

# BHA Board Report

10/1/24



## Field Trips, Positive Relationships, and Emotional Regulation

As we all know, Autumn in Blackfoot Country can be pretty spectacular. The poplars and aspens and other foliage changing colors is a transformation we all look forward to every year. It's also a time of transition in other ways, as everyone begins preparing for what could be a long winter. At BHA, we've observed over the years that these transitions can be somewhat difficult for our students. While some really enjoy winter, we also have many students that see winter as a time where they are most isolated from friends and activity. The bitter cold and biting wind can make it so we don't want to spend much time outside. And being cooped up indoors for months on end can wear on some of us.

This awareness compels us at BHA to try to spend as much time outdoors as we can before the snow starts flying. We've always believed in the power of getting outside and extending our learning environment to the natural world. Field trips are a great forum to accomplish this, and help us achieve many of our academic and relational goals at BHA. The above picture was taken last week at Swift Dam. As you can see, water can be relatively low this time of year which gives us the ability to explore the dam structure.

Field trips are also a great way to connect with our students by simply having fun and enjoying the outdoors together. As staff we firmly believe that the best way for us to

build positive relationships with our students (which then gives us the ability to accomplish many other goals in our school) is to simply model our compassion, interest, and empathy for each other. And through positive relationships we can help our students regulate their emotional experience. This is paramount for maintaining a healthy environment in our school.



We always enjoy getting outside on field trips! These cowboys did great on this beautiful day. Pictured here is Landon Carlson, Labron Carlson, and Rowdy Guardipee hiking up to Aster Point, which is along the south shore of Middle Two Medicine Lake.

Field trips also help us integrate many of our social/emotional goals at BHA as well. When dealing with loss, especially those that are sudden or traumatic, we can often be left feeling many complex emotions at once. Such is often the case with being a survivor of suicide. Because these types of losses are so stigmatized, it can inadvertently cause us to feel as though we can't properly grieve or have closure. These losses can result in feelings of ambiguity...

We often strive to make the connection that being outside in beautiful places can give us coping skills and possible healing power. These skills can be incredibly useful in helping our students process through this ambiguity to find new ways to cope and grieve.

## Ambiguous Loss

*A loss that occurs without a significant likelihood of reaching emotional closure or significant understanding*

1. Physically absent but psychologically present
2. Physically present but psychologically absent (loved ones are expected to always be who they were)
3. Physically present but had an identity change