

Collaborating for Success!

April 2016

PRIDE ACADEMY KNOCKING THIS TEST RIGHT OUT OF THE PARCC!

PRIDE ACADEMY
KNOCKING THIS TEST...



We recently received news from the NJDOE about our school's growth in relation to Student Growth Percentile scores based on our students' PARCC assessment results last year. We are happy to report that our results are way above the mean and the school average is approximately 3.6 (out of a total possible score of 4.0). This indicates that on average, our students outgrew about 70% of their peers across New Jersey! We are proud of our students' success, our teachers' dedicated work and your continued partnership!

The next few weeks at Pride will involve a strong focus on final steps to support your child in preparing for the annual PARCC assessment coming up at the end of April and first few weeks of May. Ways that you can support your child over the course of the next few months are the following:

- Encourage your child to complete all homework practice assignments each night;
- Ensure that your child attends after-school tutoring sessions with their teachers;
- Ask your child questions about what they are learning and about their ideas and opinions about current events and matters that impact your family life. Don't forget to ask them to explain their answers and give examples to illustrate their ideas;
- Ensure that your child attends school every day and on time and if he/she leaves early for an appointment, make sure that class work is made up and homework completed;
- Closely supervise your child's use of online devices, especially during their completion of homework, and then later in the evening. Our scholars are expected to work hard during their academic classes and they need to be complete quality homework on their own and be well rested in order to have stamina for the day;
- Check your child's Agenda every night, the quality of the homework they complete, and their Pride Scholar Charts. Please continue to encourage your child to make positive choices during the day and respect and honor the learning culture in our school.

Please reach out to Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Wilson or Mr. Ofstad if you have any questions about our academic program or our upcoming PARCC assessment schedule. We look forward to continuing to partner with you and learn from you!

Save the Dates

- **Parent Council Meeting:**
Wed. 4/6 at 5:30
- **Dress Down Fundraiser for Yearbook:** Fri. 4/8
- **Progress Report Conference Night:** Thurs. 4/14 4:15-6pm
- **Board Meeting:** Wed. 4/20 at 6:00pm
- **PARCC Parent Letter Deadline:** Fri. 4/22. Please submit parent letters to the Main Office
- **PARCC Assessment Dates:**
Week of April 25-29th: 5th and 8th grade testing
Week of May 2-6th: 6th and 7th grade testing
8th Grade Science Test: May 25th

Looking ahead in May...
Generations Dance on Saturday, May 14th!

In Memory of Tyjahn Virgil!

In memory of our beloved scholar, Tyjahn Virgil, the Virgil family has created a scholarship fund in his name to help keep his legacy alive.

Please visit the link on our school website

(www.pridacs.org) to make your donation and support Tyjahn's legacy in contributing to the lives of Pride Academy scholars as they transition to high school and college and continue to use their knowledge, leadership, and service to make positive changes in our world!

Generations Dance!

The Parent Council is proud to announce that they will be hosting their 2nd Annual Generations Dance in May! All those who were present at last year's Generations Dance whole-heartedly agreed that it was one of the best events that they have ever been part of during Pride Academy's history!

The Generations Dance is our version of a *Mother & Son* or *Father & Daughter* Dance. Through our Generations Dance, we celebrate all families and invite the whole family to come out to celebrate! Everyone dresses in their finest attire, there is an excellent DJ who encourages everyone to go out on the dance floor, and our families prepare and contribute delicious food for the event!

This year, the theme is "A Night in Egypt", and it will take place on Saturday, May 14th from 6pm to 9pm in the Pride Academy Common Room. The Parent Council is excited about making this Generation Dance even better than last year! Please be on the look out for invitations to the Generations Dance at our next Progress Report Night on April 14th.



Spotlight on MVP! by Mr. Ahiabor and Mr Hanna

MVP mentors and mentees visited Montclair State University for a campus tour just before Spring Break. Both students and mentors found this to be an incredibly enjoyable and memorable trip. Zahmir Coles and Cahlim McMillan had this to say about their experience this year in MVP, and their recent college tour:

MVP is a way to reflect on your academics. What I like about MVP is that there are a lot of fun activities. My favorite activity is basketball because it's a way to stay active and stay fit. Going to Montclair State University was a way to get us to work harder so that we are able to get into a college like Montclair. We learned that if we don't work hard, our life could head in whole different direction. MVP is a way to make sure that all of us are successful, even the members who are already successful in school, it can push them to work harder. --Cahlim McMillan 7th Grade MVP member.

I enjoy MVP because whenever there is a meeting, the environment changes, I see a change every meeting. As the day goes by, I see a change in people because they realize the message that the mentors are trying to get to us. When we went to Montclair State, the message they are trying to get to you is that you should keep education as a top priority because you will not regret it at the end. MVP helps me by keeping me to high expectations because I understand my life goals. --Zahmir Coles 8th grade MVP member

Mentoring is not just about working on a student's difficulties. Oftentimes, the benefits are mutual for both the mentor and mentee. Mr. Hanna had this to say about his experience as a mentor in MVP:

In my short time as a mentor for MVP, I have found it to be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. It has allowed me to be able to get to know some of our male scholars on a more personal level. Through our Saturday meetings and small group meetings during study hall, I have been able to connect with our young men in a way that enables me to be more than just a teacher to them. I am honored to be viewed as a positive male role model for our boys. In MVP, we stress the idea of brotherhood, and I truly feel as though it is my duty as a mentor to act as an older brother to our young men.

During our field trip to Montclair State University, where we received a tour of the campus, I was overjoyed to see the excitement that our young men had throughout the day. I am pleased to have shared in that excitement with them. I stressed to our scholars that college is a part of their future, and as their mentor, I will continue to guide them down the path that will open doors of opportunity in the immediate and distant future.



Spotlight on Safety from the Desk of Ms Brower....



#20 Spotlight on Safety: Gangs

As the weather improves with the advent of Spring, our children spend a greater amount of time outdoors and in public spaces. In most instances, a great time is enjoyed by all. In some, however, conflict may arise with bystanders caught in the midst. It is critical that our children are equipped to prevent their involvement in violence and conflict as well as to respond appropriately if or when it occurs. One of the most important things for children is to make positive choices about how and with whom they spend time. It is important for educators, parents and guardians to know about children's/students' friends and warn them away from anyone involved in unsafe activities like gangs.

Gang Facts: A street gang can be described as a group of individuals who share a unique name or symbol, attempt to control certain territory ("turf") in a community and engage in a variety of violent or illegal behaviors that effect the general population (vandalism, drug dealing, assaults, drive-by shootings).

Gang Presence: People often assume gangs are a 'big city' problem. The truth is that gangs are present everywhere in America, from major urban areas to surrounding suburbs and rural communities. Gangs have been glorified through music videos, and movies, and have made their way onto the internet - hosting web sites, or creating profile pages on popular networking sites to lure recruits. They have even established a global presence. Gangs are breaking through racial, cultural and socio-economic barriers to grow their memberships. Young people from all economic and social backgrounds have been lured into gang life, from as early as age six or seven.

Gang Activity: Today's gangs participate in a number of destructive and violent behaviors that target rival gangs and impact innocent bystanders. According to the Los Angeles Police Department, gang members participate in "a variety of anti-social behaviors, including battery, mayhem, sexual assault, damage to property, larceny, murder, gang wars and other criminal activity". Gangs profit from criminal acts, such as narcotic sales, robberies and auto thefts. They vandalize property with gang graffiti. They may possess assault weapons and deadly firearms to use on the streets or in drive-by shootings. Gang-related crimes devastate our families and unravel the fabric of our communities.

The Three R's of Gang Life – Reputation, Respect, and Retaliation: Reputation is especially important for gangs and gang members. A reputation determines status within the gang and community. Respect is important to a gangs' overall reputation. Gangs and gang members will demand respect from their own crew, their rivals, and the community at large. If gangs or gang members feel disrespected, retaliation is a guarantee. Disrespect may take the form of a verbal comment, or it can be an act, such as when a rival gang tags over another gang's graffiti. Retaliation can happen immediately, or it may occur later. Retaliation can range from a beating, vandalizing property, intimidation, extortion, and arson, all the way to murder of the rival, their family, friends, or loved ones.

Gang Names and Nicknames: Gangs use various names to represent their gang, crew, or clique. The gang name may have reference to a commonly-known gang ("Crips", "Vice Lords"), while the clique name may have a connection to the gang's neighborhood (street name, geographic location). Most gang members adopt nicknames when they are recruited to a gang. These nicknames might identify certain physical traits ("Shorty"), describe a skill or the recruit's personality. Two rival cliques or gangs of which we have recently become aware are DTH and Sheed Side (SS). These groups are geographically based and comprised, according to law enforcement officials, of both children and adults. Please be mindful of any references made to these groups or graffiti, and refer concerns to Ms. Brower, Mrs. Thomas or Mrs Lowry immediately.



About a Most Important Letter! from Ms Dumenigo & Mr Ofstad



For the past four years, we have worked hard to encourage and motivate our students during their State assessments. One of the things we did was to present each child with a letter of encouragement every day. These letters came from their teachers and staff, but the most important letter was the one they received from their parents and family members. Our students were truly inspired by these letters and they helped them to stay determined and work hard. We are asking that you take a moment to write a letter or card right now, which we will present to your child during their PARCC testing week coming up in late April and early May.

Some ideas about what you can write:

- ♥ Tell them how proud you are of them!
- ♥ Tell them you believe in them and know that they can achieve anything!
- ♥ Encourage them to focus and do their best on the PARCC test!
- ♥ Remind them and show examples of how they have grown academically or in maturity over the years!
- ♥ Push them not to give up, even if the questions are challenging!
- ♥ Tell them that you love them!

Here is a sample letter that one of our Dad's wrote to his daughter:

I am writing this important letter to you to express my unflinching support to you especially during this testing in your school.

I am very confident that as a good daughter, you are always very serious in your endeavors, you exude brilliance, excellence, as prepared as ever, never leaving a stone unturned, go for the test and come out in flying colours.

I am very proud of your achievements, your dexterity and kindness to your peers. I want you to know that with much favour, I will be behind you and in front to direct your steps to greatness.

There is so much to write but time will not permit. "Sharp spear, they say, needs no polish."

Go and excel girl!

Please reach out to Ms Dumenigo or Mr. Ofstad if you have any questions or if we can provide you with stationary or any other kind of support.