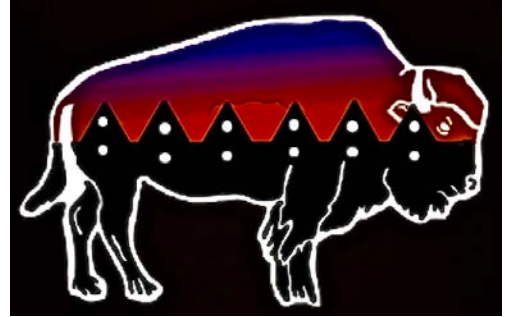


Buffalo Hide Academy

November 2021



The Four Pillars of BHA

Recently, BHA staff participated in an exercise that helped us take stock of where we are as a school and where we hope to go in our continuous effort to meet the needs of our students and the community at large. The four pillars, or areas, we focus on are:

- **Attendance/Engagement:** *We strive to create an environment in which students and community members feel welcomed, supported, and challenged to grow.*
- **Wellness:** *We take a holistic, whole-person approach to education at BHA. We believe that by addressing wellness, in both the mental and physical sense, and establishing intra- and interpersonal trust, will create fertile ground in which academic learning can best take place.*
- **Academics/Learning:** *Students can expect original, flexible, and individualized curriculum from BHA teachers and counselors. Our staff is dedicated to continuously grow as educators and bring best practices into our lessons in order to give students a unique and relevant education.*
- **Culture/Community:** *Learning, sharing, and discussing contemporary and traditional Pikuni culture will be a constant in our school. Additionally, we will use the community as a classroom, learning from and honoring the people, the land, and the resources that make up Blackfeet Nation.*

These four pillars and standards will allow us to consistently "self-evaluate" and drive our walk-through forms and Professionalism Development needs.

Attendance/Engagement

Chris Lewis and Lacey Salois represent BHA on the Attendance Committee and have recently created a tool that helps in tracking student absences, obstacles to attendance, and motivating factors for graduating. This tool was developed in order to not only allow for a more streamlined approach to identifying real-time attendance issues, but also as a means to provide support to students if/when they are unable to make it in to school, for whatever reason. Below are a few of the questions students are asked when they have missed 2+ days of school in any given week:

Section 2 of 5

Status Update/Check In

Description (optional)

How are you doing? *

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Shitty, life is bad ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Terrific, couldn't be better

Comments

Long answer text

Section 4 of 5

Plan of Action for Upcoming Week

What's the plan, man?

How can we help with some of the barriers identified in the previous section?

Long answer text

What's your motivation for being in school? *

- I like my classes and find them interesting;
- Pass my classes;
- Graduate high school;
- Get a good job;
- Make my people proud (parents/grandparents/siblings/kids/friends/etc);
- To engage in counseling;
- Hang with friends;
- It's a calm/safe space;
- Family pressure;
- Prove doubters wrong;
- Food / Clothing / Shelter
- Other...

Section 3 of 5

Attendance Barriers

Description (optional)

What are the main barriers that are preventing you from physically attending BHA? *

- Discouraged with current academic progress, or lack thereof
- No ride
- Difficulty sleeping/Problems waking up
- Work schedule conflict
- Childcare issues
- Psychological issues (anxiety, depression, irritability)
- Interpersonal issues (conflict, bullying)
- Medical issues
- Death of a loved one
- Other...

Every Friday afternoon and Monday morning, Lacey attempts to contact students through phone, email, text, Facebook, relatives – by any means possible! When a student has been contacted and/or comes into school the following week, Chris sits down with him/her/they and asks a series of questions to better understand how the student is feeling in terms of their academic progress as well as their emotional well-being. Through this conversation, the student has an active role in setting goals and creating a plan to improve attendance and engagement. Additionally, through this data collection, we are able to identify barriers and trends as they emerge in

order to adjust our academic and SEL offerings at both the individual level as well as overall building level.

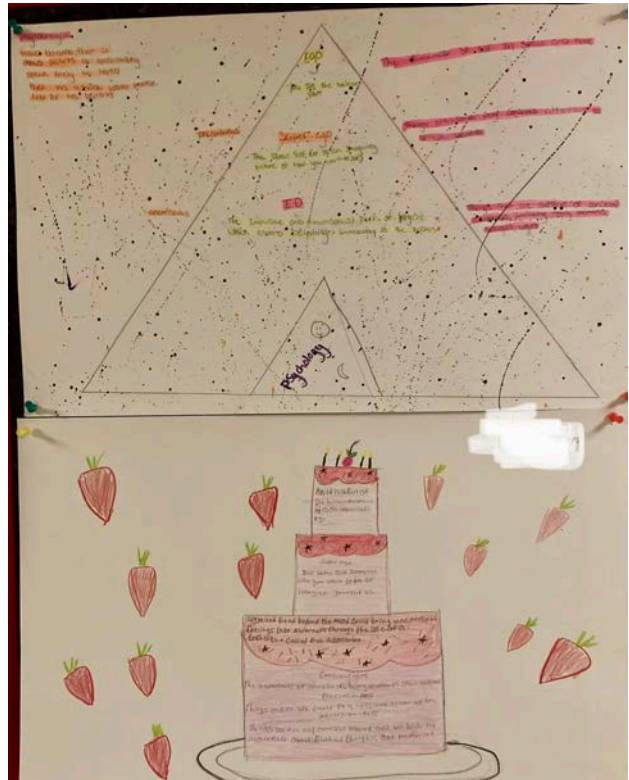
Wellness

In order to integrate wellness into our classes, BHA counselors and teachers work tirelessly to scheme, collaborate, and plan for how to best achieve this. One way this is happening is during a D-Block class, taught by Troy Atchison and Chris Lewis. Troy has a background in psychology and enjoys sharing his wealth of knowledge in this subject area with students. In addition to this class, students have the opportunity to meet twice a week with Chris, during which time he works with them in the area of affect regulation. Below is a synopsis of each of these two unique learning experiences that are available to our students.

For the psychology part of the shared class we are, and will be, covering the history of psychology, the reasons for psychology, and some psychological disorders. In one project students combined the six main concepts of psychoanalysis to demonstrate their understanding of the material by creating a poster.

In conjunction with the psychology portion of this class, the Buffalo Hide Counseling Department offers a therapeutic group rooted in dialectical behavior therapy for students who have experienced or are experiencing distressing life events. The goals for the course are for students to be able to identify challenging emotions that can arise when faced by adverse life experiences. Building upon current strengths, students will learn techniques - such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, sensory-based grounding exercises, and guided breathwork - that will help to decrease emotional dysregulation and increase self-regulation.

This class is offered to students during 2nd Quarter, with the possibility of extending it throughout the school year.



Academics/Learning

In an attempt to continuously monitor students' academic progress as well as braid together our wellness and learning, BHA staff created a pre-assessment for 2nd Quarter that touched on both of these areas. We used a text written by Dr. John Sommers-Flanagan, of UM Missoula, in which he addresses some common myths around suicide as well as making the case for treating everyone with compassion and respect because, as Socrates said, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." After students read this text, they were asked to complete a form that captures their feelings, strengths, and weaknesses when it comes to both the topic of suicide AND their academic skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Below is the handout students received prior to the pre-assessment:

During the next nine weeks, your classes will require you to complete assignments, participate in group discussions, create art projects, enhance critical thinking capability, and build your skills in reading and writing. Additionally, all of your classes, as well as everything we do in this school, will be centered around BHA's 7 Wellness Domains.

Given the immense range and complexity of the human experience, and our options as a school to be helpful in these areas of life, we've organized our wellness goals at Buffalo Hide in the 7 domains listed below. Within each domain, we as a school ask ourselves, "Where are you struggling, and how can we be helpful and impactful?"

- **Emotional:** *Encompasses all of our human emotions, as well as our state of emotional regulation. Our main SEL goal at BHA is to help students address and process distressing emotions.*
- **Cognitive:** *This includes all forms of thought, especially imagery. We strive to combat maladaptive beliefs and instill positive core views of the self.*
- **Interpersonal:** *This domain refers to the entirety of our human relationships. We create a family environment at BHA with intention to offer social connection and perceived usefulness.*
- **Cultural/Spiritual:** *This domain encompasses all religious, spiritual, or cultural values that provide meaning and purpose. Our hope is that we can help students find inherent value and meaning in their lives.*
- **Physical:** *This domain refers to our biogenetics and physiology. A healthy lifestyle lived with intentional self-care is a big part of what we do here.*
- **Behavioral:** *This includes all of our human action and activity. Being open to our 'BHA' experience can help to foster a well lived, well planned, meaningful life.*
- **Contextual:** *This refers to all factors outside of the individual that influence human behavior. Our empathic, family experience at BHA is driven to help foster a deeper connection to a healthy place and community.*

The rationale for structuring our wellness approach in this way is because oftentimes our pain or turmoil in life is not located in a single place, so to speak. This dimensional model, which is supported by robust evidence in the world of clinical psychology, also makes it easier to notice and observe the different strengths of our students. We further accentuate these many strengths and positive attributes with the question, "Where are you strong?"

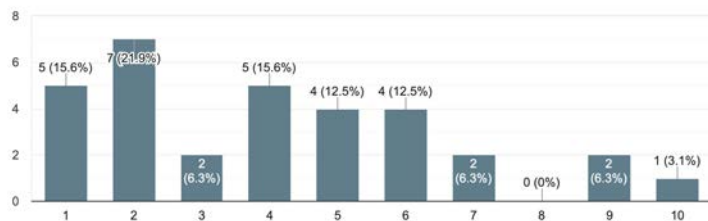
Each of these domains are multifaceted, dynamic, and they often overlap and interact. What follows is a list of the standards (or skills) that **ALL** of your classes will be working on during this quarter. These standards will be covered in the Bell Ringers, Exit Tickets, assignments, projects, and group discussions, so it's important for you to know what to expect before this quarter begins.

If you are able to demonstrate an understanding and show growth in all of these areas, then you will earn 2.0+ credits when the quarter ends.

Standard	What it Means
<p>Speaking and Listening: SL.11-12.1</p> <p><i>Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly and persuasively.</i></p>	<p>When having discussions in class or in the workplace, it is critical to be able to follow along AND participate. And when you become involved in the discussion, it is important for you to be able to communicate your ideas and opinions in a clear and precise way.</p>
<p>Reading: RI.11-12.7</p> <p><i>Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media formats as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.</i></p>	<p>In your classes you will be asked to consume a variety of texts - including fiction, non-fiction, news articles, opinion pieces, etc - as well as different types of media (for example podcasts, videos, and movies). It will be important for you to pay attention to the information that is provided in these texts AND to be able to answer questions and form opinions/ideas.</p>
<p>Writing: W.11-12.10</p> <p><i>Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.</i></p>	<p>One way in which to become a better writer is to just do it more. With continued practice, which can include journaling/reflection, narrative, persuasive, short, and long form writing, your skills will grow and develop over time.</p>
<p>Language: L11-12.1</p> <p><i>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</i></p>	<p>When you are writing in your classes, be sure to focus on proper capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. The three areas of writing we will focus on this quarter are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalization (beginning of sentences, proper nouns, titles) • Punctuation (periods, commas, quotations, etc.) • Grammar (spelling).

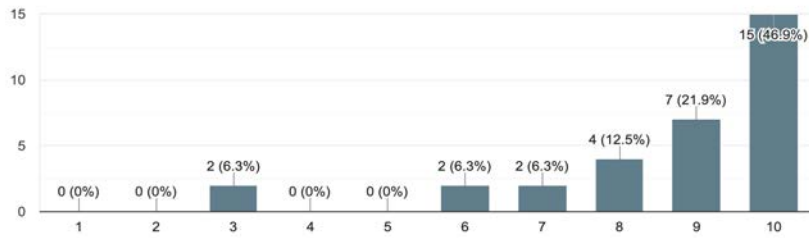
Some interesting data that emerged from this pre-assessment are as follows:

On a scale of 1-10, how would you rank your willingness to speak in front of others (including teachers, classmates, co-workers, etc)?
32 responses



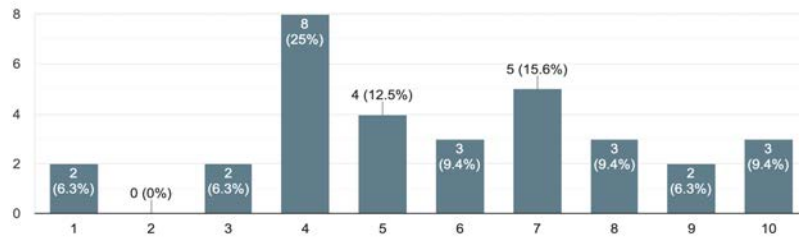
On a scale of 1-10, how important do you think listening is in your daily life (either in school or out of school)?

32 responses



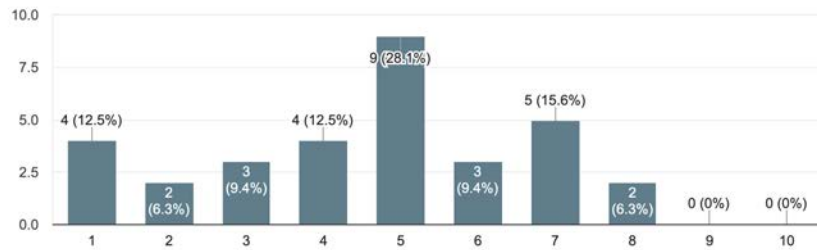
On a scale of 1-10, how much do you enjoy writing?

32 responses



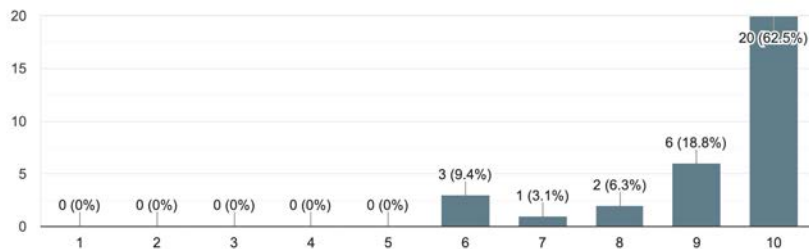
On a scale of 1-10, how good of a writer do you think you are?

32 responses



On a scale of 1-10, how important is it for schools to address mental health issues affecting teens, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation?

32 responses



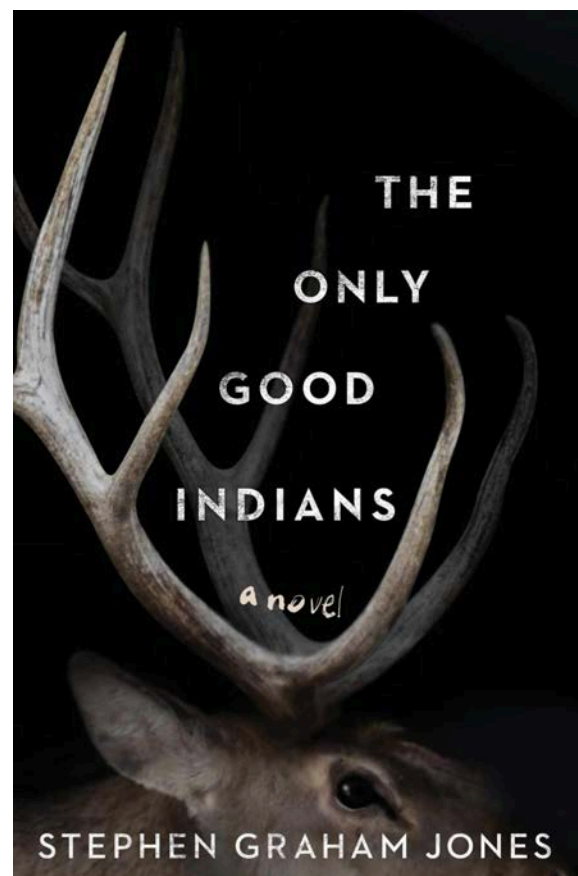
Culture/Community

Mr. Rink's classes this semester include P.E., English - Surviving the Apocalypse, and two sections of Blackfeet Literature. Each class is an attempt to teach through the **culture** and include and strengthen a sense of **community**.

In P.E., students are spending their mornings split between playing team sports in the gym and time at the Glenn HeavyRunner Memorial Pool. Both activities strengthen the community amongst the students and staff and the time spent at the pool has exposed our students to the larger community here as they interact with other community members working out, swimming, or relaxing and healing in the sauna.

English - Surviving the Apocalypse is focusing on apocalyptic themes in literature and applying those themes to the conditions the Blackfeet have existed in for the last few hundred years to give students a greater sense of the historical context within which they live. Much of the texts covered in class have been created by Indigenous people or are about Indigenous people.

The two sections of Blackfeet literature are reading a recently published horror novel by Blackfeet author, Stephen Graham Jones called THE ONLY GOOD INDIANS. The students are really enjoying reading a best seller that is set in their homeland.



BHA Student Spotlight

Name: Jori Gray-Boggs

Grade: 12th

Years at BHA: 3

Fun Fact: Has climbed Chief Mountain multiple times!

Jori has been a student with Buffalo Hide Academy since the Fall of 2019. During these years, she has shown time and again her resilience, dedication to education, and a level of compassion and empathy second-to-none. In addition to being a role model to students in the building, Jori has demonstrated leadership outside of BHA by being a member of the Varsity Cheer Squad and a teacher's assistant to Ms. Kayla Jeckell's 3rd grade class. But the thing Jori takes the most pride in is being a phenomenal mother to her son Jordan. When asked how these different roles have affected her, Jori responded by saying, "I feel like I'm giving back to the community the positive sides of me, in multiple ways."

Jori, we are so proud to have you represent the Buffalo Hide family in all the ways you do, and we can't wait to see where life takes you after graduation - lots of love!

