August 2016

Dear Scholar and Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to the 2016-2017 school year! I look forward to a challenging, interesting and fun year as we explore current world news stories, the history of journalism in the United States, the professional rights and responsibilities of being a journalist, as well as the art of interviewing, writing an article and presenting an article in the best light. The following information will assist you in having a productive and successful year. Please keep this letter in your notebook as a quick reference for frequently asked questions.

Course Outline
The Journalism Curriculum is divided into six units of varying length. Scholars will hone their writing skills throughout the course while exploring the history of journalism in the United States, interviewing skills and current school, city, national and world events.

Scholars will be writing on a daily basis in their notebooks and as such, will need to come prepared to class with a notebook and pencil. Scholars will also be required to maintain a portfolio of completed original articles.

IBMYP ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
There are four major assessment criteria incorporated in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP). These criteria are:

Analyzing
- Identifying and explaining the content, context, language, structure technique and style of texts.
- Identifying and explaining the effects of the creator’s choices on an audience.
- Justifying opinions and ideas, using examples, explanation and terminology.
- Interpreting similarities and differences in features within and between genres and texts.

Organizing
- Employing organizational structures that serve the context and intention.
- Organizing opinions and ideas in a coherent and logical manner.
- Using referencing and formatting tools to create a presentation style suitable to the context and intention.

Producing Text
- Producing texts that demonstrate thought, imagination and sensitivity, while exploring and considering new perspectives and ideas arising from personal engagement with the creative process.
- Making stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating awareness of impact on an audience.
- Selecting relevant details and examples to develop ideas.

Using Language
- Using appropriate and varied vocabulary, sentence structure and forms of expression.
- Writing and speaking in an appropriate register and style.
- Using correct grammar, syntax and punctuation.
- Spelling, writing and pronouncing with accuracy.
- Using appropriate non-verbal communication techniques.
Grading Scale
All work is graded on a percentage basis, but is weighted according to the type of assignment. The Pittsburgh Public Schools requires the following distribution:

- Classwork: 25%
- Assessment: 25%
- Writing: 20%
- Participation: 20%
- Homework: 10%

90-100% - A
80-89% - B
70-79% - C
60-69% - D
50-59% - E

Necessary Materials—You will need to bring these materials to class with you every day:
- 1-1 ½ inch binder to organize class handouts
- 10 ½ x 8 inch spiral-bound notebook (to use as your Reader-Writer notebook)
- Agenda book
- Writing utensil—Sharpened pencil or blue or black pen

Homework
Homework will be assigned throughout the week and will be expected on the assigned deadline. “No Homework” slips will be used to track missing homework and scholar explanations for not completing the homework in a timely fashion. Please use your agendas to keep track of your homework assignments.

Late Work
Late homework is accepted but will only be given ½ credit. Class work should never be turned in late. It is due on the day that it is assigned. Unless a scholar makes a prior arrangement with the teacher, any class work assignment that is submitted late will also be given ½ credit.

Make-up Work
If you miss an assignment due to an absence from school you have the same number of days you were gone to make up the work. Generally, you must make up homework, tests, and notes, but it is not necessary to make up class work. Scholars missing class due to school activities are expected to get all assignments for the day before leaving for the activity and to turn them in ON THE DUE DATE. Scholars who begin to miss significant class time due to activities should meet with the teacher to see if additional arrangements need to be made.

Extra-Credit
There will be no opportunities for extra credit. Scholars should make every effort to complete work and achieve the highest grade possible during the report period and not rely on extra credit to boost their grade. It is important that scholars begin to develop the study habits necessary to complete quality work the first time.
Behavioral Expectations

I have high expectations regarding behavior that are not easily summed up in a list of rules. I trust that we will develop a classroom community that fosters mutual respect and courtesy. Below are a few of the expectations that I have:

- **Be present.** You cannot learn if you are not in class. If you miss class for valid reasons, do everything within your power to see me before you miss the class. If you are out due to illness or other health concerns, you are welcome to e-mail me for assignments that you missed or check Google Classroom (classroom.google.com).

- **Be prompt.** For a successful class, you need to be in the room by the time the bell rings and seated with your warm-up completed within the first few minutes of class.

- **Be prepared.** This means completed homework and necessary tools (physical and mental) for success. It also means coming to class having thought about what we are doing and what you have read or written and how you plan to participate in the current learning or discussion.

- **Be polite.** In this classroom, politeness means honoring every individual’s right to learn and pursue success and to feel safe and respected while doing so. No demeaning speech of any kind will be tolerated. You should feel free to articulate your thoughts but not at the expense of one of your classmates. Also, our classroom is a profanity free zone. As we are an academic community, I expect scholars to express themselves in academic, appropriate language. I will treat any distractions to the learning process, such as eating, drinking, conversing, or using cell phones, as behavioral concerns.

Contacting Ms. Patrick

I am excited to work with you this year, so please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or concerns. You can reach me using either of these options:

1. Email me at rpatrick1@pghboe.net. I check my e-mail numerous times throughout the day and will be sure to respond to your email as quickly as possible.
2. Call me at (412) 529-5296, and leave a message. I’ll call you back as soon as I can.

I hope that this information has been helpful. Again, I am looking forward to an exciting year and trust that we all (scholars, teacher, parents) will work together to create an environment that is conducive to personal learning and growth.

Looking forward to an excellent school year,

Ms. Renee Patrick
Barack Obama Academy of International Studies
515 N. Highland Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA 15206
Phone: 412-529-5980 | Fax: 412-622-5983

Please complete the following information and return this page to Ms. Patrick by _________________:

Scholar name: ________________________________________________________________

Parent/guardians’ names: _______________________________________________________

Parent/guardian phone number(s): ________________________________________________

Parent/guardian email address: _________________________________________________

Throughout the year, I may contact you via text message to remind you about important assignments and class news or share other information about your son or daughter’s academic performance. Please check here if you would like to receive communications via text message.

☐ Text message communication is acceptable. If you would like text communication, please indicate which phone number is your cell phone number.

Please sign to indicate that the above information is accurate and that you have read and understand the above letter.

__________________________  ______________________________________
Parent signature              Scholar signature

Approved: Ms. Aisha Robinson, Director