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High School Completion Program

Monthly Newsletter-April 2017

Access to Success is a high school completion program in the Helena School District. We provide students, 16 and over, who have dropped out the opportunity to earn their diploma.

Graduation is just around the corner! Our Access to Success December 2016 and May 2017 graduates get the wonderful opportunity to walk at the Helena College Graduation Ceremony! Graduation is Saturday, May 13th, 2017 at the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds and begins at 11:00am. Students will need to be there by 10:30 as well as at the rehearsal on Friday, May 12th, 2017 at 4:30pm. Graduates need to purchase their cap and gown at the book store after April 24, 2017 for \$25.

Summer Class:

Have you ever wondered where the water in your faucet comes from, or where it goes when you flush? Have ever thought about why the ground under Helena was blessed (or cursed) with the second biggest gold deposit in the state and the impact this has had past, present, and future? How curious are you to learn why an elephant is buried under Centennial Park?



These are the types of questions we explore in our “place-based” summer class here at Access to Success. We start with the premise that, a students' local community is one of the primary resources for learning. We want to promote knowledge that is rooted in what is local -- the unique history, environment, culture, economy, and art of their community. Basically, in this class we learn all about Helena (and I for one am a huge fan).

As an extension of the classroom, this class takes students out into the Helena community and its natural environment. Our journey begins by dividing the analysis of Helena into three main focal areas: the physical landscape, the cultural landscape, and the ecological landscape. We quickly make evident how these systems are inextricably linked. For example, Helena was born of mining the underlying geology, which, in turn, exerted tremendous influence on human history which shaped the diversity and quality of wildlife habitat.

Using this approach, we can shift from looking at our local landscape as random and unrelated, toward seeing it as an integrated set of processes shaped by the complex interaction between natural and human systems. Furthermore, it is valuable because it makes learning applicable and relevant to students, which leads to higher engagement and interest. Ideally, such an exploration can empower young people to be stewards of their local community and its environment.

This class focuses on the belief that questions — not answers — stimulate learning. Rather than just teaching facts and information, we encourage students to engage their immediate world with questions like:

- What is the natural and social history of this place?

- How does this place fit into the larger world?
- What sustains this community past, present and future?
- What plants and animals make their home here?

Often this type of inquiry creates more questions than it does answers, but in this class we sure have a lot of fun doing the asking.

Comments from an Access to Success Student:



Access works for me because I can come in, get my work done, and feel confident about what I'm accomplishing in my classes. It's given me a gateway to a much brighter future than I had hopes for before I came here. Being apart of this program makes me feel like I'm a part of

something important that really does change lives every day. And I know the teachers and administrators don't get as much appreciation as they deserve, but I really am grateful for everything they've done for me and everyone in this program.
~Emily Williams

Class Spotlight: Fit for Life

I don't know about you, but Physical Education was and still is one of my favorite subjects in school! Fit for Life isn't your average PE class, however, we do a variety of activities that both work on motor skill development as well as give students a great way to get outside and be active year-round! Ever get sick of sitting around, but can't think of anything fun to do? In Fit for Life, student voices are heard, and we rarely do the same thing twice. This semester in Fit for Life, we have worked on our hacky-sac skills, kickball plays, and gotten some cardio in with regularly scheduled walks to the Capitol Building

and back. Things to come in PE include a wide variety from baseball to yoga, and there truly is something for every student to enjoy! We will also be working on testing out gym memberships to local fitness facilities here in town so that students can get an idea of what that's like as well! I love teaching this class along with Health, and hope you all enjoy it too! ~Kahlee Dalton



Upcoming Information Nights:

May 2nd, 2017

June 6th, 2017

July 11th, 2017

Information nights are at 6:00pm on the Helena College campus in room 008.

Access to Success Swag:

Access to Success lanyards and water bottles are available for only \$2.00 in the main office. Proceeds will go to the annual end of the year picnic.

