

Trust and Respect important lessons in freshmen English class

Freshmen English teacher Christie Everett is celebrating her 20th year of teaching – her eighth at BHS – and shared two of the units her classes worked on this year:

UNIT 1

Our first unit this year is titled “A Journey to Understanding Ourselves.” We studied the book “Speak” by Laurie Halse Anderson. The protagonist is a teenage girl named Melinda who has a tragic experience the summer before she starts high school. The story follows her journey throughout her freshman year as she tries to cope with her past, recover, and grow from the experience. One of the major symbols throughout the book is a tree. I gave the students the same assignment Melinda was given in the book. They had to create a tree that symbolized them and their life experiences and who or what has shaped them to be the person they are today. Every part of the tree had to have meaning, from the roots, trunk, branches, colors, etc. They were required to write a one page reflection explaining the symbolism behind every detail of their tree. The students then presented their trees to the class, and they were displayed in the classroom for the rest of the unit. Some were hesitant to look back upon past experiences, but they were able to recognize the strength and resilience they exhibited in order to overcome adversity. They were respectful of one another’s background, differences, and experiences. The honesty and openness in class discussions were so rewarding.

“This project has been a cool project,” One student wrote after completing the culminating project. “I like the use of art to represent our feelings, as well as being able to choose the format that works best for us. Being able to incorporate symbolism and hidden meanings into this project is something I’ve never done before. I loved making something that represented me...”

UNIT 2

Our second unit this year is titled “A Journey to Understanding Our Role and Responsibility

in Society.” This is centered on the study of the Holocaust and the book Night by Elie Wiesel. Through the reading selections and writing opportunities, they are asked to explore what happened, why, and what responsibility they hold in preventing and dealing with injustice today. They have shown such mature sensitivity to the suffering and inhumanity of the victims of the Holocaust. They have also exhibited the ability to connect past events to what is happening in our world today and recognize the power they have as 14-year-olds to make a difference in their school and community. One of the projects the students completed was based on the book “I Never Saw Another Butterfly,” which is a compilation

of children’s drawings and poems from the Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944. With a partner, students were asked to choose a poem from the book, research its author, analyze the content, and create a butterfly that represented what they imagined the child was thinking, feeling, and describing through the poem. The students read their poems to the class and explained the symbolism behind the design, words, images, and colors that they chose to represent that child and his/her poem. Students were moved by the innocence and the hopefulness in these children. It opened up many discussions on how we all have so much to be thankful for and how important it is to take a stand when we witness injustice.

One of the best parts of teaching is forming relationships built on trust and respect. Students need structure and they need to feel loved and cared for. It is then that they can show empathy and compassion for others and feel the confidence they need to make their mark on the world.

I am so proud of my students! They have approached each task this year with enthusiasm and diligence. They have shown tremendous growth in their ability to look inside themselves and see the potential they have for making a difference in the lives of those around them.

“One of the best parts of teaching is forming relationships built on trust and respect.”

- Christie Everett

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GROWTH OPPORTUNITY: 8TH GRADE HYDROPONICS PROJECT TEACHES STUDENTS ABOUT HYDRO SYSTEMS

By Zoe Vittum, Brewer Community School, 8th Grade

I have been working on the Brewer Hydroponics Project since the middle of the second trimester. This time included many different steps and setbacks.

I started with researching different types of systems and then moved on to designing multiple hydro systems. I decided which system I was going to build based on things like efficiency, cost, and time.

After I knew what I wanted to build, I then had to put together a materials list and get it passed by [Gifted and Talented teacher] Mrs. Gaitings.

I then started the build, which did not take very long. The component of the proj-

ect that took the longest was fixing faults and adjusting different aspects to perfect



things like pump head, water flow, and temperature.

One of my favorite parts of the projects was being

able to design 3D printable parts in Solidworks, a computer aided design program, that I have learned to use through the robotics team.

I designed a baffle system to fix a water flow problem that I was having. I thought being able to do this was a great way to bring modern computer technology and modern agriculture together into one project.

Since then, we have started growing tomatoes and a variety of lettuce plants.

Next year, I plan on handing this project down to a couple of younger students who have taken interest in my project. I also plan on staying involved with the project as it grows.

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