

Buffalo Hide Academy Board Report

April 2017

Blackfeet Academy and Project Choices are gearing up for graduation with several students having presented their Portfolios this past week at Browning High School. Students are working hard on completing classwork and community service requirements as they prepare for the chapter of their lives.

Students from the Buffalo Hide Academy continue to volunteer time with the lower grades, most specifically with Ms. Shea doing a weekly Art project. Our students serve as teacher assistants and mentors to the younger students as they bond over Art projects.



Students from the combined Science and English classes also partnered with Kayla Jeckyls class as science pen pals. Students exchanged letters with each other then met for a science lesson and luncheon, the lesson covered basic solar science and Blackfeet Astronomy lessons.



Charlie Speicher, our counselor continues to teach an Autobiographical Video Development class. From a Trauma Informed perspective it is very important to us that students have a forum and the opportunity to tell their own stories and share experiences. Digital storytelling is used and students use each week to share a chapter of their own life, their own journey. This class incorporates, writing, technology and social skills. (A sample video is being sent to your email)

Thanks in large part to the efforts of Nikki Hannon our food pantry is fully operational and serving students. A grant from Montana OPI's early warning system allows us to provide Friday backpacks with food and sanitary items, attendance awards and mentoring support for our students designated as homeless (22 students) or having food insecurity issues, or designated by the states Early Warning System as being at elevated risk of dropping out (44 students).

I am also enclosing the letter from Montana State University Professor Robert Petrone who is the Director of the English Education Department. Mr. Petrone has visited our school several times and coordinated writing workshops with our students and PD with our staff.



March 20, 2017

Dear Matthew and Nick,

I'm writing to thank you so much for opening up your school to me (and my students) over the past several months to spend time and observe and build relationships with faculty, staff, and students.

I've been in public education for over 20 years (first as a teacher in inner city high school Denver teaching reading to students labeled "at risk"), and truthfully, I've not seen a learning environment in all that time like the one you are all creating at Buffalo Hide Academy. As far as I can tell, it's one of the few places in public education where everyone involved is "walking the walk," so to speak. I so love it and hope to be able to continue building relationships with you and the students and community there.

Department of English

Below are thank you notes from the two students who joined me on my recent visit to your school. Both of these students are on track to become future high school English teachers, and as their notes attest, their experiences at your school have profoundly shaped their developing ideas for teaching. I hope you enjoy what they have to share with you about their experiences.

Sincerely,

Robert Petrone, Ph.D.
Associate Professor & Director, English Education Program

Nick and Matthew,

I want to extend my sincere gratitude for allowing my colleague, Matt, and I to visit your school and interact with your students. I had never been to Browning and had no idea what to expect. What I found there was something I have never found in a public school setting: a safe and welcoming community for learners and educators.

I particularly enjoyed the seminar put on about restorative justice and how to incorporate that into everyday teaching practices. As a student, I did not encounter this idea, but I would love to use it in my own classroom to create a space similar to Nick's classroom, where students have a voice that matters and they know someone is listening to that voice.

On another note, I would like to comment on your students. I was extremely nervous to teach my first lesson for high schoolers. I found them to be some of the most respectful and open group of young people I have met in a very long time. The students were open to trying something they had not done: a writing

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Mountains & Minds

For the Board Members who could not make the noon meeting hosted by the Blackfeet Academy I am also providing a link to Mr. Atchison's computer coding class project. This short video represents a

quarter worth of coding skills put into practice. We are very proud of the math, logic, coding and computer science skills needed to execute this project. (We will send the video to your email address, as file is too large for report)

Buffalo Hide Academy is currently serving 106 students, with 131 having been served and 20 students currently on the waiting list.

Matthew Johnson

Director of Alternative Education

Browning Public Schools