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# BACS BROADCAST

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## We have Expanded!

Blackstone Academy grew from 165 to 250 students, requiring the school to double its space over the course of the summer.

Contractor Joe Wyzycka shook his head in disbelief, "You want this done in two months? Last time we did this we had six!" referring to the original construction project during the 2002-2003 school year.

In order to accommodate the influx of new students, Blackstone Academy rented the 15,000 square foot lower-level of their long-term space at 334 Pleasant Street. The school's landlord, Greg Smith, graciously agreed to relocate and construction began in late June.

Architect Dana Newbrook came out of retirement to work on the project, bringing architect Seth Wiseman of Conformlab on-board. The team worked quickly through the spring to manage the bidding process, acquire building permits, as well as finalizing the design and time-table for the project. Fortunately, many of the subcontractors had worked on the original build-out of both International Charter and Blackstone and knew the ins and outs of the building. The construction team (overseen by "Petey") worked around the clock, particularly in the weeks leading up to the first day of school. Electrician Don Gagnon, never seemed to leave and resolved not only electrical issues but other non-electrical issues that came up. *(continued on page 2)*



During the summer, SPIRIT relocated to UCAP for special events and activities. Faculty meetings were held off-campus while the administration and office staff worked through the noise, dust and distraction of construction. By the last week of August, both new and old teachers and staff had returned. After a truncated meeting schedule, everyone pitched in to unpack and build furniture, move boxes and set up classrooms. The hardy group worked through the weekend, undeterred by the fact that walls, doors, paint and toilets were not yet complete days before opening. On the evening of August 31<sup>st</sup>, the main office was moved to the lower level on Tidewater Street.

While finishing touches have continued throughout the fall, the Blackstone community has been enjoying the new light-filled rooms. In fact, Meghan Healy's art room actually has too much light! We invite everyone to come and see the space, where work on our elevator continues through the winter. By the end of August 2016, construction will be complete and 300 students will fill the halls of Blackstone Academy.

***At left, Pawtucket Building Inspector John Hanley meets with architects Seth and Dana Newbrook days before the first day of school.***

## Blackstone & Central Falls High School Go to College

Blackstone Academy is the recipient of a \$90,000 federal Charter School Dissemination Grant intended to establish a formal collaborative relationship with Central Falls High School. The grant focuses on sharing the successful college-going culture that has been established at Blackstone.

Last year, the top 50% of Central Fall's High School's junior class were given provisional early acceptances to Rhode Island College. This development set off a spirit of hope in the "Comeback City" of Central Falls and a renewed commitment to make sure that most students there not only graduate, but go on to pursue higher education.

"Central Falls High School has made huge strides over the last few years with attendance and graduation rates. Turning our energy to strengthening our college access rates is the next logical step," according to Superintendent Victor Capellan.

The yearlong project is incorporating many capacity-building efforts for the school. The funds will allow students to attend multiple college visits on Saturdays and school vacation weeks. Staff members and teachers will be compensated to attend visits with students as well as incorporate college access information and tools into their work with students. The grant will also support marketing and informational efforts aimed at parents and students.

Central Falls High School alumnus Manny Muñoz ('04) was hired to coordinate the project. A SPIRIT student in middle school, Manny was a summer Teaching Assistant for SPIRIT while attending Connecticut College on a full scholarship. After graduating, he taught art in a Houston charter school for five years after which he returned home to become a regional coordinator for the Narragansett Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Manny and staff members from Blackstone are working with a team at Central Falls High School that includes guidance counselors, administrators, staff members and other collaborators such as the College Crusade of Rhode Island and Brown University's College Advising Corps.

## New Faculty Members



Luke Anderson spent five years as Chair of the English Department at North Lawndale College Prep High School in Chicago. Prior to that, he was Program Director for NFTE for five years where he oversaw the implementation of an entrepreneurial education program in 46 schools. He holds a BA from The University of Pennsylvania and completed a both a fellowship program in sociology and MA in Educational Leadership at Northwestern University. He teaches 9<sup>th</sup> grade English, the Non-Profit Studies CIP and is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade advisor.



Paul Pasaba graduated from Brown University with a BA in Computer Science and received his MAT from Providence College. He worked for several years in the non-profit sector as Director of Education and Organizing for the Providence Youth Student Movement and as the technology specialist for OpenDoors a non-profit serving formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. Most recently, he worked as a Tech Systems Administrator managing servers, software, and databases. He teaches Algebra and Geometry, is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade advisor and coordinates technology.



Cindy Pires has been teaching for the past decade—most recently at Portsmouth High School. In addition to teaching Spanish and Portuguese, she also served as a class advisor to the Foreign Language Honor Society and member of the Technology Task Force. She received her BA in Secondary Education, Portuguese from Rhode Island College. She has been a community leader and volunteer with the Cranston Portuguese Club. In addition to Portuguese, she also teaches Spanish, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workplace Skills and is a 10<sup>th</sup> grade advisor. Her combination of skills and experience allowed us to bring Portuguese back to Blackstone!



Elena Maker received her BA in Education Studies from Brown University and completed her student teaching at Central High School in Providence. She spent the following year teaching English and Social Studies in Cali, Colombia. Last year, she worked as a Humanities teacher at the Global Learning Charter School in New Bedford, MA. She is a 10<sup>th</sup> grade advisor and teaches World History, US History and the Facing History CIP.



Greg Payette completed his BS in Physical Education and Health Education with a specialization in Adapted Physical Education at Rhode Island College. He spent the last several years working for Tides Family Services overseeing daily operations as its Dean. While there, he helped develop academic and social skills for students with a variety of behavioral and academic challenges. He is teaching a variety of creative Physical Education classes and is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade advisor.



Kate Lavoie King spent most of her teaching career as a Special Education Teacher at Central Falls High School. In addition to teaching, she has served in many leadership positions, such as overseeing the design and implementation of a Professional Practice School, co-author of the advisory program, a participant in the Arts Literacy Program and a member of the Principal's Leadership Team. Prior to this, she was a small business owner. She studied at both Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island.



Emily Berman was a student teacher for Blackstone Academy two years ago and returns to us after having taught at the Learning Community for one year. She holds a BA in Neuroscience from Wesleyan University and an MAT, Science Education from Brown University. In addition to being a 9<sup>th</sup> grade advisor, she teaches Biology, Chemistry and a CIP related to stigma and mental health.



### Bank of America Student Leaders Program



Paola Vélez '16

The Bank of America Student Leaders program is a selective program that helps connect high school juniors and seniors to employment opportunities. The program aims to teach participants vital skills necessary to work in development and service through stories, community work, touring, and lectures. After the weeklong Student Leadership Summit held in Washington D.C., I was offered a paid

summer internship at the Boys and Girls Club of Providence. Throughout my summer-long internship I worked with children from impoverished backgrounds. This was such an eye-opening experience because the only thing that most of these students needed was a shoulder to lean on.



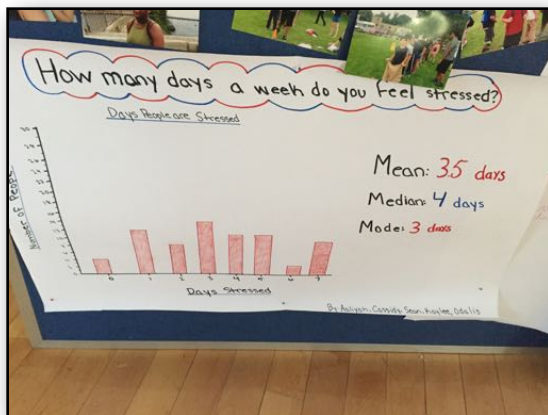
Fidaa Janoudi '17

### Summer at Brown

This summer, I attended a pre-college program at Brown University with the National Science Foundation. The pre-college program prepares students for college while also introducing them to people from all over the world. During the program, I took a 3 week neuroscience course with one of my close friends. The course was hard work but it really paid off in the end. Even with all the fun I had, I still took this program seriously and was able to experience a sample of what college

feels like. I am really glad I had the opportunity to attend this program and would recommend it to

## SPIRIT 2015



*This summer, students attending the SPIRIT Educational Program were able to not only learn many things about themselves, but their home state through their investigation of the theme "The Ocean State".*

When choosing this summer's theme, a goal was to increase the community pride that students felt when speaking about their cities and state by increasing their knowledge and involvement in their cities and state. Students did this through exploration of this year's theme while also participating in various "field studies" and field trips around the state.

Students went through the problem-solving process before settling on different service learning /community improvement projects to undertake. Some students worked with local municipalities to complete their service project. One of these projects included the redesign of trash receptacles in Slater Park in order to draw more attention to the littering problem in public spaces.

Over 110 students from more than 20 schools in Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls completed SPIRIT's 31<sup>st</sup> summer program. Teaching teams involved teachers from Blackstone Academy, Shea High School, Times 2 Academy and UCAP. Teaching Assistants represented Mount Holyoke College, Providence College, Rhode Island College and The University of Rhode Island.

Special thanks to key supporters of the program: The College Crusade of Rhode Island(Gear-UP), The Hasbro/United Way Summer Learning Initiative, Nordson Foundation, Moses Brown School, Wheeler School and UCAP.

## The Class of 2015!



*Members of the class of 2015 support fellow classmate Jesebead Gil's Senior Project at the East Side Business Association's Annual Block Party. Jesebead created a public participation "wishing tree" at the party and assisted with coordination of the fashion show (Jesebead 2nd from the left).*

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Blackstone held its 11<sup>th</sup> graduation ceremony. Thirty-five students were awarded diplomas with seven of those graduates receiving a National Honor Society designation. In addition, ten students earned Blackstone's special Non-Profit Studies Certificate. Graduates are headed to study at various institutions including URI, RIC, Providence College, Assumption College, University of Tampa, Brandeis University, and Roger Williams University. Reports from the field are positive—our alumni are meeting with success in college, career, and study programs. Congratulations to the Class of 2015!

## The Pearl Scholar



*Proud advisor Christina Lee with Pearl Scholar Brenda Anaya.*

Pearls are formed from the “grit” inside an oyster shell. Blackstone’s Pearls are chosen by the grit they demonstrate, their commitment to BACS’ Habits of Mind, and financial need. Established in 2013, the Pearl Scholarship Fund was designed to assist at least one student attend their “dream” college. The scholarship's endowment has more than doubled due to the generosity of donors both large and small, and we hope to continue that growth at a spring event for past and future donors.

**Brenda Anaya** of Central Falls was the 2015 Pearl, and her award will continue for the four years that she is enrolled at Assumption College.

## Building a strong community of learners and leaders

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*Please consider supporting the continued success of our students by making a tax deductible donation. Visit our website [www.blackstoneacademy.org](http://www.blackstoneacademy.org) to donate through check, PayPal, or credit card. Donations are accepted for the Blackstone Academy, The SPIRIT Educational Program and The Pearl Scholarship Fund. Let us know how to designate your gift.*

*Can you host a student for a job shadow or intern? Contact Rhonda-rhanaway@blackstoneacademy.org*

*For the latest news on Blackstone Academy Charter School Inc:*



Thanks to Tim Azanvourian '07 and Val Gutierrez, '16 Editors



## BLACKSTONE FIRSTS

Our sincerest congratulations to two of our successful alumni:

**Ana Maria '08** is the first of our graduates to complete law school. After finishing her undergraduate work at the University of Rhode Island in 2012, she studied at Roger Williams Law School graduating in May.

Our first Engineer, **Sebastian Vergara '11**, completed his studies in May at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Best wishes to all of our alumni college graduates this year!