

LaFayette Big Picture TGIF

2019

JANUARY 11

We are **STILL PRESENT, POSITIVE** and **PASSIONATE!**



We are **PRESENT**. We are **POSITIVE**. We are **PASSIONATE**.

We have returned from break and have tried to get back into a rhythm. The weather has not been cooperative. We have had a couple of snow days. Both snow days landed on internship days so our students did not have the opportunity this week. Hopefully we will be back in full swing next week and our students will be out in the community learning from experts in their fields of interest. Since our last TGIF, our students presented their learning plans at their exhibitions. Overall, we had 86% parental participation in exhibitions. This is excellent and we thank our parents who partner with us to provide the best educational plan for their children. Students were excited about their projects and the 101s, our 9th graders, blew their panel away with some of their presentations. Congratulations! On the flip side, our attendance rate dropped a bit in December. We dropped to 89% overall attendance for the school year. We are committed to moving this in the right direction for January and the rest of the year. To all of our parents and students, as you read in my letter home, we need you here on time and everyday!

Our climate controlled agriculture project is up and running. Thank you to Rick Kolceski who is our mentor on this project. The plants are growing. It is fun to see the growth in one day! Lenny will discuss this project more in his reflection. I invite you in to see the two growing stations we have set up in our collaboration space. I can't wait to enjoy the fruits of our labor!

TGIF from Walt

This week was a little crazy because of the two snow days we had, but things were generally positive. Regents are coming up shortly and things are getting a bit stressful. I haven't been spending as much time in the workshop since we've gotten back from break, because I have spent most of my time focusing on ELA prep and writing instruction.

This week's highlights:

I started working with the 201s this week to help them with grammar and writing. I will be doing a series of mini workshops to help them improve on these skills. So far, things have been going very well. We have been focusing on parts of speech

and sentence diagramming, and next week we will be looking at clauses and comma usage.

I spent a good amount of time trying to finish building a robot with Jamus and Brandon for the Vex robotics competition this weekend. However we weren't able to complete the robot because of the snowdays. We are still hoping to complete the robot for fun, and we will be working on it during exploratory workshops in order to prepare for next year.

In Entrepreneurship Workshop, we have been planning out our next project. We are hoping to start creating custom Big Picture t shirts and sweatpants. This week we spent time going over designs and researching different methods of printing and looking up sources for materials. We also began researching product ideas for Valentines day, and are hoping to create items for that event.

TGIF from Jessica

We are ringing in the new year and gearing up for regents. We have one more week of preparing and studying before we take the tests. If your student is in algebra they are strongly encouraged to be working and studying outside of class time. All students have extra practice problems in their notes packets and they have been given a practice exam. I am continuing to offer exploratory time for students to work on math for algebra, project work, etc.

As of January the 201s have been participating in a writing workshop with Walt during advisory time. Walt has used the 201's argumentative essays to design writing instruction specific to our advisory's needs. We will be continuing the writing workshop through this second trimester in place of our advisory reading book. I am excited to see the students grow in their writing skills as the trimester progresses.

By the end of this week I am hoping to have all of the 201's new learning plans and checklists finalized. When your student's learning plan is finalized I will send it home. Please

ask your student about their projects and provide them feedback. Also check on their progress and the development of their work. In hopes to prepare the 201s to gateway into senior institute come spring, I am looking forward to a successful second trimester. The 201's have several requirements that need to be met in order to transition into 301 year. If the students are keeping up with their work and completing their missing work, then gateway will be a manageable task. I have spread out and designed their assignments evenly over the past two years so they will not be overwhelmed come spring. All of the 201's have already been on the right track with their 101 work. Completing work this trimester is very important to keep them in this well prepared track.

After reflecting on last year and into this year, I have seen a lot of growth in the 201s. It's a beautiful thing to start to see your students' mature into young adults. We had a rocky start to the year, but I feel we have gotten a sense of motivation from the ending of the first trimester. I hope we continue to ride this motivation, growth, and determination.

TGIF from David

I am a fan of the Lord of the Rings movies. The books, I am not too thrilled about. I read the Fellowship of the Ring and I started The Two Towers, but I did not get very far. I was turned off by all the history of the Ents and Treebeard. There is only so many grandfathers of trees that you can read about before your brain just shuts off.

Also, I am a fan of the extended editions of the Lord of the Rings, which gives you more movie than the theatrical version. Although, these extended editions are devoid of tree grandfather stories. Anyway, the point I am ultimately trying to get to after all of my background information (still sans grandfather tree stories), is that this is our Two Towers point of the school year.

Metaphors are fun, especially when you can tell them through popular culture.

Yes, we are at the middle of our school year, at the middle of our story. We have taken the long trek to get to this point after taking months to undo the summer hangover and put students on the right path. Some have come along willingly, like Merry and Pippin, while others have treated our relationships like Gimli and Legolas. They know there is a bond there, but they are going to make us work for it. By the way, The Two Towers is my favorite of the LOTR movies, and it is the best. This is universally known. The middle of the school year may not always feel the best, but it is the part of the year where new pathways open up and students really begin to venture out in different directions. This is very much like The Two Towers where our Fellowship has splintered into different groups.

We had some battles this week in the form of weather. I suppose this is better than fighting off Orcs and Uruk-hai.

The weather stalled our VEX Robotics building, but building the robot in the main room gained the interest of other students. We will continue doing VEX Robotics work for exploratory.

I suppose I do have my own grandfather tree passages with students. Our seniors trying to figure out their next step after graduation involves long deep conversations.

Fears, worries, and excitements often emerge from these talks. At times, the fear takes over so profoundly that they get entangled in their own doubt which inhibits their daily success. Fear is not an easy feeling to overcome and too often it paralyzes students' success. They retreat to comfortable places of avoidance, or anger. They find their own Helm's Deep to find protection from their fears and worries. It means we have to go with them to this place and help them fight their way out. There are losses along the way, but we have to help them find the light that will help them emerge victorious. This requires our own strength. This requires us to find a balance within ourselves so we can best serve as allies for our students.

This middle part of the year can be the best because it allows for exploration. We know our part in this story, but the end is not written. We will write the ending together. We'll climb Mount Doom together and hopefully I will get to write a TGIF at the end of the year with many different endings like the ones in Return of the King. Yes, I brought it back to LOTR in the end.

TGIF from Greg

The 101s had a busy week despite missing two days for snow! They began to read *Four Perfect Pebbles* as part of the Holocaust unit. They are vigorously working on their Learning Plans, choosing projects for their next exhibitions. As an advisory they have learned the meaning of empathy and are researching activities to do with Veterans at the VA. This week the students have also chosen their next DIRT books and have already started on their

individual vocabulary lists with definitions and sentences for each word. Before the winter break, the 101s were using their planning skills to build homemade sleds to race in teams on the hill; we are looking forward to testing them out in the next week now that we have snow!

TGIF from April

What a week! Due to snow days it was like Monday every day! I kept forgetting what day it was, so I can only imagine how the students felt!

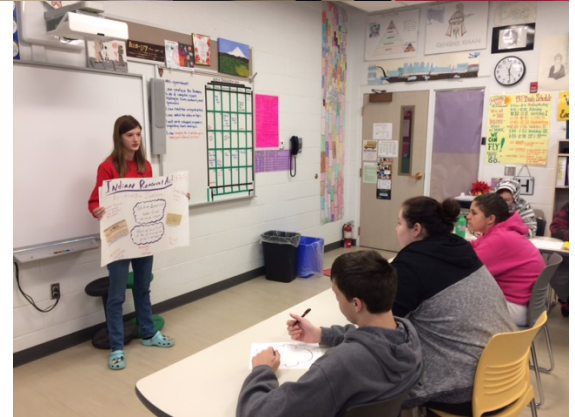
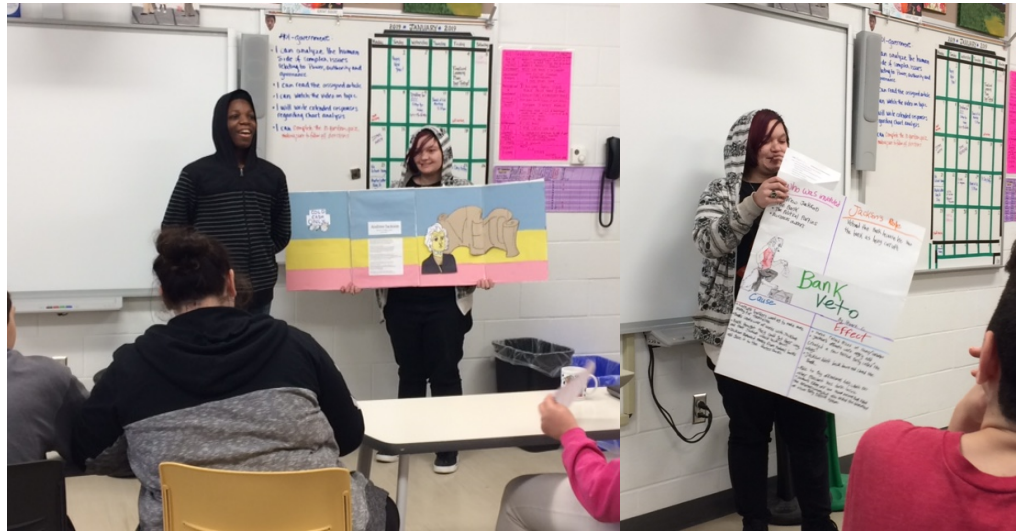
USH workshop students gave presentations of their posters pertaining to the Jacksonian Era. I was thrilled with the creativity some showed. It was a challenge for many of them to grasp the concept of digging deeper, they simply wanted to throw information on a poster and call it good. I was able to push them into more rigorous research (when I reminded them that they would be teaching their peers about their topic), and an understanding of properly citing sources (something that they will continue to work on with me). They were nervous when presenting their project to the class, but for me it was like watching mini exhibitions; it was great! Those who presented were able to answer questions regarding their topic that was not necessarily listed on their poster, to me that says: rigor and meaningful learning. Yay! We also began learning the QFT protocol, which I am excited about.

The 401's are anxiously awaiting news regarding college acceptances, or they are putting finishing touches to their applications. The concept of graduation for many of them is both real, and unreal. They know it's coming. It's real. However, they may be unsure what their next step will be in life and for some that makes it unreal. Some are ready for the unknown challenge and some are quite frankly terrified. The fear is leading some to what we call self-sabotaging. After 4 years in the same little space some find the world a daunting place. Yet at the same time ALL of them are ready to be done with HS (and we haven't even hit spring weather yet!). Nevertheless we keep plugging away at our requirements and these last few weeks have been really quite nice because they are all here. The Morrisville classes have not started yet so I am taking full advantage of having them all together –and enjoying it. Friday we had a great time with our civics lesson. They were so engaged, we got loud and didn't realize we were until another advisory student came and

asked us to quiet down. Ooops! 😊

Next week we will be doing our STAR reading and math assessments. It is really important that they are all present and complete them; especially the students beginning college classes the following Monday, the 21st. I'm asking parents please help remind the 401's to read their IR's and work on their autobiographies at home. Some 401's are falling behind in these requirements. Our health PSA's will also be a big push this semester.

Congratulations to the Grimshaw students and staff for a wonderful play: *Junie B. Jones The Musical* on Friday night! What a great show so full of young talent!



TGIF from Lenny

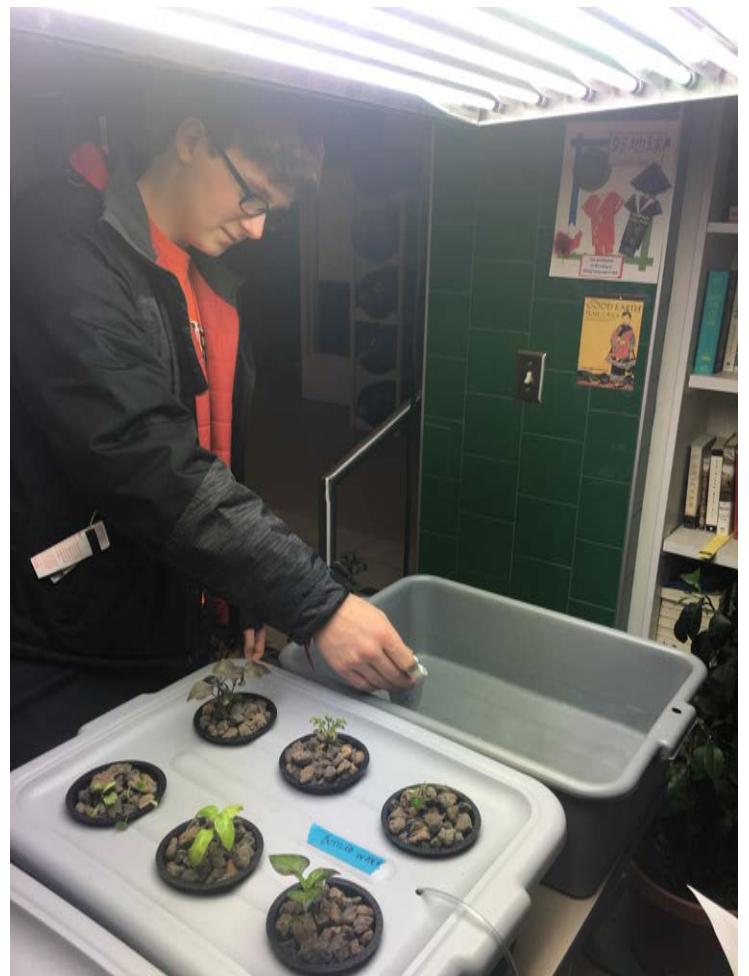
Typically, we have our advisory sessions, workshops and exploratory on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Leaving Tuesdays and Thursdays for internships, service learning and project work. It's also an important time to have one on one meetings with students to touch base. With both snow days last week landing in internship days, it made for a busier week than usual.

In Living Environment, we began to investigate the Galapagos Islands and its unique flora, fauna and terrain. Next we will utilize a design-thinking model to create 'beaks' for picking up seeds. This will be a precursor to the Beaks of Finches State Lab that focuses on the variety of finches on the archipelago.

In ER, we are well under way with an exciting project. We have begun to grow plants using a couple hydroponic systems. Rick, an expert in the field, has been guiding us and teaching us throughout the process. Last week, Rick joined us for ER and we checked pH levels, looked at ppm in the water, and evaluated the health of the plants. We have a bucket system and a tray system, each with a couple of variables. We are also growing some plants with synthetic nutrients and some with organic. Rick shared his mission to develop a system that uses the minimal amount of resources (light, water, space, nutrients) for the maximum yield. The ER students are genuinely interested in this mission. We are also monitoring the pH daily, making adjustments, and will be designing a system to filter water for the system.

As an added bonus, I took the opportunity to get my two groups of Living Environment students involved with the pH monitoring and reinforcing our understanding of photosynthesis and the plant's life cycle. I am excited about all the learning opportunities this experience will provide. And I am especially excited about enjoying the food that we will eventually harvest.

Our recent focus in 301 Advisory has been to prepare for January Regents Exams, develop our new learning plans, commit to Health and PIG requirements and find internship opportunities. I'm looking forward to a full 5-day week to build some positive momentum. Have a great week!



LAFAYETTE BIG PICTURE STAFF

401s



Need to Contact Us?

Susan Osborn:
sosborn@lafayetteschools.org

Kym Weil:
kweil@lafayetteschools.org

Lenny Oppedisano:
loppedisano@lafayetteschools.org

Walt Nowey:
wnowey@lafayetteschools.org

April Palmer:
apalmer@lafayetteschools.org

David Stablein:
dstablein@lafayetteschools.org

Jessica Giordano:
jgiordano@lafayetteschools.org

Greg Scott:
gscott@lafayetteschools.org

Hollis Rotella:
hrotella@lafayetteschools.org

Christine Kane:
ckane@lafayetteschools.org

Erin Virnoche:
evirnoche@lafayetteschools.org

Joy Gregg:
jgregg@lafayetteschools.org

Rosalie Whipple:
rwhipple@lafayetteschools.org

Nikki Cawley:
ncawley@lafayetteschools.org

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU. IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS, COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT US!

Susan Osborn



301s



201s



101s

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LaFayette Big Picture Learning

3122 Route 11 North

LaFayette, New York 13084