Welcome back from break! We needed the time and space away to recover from illness and proximity! Monday felt great to see everyone and the mood was positive. Students and staff looked healthier and were ready to tackle to challenges of the week ahead. Our exhibitions start on March 9th. Students are making final touches to project work. In my lunch bunch we discussed what they needed to do to have an successful exhibition. All members of my lunch bunch stated that they needed to get their slideshow presentations finalized so they could double check they included all parts of their learning plans. Having all four grade levels in my lunch bunch is a wonderful way to observe the progress of our school expectations over time, individual advisors focus and priorities and a small sample of the learners within our school. I really enjoy the time I have spent learning with my lunch bunch. I would like to give a shout out to the Big Picture staff who come to school everyday ready to take on whatever comes their way. They are truly dedicated to support each and every student in each and every way possible. I saw so many examples of that belief and dedication this week. It is not easy. There are sacrifices made in order to make that a priority. They do just that. I am honored to work with such amazing humans. Thank you.
TGIF from Lenny

The first thing that struck me on the Monday after break was the improved attendance. It was clear that many students caught up on rest and used the time off to mend themselves. That break was a needed interruption to the bugs going around. There was also a positive energy and I'd even wager that many students were happy to be back.

We had a very productive week in advisory in regards to our book The Last Lecture. I knew reading this book would be tough for me and some students at times because of its matter of fact approach to terminal cancer. Although I’ve already read the book a couple of times, I read it the day before we read it as a group to prepare assignments and get through some emotions. I knew this was a book I needed to read with my advisory before they graduate. There are so many lessons that I still want to share, but so little time. I am happy to say that the 401s are truly enjoying this book. They volunteer to read, ask questions about the journal prompts, complete the vocabulary.com assignments and connect events from the reading with their lives. We will likely finish the book next week and frankly, I’ll be sad to see it end.

We have also been working in ixl.com for math, getting internship evaluations completed, working on our STPs and preparing for exhibitions next week. I wouldn’t say that things are perfect by any means, but there is a general sense of purpose to the goal setting and IWT with the 401s that’s been a long time in the making.

My ‘lunch’ bunch group began reading The Mindful Teen by Dzung X. It provides a meaningful and structured way to discuss stress with students. It’s remarkable how the effects of stress can impact every facet of our lives if left unchecked. A great form of stress relief is physical activity and with the new fitness center complete, we have jumped right in. We are fortunate to have access to a state of the art fitness facility and the students I bring down for exploratory LOVE the experience.

In the ER and LE workshops we have explored micro greens, mars, mitosis and more. I really appreciate the level of interest that students express in my workshops. I realize that although I am biased, science in naturally engaging. But the students ask great probing questions and often drive the direction of learning with their curiosity. I’m fortunate to have really great groups in workshops.

One more week until exhibitions and my hope is that we all remember that exhibitions are not work but are in fact a celebration of the work that we have done. Have a stress free and productive week!

TGIF from Greg

The 201s had a great week! Claire is doing great in her High School math class, getting a 96 on her test this week. At her internship, she is working with the elementary students at Grimshaw; they’ve started their gymnastics unit. Secorrah has been shadowing at the Elizabeth Brewster House in Homer working with elderly people. She has been an awesome addition to our class. Hayden and Evan still are working on Evan's homemade go-kart from the ground up. Evan ordered the parts to complete the engine and should have it finished within the next month or so. Josh, Garrett, and Caitlyn went to Beaver Lake and walked the trails taking photos of wildlife with their internship with Carol. JJ and Adam created and produced their own advertisement for the On The Dot Coffee shop and showed it in a school-wide Pick Me Up. They recruited a couple of other students to act in it, and even came up with slogans, music and voice-overs for it! They will be opening a coffee booth at the snack shack during the lacrosse and baseball home games. Morgan is finishing up working with students in Ms. Lockwood’s math class, as well as having jumped into two more college courses at Onondaga Community College. Austin, Mason and Devyn are rocking in the kitchen with Hollis. They are making some delicious foods while they learn valuable life and cooking skills. They’ve learned to read recipes, prepare food and different measurements. Kyler is completing new stringing techniques at the Tama Lacrosse shop. As an advisory the students are completing a partner assignment creating a timeline and journal entry on the first 7 chapters of Animal Farm. They will add to these as they finish the book. In addition to their exhibitions and Animal Farm, they have been working to get their Gateway Binders together; this will showcase all the work they’ve done at Big Picture thus far. They have also been working really hard on their Stock Market Projects: they have learned to navigate the NYS Stock Exchange program, following the stocks they have chosen after researching companies and trends. All of our students are preparing for the upcoming exhibitions. We will do trial run-throughs next week Wednesday and Friday, and are looking forward to seeing what they have come up with and learned in the second trimester of the school year.
TGIF from Walt

Exhibitions are coming up, so most of my week was spent working with students to get projects finished up. I have also been working with the coffee shop staff to develop long term and short term plans. Now that we have gotten down all the recipes and techniques, we are looking to focus more on the business aspects and marketing. JJ is interested in developing a formal business plan for the coffee show, and Adam is interested in marketing in order to get more customers. We also are hoping to expand to after school activities, and we are hoping to start selling at the lacrosse games this spring.

This week's highlights

Darryl and I finally finished his custom computer desk this week. It was a very long process, the end result was worth it. Darryl worked very hard to complete this project, and he learned much about woodworking over the course of its construction.

I have been working with Max on a cosplaying project. Cosplaying is creating a costume of a pop culture figure, usually from anime or comics. Most of the effort usually involves making foam replicas of props or armor, and that is what Max and I worked on this week. We are recreating a gauntlet from a character Bakugo in the anime My Hero Academia. I've been teaching Max how to work with foam and glue it using contact cement. This week, we cut out all the shapes needed, and began the gluing process. Next week, we are hoping to have the entire prop assembled, smoothed, sealed and ready for painting.

I helped Jacob with his underwater remote operated vehicle this week. After a few weeks of learning about basic electronics and Arduino coding, we finally began assembling his vehicle. Jacob created a design for his vehicle, and we were able to finish the frame for his underwater explorer. Next week, we are going to waterproof some dc motors and get the electronics working. Hopefully, we will have it functional so that he can have a completed product for his exhibition.

The coffee shop introduced a new drink this week: the hot shamrock. It is essentially a steamed milk version of the iconic Shamrock Shake, and we are offering it next week as a limited time seasonal drink. Adam and JJ have been experimenting with this, and developed the final product. They also created a commercial for this drink, and aired it during morning meeting to promote it. Hopefully it will have a good reception next week.
**TGIF from Jessica**

Before our week long break we were able to conquer the globe puzzle! Thomas found that putting the last few pieces on was more of a challenge than initially thought, but he had the patience to keep putting it back together to get it to fit just right.

During that same week, I lead our morning meeting pick me ups. One day, all of the students were asked to write something that made them feel happy on a piece of index card. These cards were compiled into the sun part of the poster which is now hung in the school. On another day of the week, the students wrote where they would like to go and where they like to be. This information was made into the sand portion of the poster.

The 301s have been continuing their participation in government credit by exploring how democracy operates in Australia. Each time the students work in the same groups to research a different topic such as government, laws, economy/jobs, education, and food/clothing/housing in the country. After a time of research, the students present their findings and write a reflective paragraph summarizing democracy.

Recently, the 301s are working to develop their philosophy. Each student wrote their own working definition of philosophy and they began to sort through some moral values. They made a three column chart, titling want, undecided, and don't want. Then they worked through a list of values and ideologies placing them into one of the three columns. This marked the start of our journey to developing each student's personalized philosophy.

**TGIF from David**

Let's hope that this is the end of the snow. I was standing outside my house with my dog as new flurries of snow fell from the sky and I just wanted to see some sunshine. Sunshine comes in limited supply in Central New York during the Winter. It is up to us to create our own sunshine. We cannot allow the cloud cover skies to decide the trajectory of our days.

Our days went by rather fast this week, at least to me, I am not sure about everyone else. Tuesday was full of activity with Secorrah shadowing at the Brewster House, and Sam shadowing at WXHC Radio Station. They both enjoyed their shadows and were welcomed back for a repeat shadow day on Thursday. Sam met with the Friday Night DJ who travels all over the world performing at concerts. This is something Sam wants to do, and after his shadow days he realized some adjustments he needs to make for his future. Learn it now and make those adjustments because there is little time to do it later.

The snow ruined our activities for after school STEP on Thursday. We have a series of projects planned for the next month and had to cancel the first of those activities. We also had to cancel our return to after school painting with Christine. Alas, all is not lost as there will be more Thursday afternoons. There will be more Thursday afternoons when the sun will even shine. Painting outside sounds like a fun activity. That sun needs to hurry and clear the clouds.

Next week, there are more shadow days planned. Hopefully, some sun will join.
The last few weeks 101s have been busy preparing for the upcoming exhibitions. To celebrate our work, and for some students to experience a new food, I brought in vegan wraps for an advisory luncheon. The boys were really ‘surprised’ that they liked the wraps 😊. The 101s are learning to step out of their comfort zones and try new things. Many are working with Walt, Hollis or me to complete rigorous learning goals. For instance Coleby has been working on making a working guitar, Ricky has been focusing on the Titanic and his ER experiment has drawn plenty of curious attention in our room. Olivia has been ROCKING her work on anamorphosis and her health project ever so creatively. Jacob began building his UNDERWATER ROV prototype this week. Phoenix has been diligent in his research on Ancient Egypt. Kara is studying the brain while Faith is contemplating Nature vs. Nurture. Elaina has been building a leather shoe after her visit to a cobbler. She has had to do a ton of ‘leg work’, research and materials gather before beginning to make a pair of shoes. A huge thank you to Carol DiSalvo who happened to stop by our room and in seeing Elaina’s work in trying to make a shoe last, because to purchase one was very expensive, said: “hey, I think I have one of those (shoe last) at my house that was my fathers”. She indeed did have one and brought it in to school for Elaina to borrow. Our room has been a flutter of innovation, which of course can lead to a messy space, 😳 but it is exciting! The projects students are doing have taken them to new forms of learning. They have had to think in new ways, complete various math and critical thinking skills all the while adding creativity. I have loved to witness the progress these young 101 students are showing to the project based learning model! Lexi, studying nutrition, created various foods using healthy vs. not so healthy recipes and created a survey for taste testers; she is working on compiling the information in a spreadsheet. Julien is working on prints at SU Lightwork and building birdhouses. Max is working with Walt building a cosplay costume.

Our lunch bunch group did some meditation this week. The boys were not so sure about it, but in the end they totally relaxed. Sam said he was surprised. My exploratory group is making progress on the wall mural. USH is working on peer editing essays they wrote. We have this upcoming week to wrap up our learning plan work before our exhibition celebrations. Please remind your students