turned into exile at the end of February.

When Metellus called, her cousin apologized and said that she could only whisper because she did not want anyone passing by to hear the conversation and wrongly assume that she and her family were supporters of Aristide. Metellus’ and Dumay’s worries for their friends and family members have been eased by the fragile stability brought by American and French intervention that began in the first week of March. Dumay’s family and hometown are slowly recovering. “Schools are opening. So are businesses. Everything is going back to normal,” says Dumay.

A recuperating country

The tumultuous history

Aristide’s troops harmed her family, says Dumay. His men specifically targeted Dumay’s home of Petionville, located within the capital of Port-au-Prince, because a large number of residents disapproved of Aristide’s presidency.

For years, corruption and social unrest have marred Haiti’s politics. Not until 1990 did Haiti hold free and democratic elections, selecting Aristide, a former Roman-Catholic priest, as the new president. Aristide won in 1990 by a landslide because he was a leftist leader who supported the poor majority, according to David Swaney, a social studies teacher who was working in Haiti during the election. “I remember the euphoria when Aristide was elected for president. There was jubilation in the streets,” he says.

As Anne Manuel, a ninth-grade U.S. History teacher and a former Human Rights Watch Deputy Director for the Americas, says, “people looked to [Aristide] as a messiah,” because of his promise to help the poor.

However, several Haitian students say Aristide’s popularity diminished over the years because of his failure to help the economy and because of his gratuitous use of violence. While in power, Aristide formed a group of dreaded street gangs known as the chimères who in early March began executing members of the opposition, according to The Economist.

Junior Christina Lafontant, who lived in Haiti until she was 14, says that both varieties of gangs and Aristide’s government committed crimes in the interest of the president. “He’s been turning everything in his favor. The police are practically his little puppets,” she says.

A broken promise

The devastated economy exacerbates political turmoil in Haiti. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with more than 80 percent of Haitians living in abject poverty.

Lafontant describes the country as a few wealthy individuals controlling the poor masses, leaving the country divided into two distinct classes.

In one area of Haiti, “you could have anything you want.” However, in other areas, people cannot afford food or water, and many live in cardboard houses in the slums of the city.

Among other problems, public school systems practically do not operate, says junior Doojy Pierre-Louis, who lived most of his life in Haiti. He says that students like him who could attend private schools did so, because public-school teachers often didn’t show up to their classes.

The disproportionate allocation of wealth among the people is the main cause of the violence in Haiti, says John Koyn, a consultant for the Haitian embassy in Washington, D.C. “The conflict revolves around the empowerment of poor people,” he says.

Because of such differences in wealth, constant social struggles and limited freedom of speech, Haitians learn to deal with problems through violence, says junior Jenny Metellus, who moved to the U.S. in 1999. “We’re like a bomb ready to explode,” she says.

President Aristide never delivered on promises for better schools and better jobs. “Before he was president, he was promising people in Haiti better things. He did the opposite,” says Dumay.

Despite continued problems in Haiti, the majority of Haitians still support Aristide, says Koyn. But at Blair, there seems to be little support for Aristide among Haitian students.

Remembering a Haitian homeland

By Maya Kosok; graphic information according to the 2003 World Almanac

April 22, 2004

CHIPS

Above: Junior Jenny Metellus, who hails from the capital city of Port-au-Prince in Haiti, poses next to a street vendor. Metellus emigrated to the U.S. in 1999; in 2002, she went back to her homeland to visit her relatives. Photo courtesy of Metellus.

Right flag, top: Somalia. Right flag, bottom: Haiti. Timeline by Maya Kosok; graphic information according to the 2003 World Almanac.
Leaving home alone

Immigrant Blazers search for opportunities

By ALEXA GABRIEL

Four years ago, junior Madina Pires left her family in São Paulo, Brazil four years ago to attend high school in the U.S. The academic opportunities in America had strong appeal to Pires, but leaving behind an infant sister, a teenage brother, a father and a mother who Pires calls her “best friend” was a challenging decision. “I didn’t know anything about anything,” she says.

Mahamed first left Somalia for Pakistan, where she stayed with a friend of her mother. While in Pakistan, the United Nations selected Mahamed to be a part of an education program for the underprivileged and brought her to the U.S. for high school. Her current job at a local assisted living center allows her to send a monthly check to her parents and five siblings in Somalia—their only source of income, she says—that her family has put towards traveling to the U.S.

While these Blazers have high aspirations for making the most out of their education, the obstacles presented by independent immigration can prove very difficult to overcome. Adjusting to a new culture, language and environment becomes an even larger issue when teens are living with an entirely new family, according to ESOL counselor Fernando Moreno.

Immigrating to the U.S. with family is easier in many respects, he says, because a relationship between the parent and child has already been formed.

Sophomore Vladimir Desir, who left Haiti four years ago and now lives with his sister’s stepmother, says adjusting to life with an unfamiliar relative was harder than learning English. His new family knew nothing of his daily homework tendencies. “If I make a mistake, they may not understand,” says Desir. “Your family can understand.”

Spending four years away from her family has made Pires, who often resents the time she has spent away from her family, realize how valuable parents are. “Everyone says living without your parents is the best thing ever, that you can do anything you want to, but I don’t agree with them. It is hard to accept someone as they are, but parents can do that because they care,” she says.

Despite the hardships of living away from his family, Desire, like other independent immigrants, is thankful for his unique opportunity. “Living in Haiti, things were not easy,” he says. “Some people have more problems than me. I feel lucky to have a chance to have an education.”

A world away from a war-ravaged past

By KRISTINA HAMILTON

Enraged militant clansmen swarm the long road Soonto Muhktar must take to get to the city of Baidoa in her homeland of Somalia, threatening the life of the young girl and her family. Muhktar simply hopes to sell corn, beans and watermelons to the city dwellers, but instead she and her family are burdened with the sight of a seemingly endless war.

The warfare that erupted after the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre in 1991 and the advance of tribal rule have caused much chaos in Somalia. Muhktar, now a junior, fled the war-torn country in 1999 with her mother and her three brothers, freshman Ali and junior twins Abdi and Abdul. They found refuge in a camp in Nairobi, Kenya, along with over half a million other Somalis. Finally in the U.S., Muhktar and her family are safer than they have ever been.

Soonto Muhktar’s most striking memory of clansman violence occurred when she was a young girl. Men came into her home and hit her mother twice with a gun, leaving a permanent scar on her chin and on Muhktar’s life.

“We were always running,” says Muhktar. “Rebels were always trying to kill civilians. We’d be in one place for two weeks, and then they’d come again. It’s so painful, I don’t even want to remember it.”

Fighting plagued the city, where the Muhktars moved after their farm was ravaged. “A lot of my friends are probably dead over there,” fears Muhktar’s friend of her mother. While in Pennsylvania, Muhktar was able to contact his adult sister, who had moved to the U.S., and ask her for help to get out of Somalia. Working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Muhktars were able to go to the refugee camp.

The camp, however, was a “horrible” place, according to Abdul Muhktar. He and his family had to cope with hot weather, lack of running water, scarce food and low income. The Muhktars remained in Kenya for two years and were periodically questioned by UNHCR workers about their plans. “I told them that my country fights, my dad died and no one is trying to help my family,” Soonto Muhktar says defensively.

After seven months of processing, the Muhktars were given visas and airline tickets to the U.S. They arrived in July of 2001, becoming one of 44,673 Somalis since 1991 who have come to the U.S. as of February 2004, according to Richard Greene, a high-level State Department official who works with refugees.

Soonto Muhktar has been able to adapt to her new life in America very well, according to her teachers. Soonto Muhktar married a teenager, like most Somali Muslims, just before she arrived in the U.S., and was one month pregnant while traveling to the States. Muhktar was forced to take several months off from Blair, which was her first experience with formal schooling, to care for her child. “She’s one of our success stories,” says ESOL teacher Margarita Bohórquez. “She’s been very tenacious and dedicated.”

Free schooling and a sense of security are opportunities Abdi Muhktar now appreciates. “[The United States] is a world away from family, teens who leave home to search for opportunities in other countries either to get education time. Many students intend to overcome these hurdles to ultimately attend college.
Hey ppl its M. As some of you know a certain someone broke up with me on the internet. I personally think that that’s messed up and that I deserve better. I just wanted to let you know that I am now SINGLE. Holla at ya boy!!

A happy merry birthday to Daozhong, and a late one to Mallory! You guys are legal now!

Hey, shout out to my sisters Sophia and Edra, and my girls Yasmin, Camila and Diana and my best buddy Steven. Much love to my baby. I love you. – Stephanie

This is Carlos D. giving out a Holla to all my people and my Baby Karina Love ya

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARCUS HAROLD! YAY FOR 18! Love, Tiffany

Want a senior ad that everyone at Blair will see? Having trouble designing your own ad? Silver Chips is the perfect option for you! Visit room 158 or ask a staff member to find out more!

Seniors! Want to keep up with the events at Blair after you graduate? Subscribe to Silver Chips by visiting room 158.

FOR MORE SHOUT-OUTS, SEE OTHER ADS PAGES.

BLAZERS!!!

IMPORTANT NOTES:
❖ April 19: Senate Q&A with Administration
❖ April 28-29: Elections for SGA

PIZZA SALES FOR APRIL:
❖ Gutiérrez (April 19-23)
❖ Step Team (April 26-30)
❖ Freshmen Class (May 3-7)
❖ Art Honor Society (May 10-14)
❖ SGA (May 17-21)

Be a part of your school
Run for a position in the SGA
Help the Homeless. Help the Community
Serve your school

FOR MORE SHOUT-OUTS, SEE OTHER ADS PAGES.
**LAS NOTICIAS**

**Arte poético**

**Ejemplo de uno de los varios poemas del libro:**

Me levanta todas las noches, buscando una salida a nuevas opciones

**Por RIA RICHARDSON**

**En primera persona**

Soy muy callada y tímida y me estoy muriendo por salir de mi maldición. Hay miles de estudiantes que pudieron hacer para estrenar al mundo y ahora es el mejor tiempo para hacerlo.

Quiero ser diferente y por eso he decidido aprender a tocar el güiro. No parece ser muy difícil y siempre me he interesado en este instrumento tan único.

El güiro es usado en la música tradicional de la República Dominicana, Puerto Rico y Cuba pero otros países lo usan también.

En la República Dominicana se usa mayormente el güiro hecho de un cilindro de metal cubierto con pequeñas y redondas incisiones. El güiro de Cuba tiene menos rayas y es más gruesas.

Todas las variaciones se tocan de la misma manera. Se usa una púa, la cual generalmente está hecha de barras de metal que son largas y delgadas y con una base de madera, que se parece a un tenedor. La púa se agita sobre las rayas y es cuando produce un sonido rasposo.

Yo aprendo a tocar sobre el instrumento y cómo tocarlo intenlo enseñarle a mi misma. Empecé con unos pasos básicos que he aprendido. El sonido que estoy haciendo es un ruido insosportable pero no puedo dejar que ese no pare.

Después de practicar por un tiempo, tengo los ritmos básicos para tocar y ahora viene el verdadero reto: tengo que tocar en público, en mi caso frente de estudiantes de tercer grado.

Hago una cita y corro a buscar la puerta, en mi caso frente de estudiantes de tercero grado. Encuentro al güiro hecho de un cilindro de metal cubierto con pequeñas y redondas incisiones.

Para más información, venga al portátil 2 durante almuerzo A o B y hable con la Señora Castro, la cual generalmente está hecha de barras de metal que son largas y delgadas y con una base de madera, que se parece a un tenedor. La púa se agita sobre las rayas y es cuando produce un sonido rasposo.

**En la clase de la Señora Elba Segura, los estudiantes de noveno, hasta 270 las clases que son tomados de manera diferente. La púa no va a tener dificultades en conocer personas de otros grados. Algunos sienten que tal vez no van a conocer bien la escuela y que pueden tener problemas al moverse dentro de Blair. En el pasado, se trató de iniciar esta política con éxito pero con el aumento del problema van a intentarlo de nuevo.**

**Por Jennifer Ocean y Ria Richardson**

En las dos fotos, Ria Richardson toca su güiro con una púa hecha de metal. Fotos por Rachel Fuss.
Fast feet and strong spikes

By ELENA CHUNG

Senior Alysia Isong sprints at Poolesville on March 30. Photo courtesy of Sara Yousefnejad

Senior sprinter speeds her way to track success

Senior Alysia Isong grabs it in the second leg. Isong is an all-around competitor, willing to run in almost any event. While her specialties are the 100m and 300m hurdles and the 4x100m and 4x400m relays, Isong is critical as a versatile athlete. “Whatever they want me to do, it’s what I do,” she says.

Isong started running in elementary school but stopped during middle school. When she came to Blair, she joined the track team as a way to keep in shape but soon grew to love the sport, she says.

Running is a challenge, she says. “It’s like I love it at times, but I hate it at times. When I’m not running, I want to run. When I’m running, it’s a lot of hard work,” Isong explains.

To Isong, running isn’t just about muscle but also about attitude. “Running is a lot about mental ability as well as physical. You have to believe in yourself,” she says. “You have to have the confidence.”

Winner of the most improved player award in indoor track, Isong and her coaches believe she can always shave seconds off of her times. While her best time in the 300m hurdles is 53 seconds, Harrison is confident she’ll reach 50 seconds flat by the end of the season.

As co-captain of both winter’s indoor and spring’s outdoor track teams, Isong takes her leadership role seriously, says Harrison. “She sets the bar by example,” he says. “She doesn’t ever quit.”

Baseball

By KATHERINE DUNCAN

The JV boys’ baseball team proved that they had the skill, focus and determination to win, beating Richard Montgomery 10-6 in a close game on April 16 and improving their record to 4-0.

Coach Richard Porac is proud of the team’s performance thus far. “The team has successfully done what is needed to win games: hit, pitch and field.” Porac, however, is apprehensive about the team’s upcoming games. “Our toughest stretch is to come,” he said.

Freshman Dylan Rebois is a key part of the Blazers’ success and has been “hitting, fielding and running the bases great all year,” according to Porac. "Dylan is our best player right now," he said.

Softball

By AMANDA LEE

The JV softball team suffered a loss for the second day in a row on April 17 against the Richard Montgomery (RM) Rockets, losing 24-1 and dropping its record to 2-3.

The Blazers, who had shown a vast improvement in the past couple of games, were given a rude reminder that there are still skills that they need to work on. They struggled with consistent pitching as well as a lack of communication that sometimes caused errors in the field.

Foiled both at bat and in the field, the Blazers couldn’t counter RM’s pitching and aggressive base-running, according to Coach Kristen Werdann. “We fought hard, but they outplayed us,” she said.

Dedication, perseverance and heart transform Lee from manager to MVP

By ELENA CHUNG

Junior James Lee crouches in ready position. As the ball sails over the net, he leaps two feet into the air with his right arm drawn for the hit. An aggressive expression is plastered on his face as he goes for the spike and directs the ball to the other side of the court in Blair’s gym during practice on March 23.

As the ball sails over the net for the score, Lee demonstrates his ability to kill. But just two years ago, Lee could not take any points for the team.

The lanky Lee is known for his vast improvement, says boys’ volleyball coach JJ Rathnam. “In the last two years, he’s really blossomed as a volleyball player,” he says, citing Lee’s designation as MVP and most improved player last year as a stark contrast to his skill as a freshman.

A spiked ball that hits the ground in bounds, called a kill, is Lee’s specialty, says Rathnam. Today, Lee averages impressive 11 kills per game. With 60 or more points scored in total in the three games, Lee usually scores 20 percent of the total points, Rathnam adds.

Without any prior experience, Lee started playing volleyball his freshman year during tryouts. He did not make the team and became manager instead.

Although he didn’t make the cut, Lee’s managing position freshman year allowed him to practice with the team. He began playing in weekly tournaments during the off-season in the Maryland Volleyball Program, where, Lee says, he improved his skills.

In the beginning, Lee was unable to do push-ups, bumped weak passes and couldn’t jump vertically over two feet. Today, he averages 40 to 50 push-ups per day, provides consistent passes and can jump vertically over two and a half feet.

Last season, he led the team in all-county points, which are marks given by the opposing team’s coaches’ evaluation of the best players for each game.

And according to Rathnam, Lee deserves those points because of his dedication. “He’s a hard worker that never complains, asks good questions, always tries hard and wants to learn more about the game,” he says.

This season, Lee hopes to lead his team far in the final crucial games. “After not winning any playoff games in the past two years, I want to be a key player in winning a playoff game,” he explains.

However, the games still aren’t really about winning; being on the court is just what Lee loves, he says. “Volleyball is just a fun way to exercise. It’s where my heart is,” he says.

As the practice in the gym winds down for a co-ed volleyball game on March 23, Rathnam yells “James!” as one of Lee’s spiked ball sails out of bounds. Lee flashes a goofy grin at his mistake and readies up for another spike.
The league of extraordinary athletes

By KATHERINE EPSTEIN

There are certain things that Blair varsity softball coach Louis Hoelman tells his fielders to look for in a batter that have nothing to do with quick hands, powerful forearms or a great trigger step. If she is wearing fancy cleats or a spray-painted helmet, he tells his players to try to get a step back. If she has a certain swagger, a confidence at the plate that comes from playing hundreds of tournament games every season, he tells his fielders to be ready for anything. If she is a member of a travel club softball team, says Hoelman, then this girl can play.

She is then a member of the elite group of athletes for whom varsity spots are mere较低的. Off the field, their differences lie in a few physical anomalies: hair frosted blond by daily chlorine baths, badly bruised shins or the number 23 identically imprinted on cleats, bags, helmets, blankets and sweatpants. On the field, they demonstrate a physical prowess and mental presence that comes from playing high-stakes games and tournaments against the strongest area competition.

In soccer, softball and swimming, these stellar athletes push Blair teams to the brink of excellence but often no farther. They sparkle as all-too-rare bright spots in every incoming freshman class and leave coaches scrambling for more.

“Playing to win”

In high-school sports, the teams with the most club players are the teams that win. Blair’s girls’ varsity soccer team has never beaten Wootton, Whitman or Churchhill, three upcounty soccer powershouses traditionally stacked with club players. Girls’ varsity soccer coach Bob Gibb names club players as the difference between Blair and dominant upcounty programs. “They’ve got a lot of players who can change the game,” he says. “We’ve got a couple.”

These players, likely to make varsity as freshmen and virtually guaranteed to do so as sophomores, filter up to Blair only sporadically, often sidetracked by private-school recruitment, says Gibb. As a freshman, Sophie Esparza, now a sophomore, made varsity as the starting sweeper and earned All-Division honors. She has been playing soccer with Washington Area Girls’ Soccer (WAGS), the highest level of girls’ soccer competition in the area, since she was in grade school. Gibb credits the cutthroat competition of WAGS with producing the area’s finest players. “The principle behind a club sport is that these are athletes who take their sport very seriously,” says Gibb. “That’s motivation, and you’re playing to win.”

After each of the fall and spring seasons, the bottom teams in the district are dropped, to be replaced by a team on the WAGS waiting list.

The desire and the Fire

The Blair softball program has been building this year, with the arrival of freshman Michelle Linford, starting shortstop and number-three batter for the Washington Senators, the third-ranked 14-and-under (14U) team in the U.S. Three games into her first varsity season, she has a 1.50 ERA, bats .550 and leads the team with 7 RBI and two home runs. Her throw is more accurate, more powerful and more polished than any other player’s on the team, and as a freshman, she is Blair’s best player at every single position, according to Hoelman.

Blair coaches must wait for stars like Linford and Esparza to surface at Blair. County policy forbids coaches from managing teams in the off-season. But Hoelman longs for the spark that travel players add to his lineup and is no longer satisfied with one every few years. He credits 2003 Blair graduate and travel player Carly Viera and Emma Simonson with “raising the bar for higher-level softball at Blair.” He has worked with softball parents to form the Takoma Park Fire, a group that will bring competitive softball to the downcounty area.

Swimming for distance

While softball and soccer players gain a distinct advantage with an already secure spot on a competitive club team, swimmers can gain access to club coaching and competition merely by paying the $200 fee to register as a member of the Rockville-Montgomery Swim Club (RMSC). All MCPS swim teams can only provide pool time for two practices a week, so Blair’s strongest competitors are those who practice six days a week as members of the RMSC for a total of 14 hours a week. Junior co-captain Patrick Detzner, who joined RMSC as a freshman on the advice of Blair swim coach David Swaney, directly equates club participation with swimming success, especially in the higher ranks of the county. “Two times a week is not enough swimming to really improve,” he says. Detzner estimates that 80 to 90 percent of qualifiers for Metrostar, the biggest swimming competition merely by paying the Registration fee and an estimated $1000 per season to pay for tournament travel, equipment and clothing.

Linford participates in tournaments throughout the year (she played five games on April 10). She will play in an unrelenting procession of 35 tournaments all summer long. She revels in the payoff: her commitment has brought her, like the 280-foot over-the-fence home run she hit at the end of last season for the Senators.

In soccer, softball and swimming, these stellar athletes push Blair teams to the brink of excellence but often no farther. They sparkle as all-too-rare bright spots in every incoming freshman class and leave coaches scrambling for more.

Boys defeat Poolesville, girls fall due to absence of key runners

By JAMIE KOVACH

Boys defeat Poolesville, girls fall due to absence of key runners

April 22, 2004

MARCH 30, POOLESVILLE —

The boys’ track team improved after its loss to Seneca Valley on March 24 to beat the Poolesville Falcons 76-61, while the girls’ team fell to Poolesville 58-81 after its strong win over Seneca Valley.

The boys placed well in distance, sprinting and field events, thanks to senior co-captains Matt Sheldon and Esey Kidane and seniors Perry Smith, Jr., and Hansel Cedeno. Kidane credits the team’s success to a strong work ethic. “We worked harder at practice, and it made a difference,” he said.

The surprise win for the boys came in the 400m, where freshman Aaron Townsend, senior Sekou Kourouma and sophomore Vainthe Julien placed in the top three in the event. The girls’ team points to absent athletes and stronger competition as the cause of its upset loss. “We were missing key runners, so we had to make do with what we had, and we did our best. We had some people step up, but it wasn’t enough,” said senior co-captain Alyssa Isong.

Key sprinter Narique Dixon, a junior, was absent on the day of the meet. Freshman Nalasha Walker filled her spot masterfully, claiming first in the 100m dash and taking Dixon’s place on the 4x200m relay team that placed second to the Falcons. However, Walker got a bad cramp during the 400m, leaving an empty hole in the first leg of the race.

Freshman Katie Zalaya filled the hole helping the relay team to first place. “I was really impressed with [Zalaya’s] performance. She did really well as a freshman who had never run with us before,” said senior co-captain Nicole Gray.

As usual, the freshman twins Ashlyn and Halsey Sinclair performed well, but their high-scoring races were not enough to bring the girls’ team a victory. The Sinclairs placed first and second in the 800m and 1600m races. Ashlyn Sinclair placed first in the 800m and Halsey Sinclair placed second to Poolesville in the 300m hurdles. The next meet is at home against Walter Townsend on April 27.
Lax gives Bengals a sound licking

Despite a shaky start, second-half comeback leads the Blazers to victory and .500 record

By LAUREN FINKEL

APRIL 17, BLAZER STADIUM—

In a nail-biting match against the Blake Bengals, the boys’ lacrosse team played its best game of the season, pulling off a 9-2 victory. The impressive game improved the Blazers’ record to 2-2, setting a new tone for the rest of the season. The first half of the match started out slowly, reflecting the Blazers’ consistently lackluster performance all season. Players lost ground balls in the midfield, set up few successful plays and did not play solid team defense, usually the strength of the team.

With seven seconds left in the first half, senior co-captain Kyle Cohen scored, bringing the Blazers to within two goals of the Bengals’ seven. Cohen finished the game with three goals. Coach Robert Gibb believes that this was the “turning point of the game” and set the foundation for the Blazers’ success. “We were just pumped after that,” he said.

When the second half began, it seemed like the two teams had switched uniforms. Where Blake had been strong before, Blair was now dominating, and the Bengals were lagging behind. “We were patient. We set up the plays. We held onto the ball. We got the goals,” said Gibb. “Basically, it was a game of two halves.”

Gibb’s offensive captains were at the forefront of the success. In addition to Cohen’s hat trick, senior co-captains Alex Berger and Josh Gottlieb-Miller also put up three goals, rounding out the Blazers’ scores. This surge in offensive power is a far cry from the beginning of the season, where the Bengals’ shots often had trouble finding their way through the net.

The defense also showed a vast improvement, shutting out Blake’s offense entirely in the second half. The midfield defense was led by senior Jonathan Gregory, where junior co-captain Erik Kordick added a stalwart presence at once. Unfortunately, this was the only time Blair switched uniforms. Where Blake was a group effort. “It all boiled down to, ‘Are we going to do it? Are we ready to play as a team?’” Gibb said.

Yes, the Blazers were. They outscored the Bengals 4-0 in the second half, pulling ahead for the win. “If you stepped up to victory,” Gibb said. “In the second half we played up to our potential.”

The Blazers next play at home against the Damascus Hornets tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

Blazer boys strike out

Hornets trounce Blair to take command of division

By ZACH MILLMAN

APRIL 17, MONTGOMERY BLAIR STADIUM—

The Blazers were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs last season by Damascus 12-1. Unfortunately, in April 17’s much-anticipated grudge match between two of the country’s top teams, the story was much the same for the Blazers, as they were thoroughly demolished, losing 13-1 to the undefeated Hornets.

However, the season as a whole is much more impressive than last year’s; the Blazers are off to a solid 6-3 start with key wins against Paint Branch, Richland Montgomery and Watkins Mill.

The Blazers may have been worn-out from their 6-4 win over a formidable Paint Branch Squad held just hours before the Damascus game. “It stinks that we got blown out, but we were all tired from the Paint Branch game,” said senior co-captain Thomas Foley.

Junior pitcher Cody Simpson started the game very well, allowing only a single baserunner in his first two innings. Unfortunately, he gave up four hits and four runs in the third inning, plus another run in his fourth and final inning. In relief, sophomore Tommy Douglas gave up two more runs in the sixth inning with two consecutive HBPs. Senior Ian Scroggs pitched the final inning and was also unsuccessful, giving up six runs including a three-run triple which nearly left the park.

According to senior co-captain Sam Boone, the Blazer pitchers didn’t get ahead in the count enough and had trouble throwing their breaking balls for strikes. Blair was just as disappointing from the plate, as they were only able to muster five baserunners, and as in last year’s playoff game, they only recorded three hits, all singles. The Blazers’ offensive ineffectiveness was made quite clear in the second, fourth, sixth and seventh innings, where they were re-tired in order.

Though the Blazers were struck out only four times, their hitters tended to show weakness when batting. In addition, Damascus did not make careless defensive mistakes. Folely had the Blazers’ first hit of the game in the fifth inning, advanced on junior Chris Mader’s single and then scored on Scrogg’s single. Unfortunately, this was the only Blazer run of the game. This lone score was not nearly enough production to play competitive ball with the Hornets, who may now be the favorite to win the county playoffs.

Boone felt that Damascus’ quality personnel made it hard for the Blazers to hit well but is still confident about Blair’s chances. “We were playing against the best defense and the best pitcher that we are going to see,” he said. “We can stay with these guys, and I’d like to see them in the playoffs.”

The loss left most fans disappointed. Coach John Macdonald said that “Damascus did a lot better than us in all categories. The final score might not have been indicative of how we played, but it was still a [big] defeat!”

Offensively, the Blazers have been led by senior first baseman Kent Anderson. Although he has cooled down recently, Anderson still leads the team with a .500 batting average, 14 hits, 12 RBI, three doubles and three triples.

The Blazers look to redeem themselves at 7:00 p.m. tonight, when they will host the Magruder Colonels.

Boys win 3-0

V-ball soars over Seneca Valley

By KRISTINA YANG

APRIL 14, SENeca VALLEY—

After nearly two weeks off the court, the boys’ volleyball team returned to action against Seneca Valley, defeating the Screaming Eagles 25-22, 27-25 and 25-16 in three lively matches and boosting its record to 4-1.

The Blazers began the night with a solid start, serving several aces through all three matches. “This new, team-oriented approach was evident in the second half. The midfield defense was led by senior Jonathan Gregory, where junior co-captain Erik Kordick added a stalwart presence at once. Unfortunately, this was the only time Blair switched uniforms. Where Blake was a group effort. “It all boiled down to, ‘Are we going to do it? Are we ready to play as a team?’” Gibb said.

Yes, the Blazers were. They outscored the Bengals 4-0 in the second half, pulling ahead for the win. “If you stepped up to victory,” Gibb said. “In the second half we played up to our potential.”

The Blazers next play at home against the Damascus Hornets tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.

The Blazers’ next game will occur at Wheaton on April 23 at 4:30 p.m.

Helgeson had a standout game, starting strong in warm-ups and picking up intensity throughout the game, allowing him to yield no goals in the second half.

Blazers were behind at the wire over the Bengals was a group effort. “It all boiled down to, ‘Are we going to do it? Are we ready to play as a team?’” Gibb said.

Yes, the Blazers were. They outscored the Bengals 4-0 in the second half, pulling ahead for the win. “If you stepped up to victory,” Gibb said. “In the second half we played up to our potential.”

The Blazers next play at home against the Damascus Hornets tomorrow at 5:30 p.m.
Eagles’ scream is unanswered
Co-ed volleyball defeated by Seneca Valley in four sets as disappointing season continues

By DAVID MUEHLENKAMP

The winless co-ed volleyball team continued its trend of very close games as it fell to Seneca Valley in four sets. They lost the first, second and fourth sets 25-18, 25-22, 25-19 respectively but were able to win the third set 25-22.

The game was very evenly matched, but the Screaming Eagles got most of the breaks. They were almost always in position to give the ball back to Blair and often regained possession. The Blazers were also not prepared for the Eagles’ tough defense.

According to Coach John Mott, the Screaming Eagles were fast, aggressive and good at positioning. “They were very good at covering the floor,” Mott said. “Seneca Valley is a very scrappy team, so even if we hit it well, they are always there to put it back.”

Every single point was fought hard for, and the Blazers showed tremendous effort. Both teams never gave up on any points, no matter how long they lasted. Major points took well beyond a minute and the match was approximately two hours long.

Tremendous serving by senior Rebecca Cho often led to sparts of consecutive points for the Blazers, as she served for a crucial five-point run in the second set to bring the Blazers to within two points of tying the game but the set ended in Seneca Valley’s favor, 25-22.

Senior Amanda Hsing, the “Floor General” as Mott calls her, played a focused and skillful game as usual. “[Hsing] was outstanding in every aspect of the game,” Mott said.

Reserve sophomore Adam Cretzu got to see critical time as he played with great intensity. Cretzu made his way into the lineup for the entirety of the last three sets. The Blazers were shut down in the first set due to poor serving and communication. They appeared to come alive in the second and third sets, but unfortunately the effort came too late in the game. “As the games went on we became more competitive, but we just didn’t get it done early enough,” Mott said.

The main reason for Blair’s woes this season might be the team’s lack of experienced boys. The team has several good senior girls in Hsing, Cho and Lauren Wong, but the only experienced senior boy on the team is Jason Gordon.

The Blazers hope to turn their 0-5 season around when they go on the road to face Wheaton on April 23 at 3:30 p.m.

By LUKE BOSTIAN

Hornets sting softball

For most of tonight’s game against Damascus, the county’s top team, the Blazers played their best softball of the season. Their defense, which had been shaky at times during the team’s first three games, was flawless. The Blazers hit the ball well against a tough Hornet pitcher and managed to put up a 4-1 load going into the seventh inning. But a comebacker line-driven freshman pitcher Michelle Linford in the shoulder and the Blazers’ fortunes turned. Mental errors and a flurry of Damascus hits took the game into an extra inning, and the Hornets eventually claimed victory, 7-4.

The girls made heads-up plays one after another. The team also employed Coach Louis Hoelman’s vision of a small-ball offensive strategy, putting runners on base with bunts and slaps and letting the big hits come when they were due.

“No one wants to be on the mound in that situation,” said Linford. “Basically, we played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“Basically, we played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

Together, the Hornet pitcher and Damascus’ defense played a focused and skilled game. “It was a good game,” said Linford. “It was a fun game.”

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.

“Against a team like that, that’s undefeated, it’s a credit to them,” said Hoelman.

“We played a perfect game until the last two innings, and then a couple of plays killed us,” said Hoelman. Blackfly hit a double fly ball that should have been caught, according to Hoelman, was followed by a dropped third strike. Both plays came in the seventh inning, and both allowed runs to score.
**Bengals sneak past girls’ lax**

By Julia Penn

I

n a hard-fought and evenly matched game, Blair’s girls’ lacrosse team lost to the Blake Bengals 13-12. After playing a strong first half, Blair let the Bengals get back into the game and win.

The Blazers attacked the Bengals with a high level of intensity from the get-go. Less than two minutes into the game, senior co-captains Mairead Hunter and Ariel Wilchek were driving forces on Blair’s offense, scoring five and two goals, respectively.

Although the Bengals matched Blair’s goals with two of their own in the next couple of minutes, Blair’s intensity did not waver. By the end of the half, Blair led Blake 8-4.

In the second half, the Blazers started to slip up, making little mistakes. “We got a little sloppy,” explains Coach Mike Horne. “Then they scored a goal. We got down and then they scored another goal.”

The Bengals went on a scoring spree in the second half, and with a little under six minutes to play, they tied the game at ten.

With five and a half minutes remaining, junior Lauren Finkel sped up the left side of the field and shot the ball into the far corner of the net, unassisted. A minute later, Finkel stole the ball at the midfield and scored again, putting the Blazers up by two goals.

Blair’s lead did not last long. Blake came back to score three more goals and with about two minutes remaining, Blake took its first lead of the game.

In the waning minutes of the game, Blair’s offense valiantly tried to tie the game but could not capitalize on several scoring opportunities, including an eight-meter shot with under 30 seconds remaining.

Senior co-captain Sarah Robinson, who had two assists, attributes the lowered level of play in the second half to the fact that the team wasn’t talking. “We fell apart at the beginning of the second half and stopped communicating,” she says. “We got frustrated when things went wrong instead of getting angry and wanting to get it back.”

Blair’s next match is against Damascus at home tomorrow at 7:00 p.m.

**Boys’ tennis swings to a win against QO**

By Anthony Glynn

APRIL 15, QUINCE ORCHARD HIGH SCHOOL—

The boys’ tennis team had its first Division I victory on April 15 against Quince Orchard (QO), beating the Cougars 4-3 to bring its season record to 4-2. The doubles teams swept their opponents, making up for key singles absentees. Senior Max Gibiansky’s singles win pushed the Blazers to triumph over QO.

Seniors Michael Price and Gordon Su, the first and second singles players, respectively, were not at the match. But the Blazers managed to reorganize the remaining players in ways that proved vital to their victory. The third and fourth singles players moved up two spots to fill the holes left by Price and Su; their places were filled by the top doubles team, which was split up to complete the singles team. The doubles teams moved up, and an alternate pair filled a blank spot on the doubles roster.

The first six matches were all decidedly one-sided, with Blair losing their number one, two and four singles games in straight sets and winning their number three doubles and singles and number-two doubles in straight sets. Then came the teeth-grindingly close number-one doubles game. Senior Kevin Chai and junior Edward Hsieh played a 5-7, 7-5, 7-6 (11-9) match that made the overall competition one hour longer than any other this season. Their game was plagued with more errors than usual, but by the last set, most of their teammates had finished and were enthusiastically cheering them on. Hsieh said that the support from the rest of the team was the reason they pulled through; it helped them stay calm and to maintain control despite the pressure of a close match.

The Blazers’ main problem was errors. Several players couldn’t overcome their mistakes, but the consistent play of the rest of the team carried Blair to victory. The points they earned while playing safe and hitting soft tipped the scale against QO.

Junior team manager Hersch Bhatia believed the Blazers should have easily won the match, but with the top two singles players out and a team rusty due to rain-delauged practices, Blair struggled. Although he didn’t expect the contest to be so close, coach David Ngbea told the team that they had depth and were going to pull through.

The next match is tomorrow at 3:30 p.m. at Paint Branch.