

Buffalo Hide Academy School Board Report - May 7, 2024

Senior Exit Interviews at Buffalo Hide - Spring 2024

We conducted our senior exit interviews at BHA last week, with 38 seniors completing this final academic step toward graduation. These interviews have emerged as a highlight of our year, as the interview itself serves as the culmination of many hours and tough days of work on behalf of our seniors. The interview is designed to mirror a job or college interview, with two BHA staff members serving as facilitators during each 30–40-minute session.

The goal is to hear each student's story of what their experience has been like during their academic careers in BPS. In addition, our hope is that the narratives we've been helping them formulate during their time at BHA will include stories about their families and important people in their lives, the challenges and adversity they've overcome, their strengths and weaknesses, and future plans.

While our students typically do extremely well during these interviews, we recognize this is also an immense challenge for most of them. While most Buffalo Hide students come from loving and supportive families (albeit families that still have their struggles) many of our students have also overcome significant obstacles in their lives, from losing loved ones to experiencing abuse and neglect. These interviews can paradoxically unearth some of these unpleasant memories and emotions, and a big part of this experience leans into helping our students utilize the myriad of coping strategies we've been working on during their time here.

It would be impossible to overstate how impressed we were with our senior crew during the interview process this year. They rose to this unique challenge and did extremely well. Usually within each interview, somebody is crying. And more often than not there are happy/inspired tears from our staff members!



Graduation Prep and Academic Advising with Chris Lewis

Here at the Buffalo Hide Academy, we believe in the importance of collaborative academic advising to ensure each and every senior is informed of credit totals, classes taken, classes that they still need to take, and credit recovery options. This is done by meeting with potential graduates weekly to assess academic standing, goals, and addressing any challenges they might be facing that stands in between them and their diploma. By offering strategic advising and academic triage to graduating seniors and their families, we help to ensure that each student is informed and equipped with the tools and support they need to graduate from high school.

These final two weeks for seniors are always a whirlwind, and sadly some of the seniors with hopes of graduating ultimately may not make the cutoff by graduation time. In that event, we collaborate with students and their families to make sure we have a realistic and attainable path forward to still help students earn their diploma. More often than not, our plan for seniors that fall a few credits or classes short will be to finish them up during our summer school session, an intensive three week original and credit recovery course palette offered by Greg Klauk (BHA Science and English instructor - dual certified, heck yeah he's fancy!).



Makayda Skunkcap showing off her fancy grad gear

BHA MSU Bozeman Trip - May, 2024



Four Buffalo Hide students (Jarron Lahr, Angel CrossGuns, Madison Tallwhiteman, and RJ Goggles) were invited to MSU in Bozeman as guest lecturers in Dr. Christine Stanton's and Dr. Allison Winehoff-Olson's education prep courses. They spent two nights at the Comfort Suites and attended events and classes for three days on the MSU campus. Students received monetary compensation for their expertise in classes as well as compensation for an art project they were invited to by Dr. Stanton for the cover of a book she is publishing in which their BHA teacher Mr. Rink is a co-author.

Students also enjoyed a campus tour while there and experienced delicious food courtesy of the MSU catering department. They also participated in activities off campus including horseback riding, swimming at the hot springs, and shopping. They wanted to include a special shout out to their transportation specialist for the trip, Crystal Upham. She did a phenomenal job navigating Bozeman and even joined the students for some of the events.

Science Field Labs at BHA

With the coming of Spring the BHA students have begun to plant seeds and study the biology of soil and plant growth as we prepare to start up our garden for the summer school program. With the warm weather that Spring brings, BHA students have also been able to participate in the first few Science field lab excursions to Rock City to study geology and local biomes.

BHA students were also hosted by some of the Glacier National Park staff for a day of career exploration and science lessons in hydrology, ecology and astronomy. All of these learning experiences will meld into the BHA Summer Science School program during the first three weeks of June, where students will be able to expand their learning in the areas of science, ELA, and career exploration.



A student's perspective on his time at BHA

Our writing classes offer unique and structured time for self-reflection. Many of our writing prompts and guided assignments are designed to get our students thinking about who they are within the larger context of their lives. In Jake ArrowTop's writing revolution class, students have the opportunity to develop foundational writing skills. Through their essay brainstorming process, one student developed an insightful topic regarding his time at Buffalo Hide Academy. Ty decided to write about how the school has positively impacted his life:

Buffalo Hide Academy is a great school. Unlike traditional schools, it is very welcoming and the staff are understanding and thoughtful. The students are also very laid back which creates a calm environment. I've made friends and changed some of my habits. My experience at Buffalo Hide Academy has positively impacted my social life as well as my emotional and physical well-being.



Ty Evans, BHA sophomore, looking caddy!