

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Fall II term! This semester, we will be focusing on the Age of Exploration, Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Exchange, the impact Columbus had on the indigenous populations occupying the “discovered” land.

Please see below for important information in regards to your child’s requirements for this course during this term.

DRIVING QUESTION:

How can we, as lawyers, analyze the impact of the Age of Exploration on native communities by placing Christopher Columbus on trial?

Project Based Learning is a “learning by doing” educational pedagogy that seeks to put the student first. It involves a dynamic classroom approach in which students acquire a deeper knowledge through active exploration of real-world challenges and problems. One of the main components of Project Based Learning is a Driving Question. This question quite literally drives the entire project. It is what the student seeks to explain or solve.

PRODUCT:

Students will be creating a court case either defending against or accusing Christopher Columbus of crimes against ethnic groups in the lands discovered. Students will create and hold a mock trial outlining their findings.

PRODUCT/PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

- Position (defending against or accusing Christopher Columbus of a crime)
- Detailed Court Case Document outlining the following:
 - Position
 - Planned Opening Remarks
 - Evidence proving or disproving Christopher Columbus of the crime- Evidence must be paired with correct MLA citation and noted as a primary or secondary resource
 - Planned Closing Remarks
- Mock Trial Containing the following:
 - All of the above
 - Lawyers
 - Witness Accounts
 - Based on evidence, create witness accounts and call the witness to the stand to testify. This will need to be role played by the people in your group.
 - Visuals

PRESENTATION:

Presentations are an essential element within Project Based Learning that prepares students for the future and allows them the opportunity to showcase all that they've learned throughout the unit. This piece not only allows students an opportunity to show their knowledge, but also allows them the opportunity to practice their critical thinking skills, written communication skills and oral communication skills. This unit's presentation will be on **November 12 and 14th at 9:00AM** Parents, friends and family are welcome and encouraged to attend! I will send information regarding the presentation date for specific groups as we get closer to the event.

ESSAY:

All students will be working on an essay over the course of the first term. Students will be answering the following question: How did the Age of Exploration impact indigenous people groups?

WEEKLY READING:

I am a reader at heart. I love the places and the adventures that a book, as simple as it may seem, can take you. As a reading teacher primarily, I've always been afraid of what reading may seem like to some of my students. Will they share my views on books or will they be fearful of them or uninterested for whatever reason? My goal is to ignite passion in their hearts for the possibilities that a book can provide. For this reason, we are going to start with interest first. This term, students will be required to read a certain amount of minutes a week of whatever book that they choose, within reason, and fill a reading log out each week. All I ask is that this book is a "just right" book for them. That means that it is neither too easy or too difficult. I will help the students to pick these books out at the library on the first week. Some students may not find a book that they are interested in, and will need to find one on their own by Monday of week 2. Students will receive reading time in class, but may need to utilize their at-home time to read as well. Students are not limited to the amount of books they want to read! If they finish their first book, they'll just move on to another one! Each week, students will discuss their books in a teacher/student conference setting. They will also write a summary for each book read.

BARTON READING PROGRAM:

Barton Reading & Spelling is a structured literacy program that is Orton-Gillingham influenced. In small groups, students will participate in the multi-sensory, direct, explicit, structured and sequential program during their literacy block. This explicit instruction is designed to support their reading and writing goals.

WHAT WILL STUDENTS BE ASSESSED ON:

Project Based Learning, at its core, really encompasses all domains. It really is a beautiful example of how all forms of learning come together to create new knowledge. This semester, students will be assessed on their growth mindset, creativity, collaborative skills, effort, social-emotional skills, presentation skills and target academic skills. Target academic skills include:

- Writing clearly and developing their overall writing
- Utilizing a command in writing conventions, including grammar and spelling.
- Evaluating primary and secondary sources

- Historical knowledge as outlined above.
- An ability to evaluate the role that history has in shaping character and identity
- Reading comprehension
- Reading stamina
- Writing stamina

HOW STUDENTS WILL BE ASSESSED:

Throughout the *Christopher Columbus: Friend or Foe?* unit, students will be assessed through ongoing authentic assessment such as collaborative discussions, teacher-student conferences, peer feedback opportunities, and ample reflection opportunities. Students will receive a rubric at the beginning of the unit, and will receive final product/presentation feedback utilizing the same rubric. This rubric will be able to be found on the parent portal no later than October 11, 2019. Students will also spend at least one day a week placing their ongoing work within Seesaw, our online portfolio app. If you have not done so already, please see your email for instructions on how to set up Seesaw on your phone or computer so that you can see all of the wonderful things that your child is working on! All students have already been connected to Seesaw and have been working on uploading their work thus far. Please let me know if you have any questions!

SCHEDULE/UNIT TIMELINE:

Due to the nature of Project Based Learning, timelines and schedules are subject to change. If there is a change, all students will be made aware of that change in class. Students are responsible for time and project management, as well as due dates. Due date extensions will not be made without request by the student to the teacher, and without educator agreement. We know that sometimes things happen that are beyond our control. If an extenuating circumstance arises that prohibits the student from effectively managing their time and due dates, we encourage students to speak with their educator to find a solution, just like they will one day do with their bosses. We love our students and want to see them succeed! Please see the below tentative schedule for this course:

Week 1: Introduction

- Entry Event
- Knows and Need to Knows
- Rubric
- Court Position
- Group Choice Applications
- Reflection
- SeeSaw
- Barton
- Library Visit: Please ensure that your students have a library card if they want to check out books for research or reading pleasure!

Week 2: Research, Essay Formation

- Research

- Essay Formation: Prewriting and Research
- Workshops: The Age of Exploration and Intro to Christopher Columbus
- Reflection
- SeeSaw
- Knows and Need to Knows

Week 3: Research, Essay Formation

- Research
- Essay Formation: Prewriting (due this Friday!)
- Workshops: Columbus Continued
- Barton
- Reflection
- SeeSaw

Week 4: Essay formation, workshops

- Building
- Essay Formation: Drafting (draft due Friday!)
- Workshops: Columbus Continued
- Barton
- Reflection
- SeeSaw

Week 5: Mock Trial, Peer Feedback, Peer Feedback Reflections

- Building
- Peer feedback
- Revisions
- Workshops: Columbus Continued
- Essay Formation: Editing, Revising and Final (Due Friday!)
- Reflection
- Barton
- Seesaw

Week 6: Presentation

- Presentation practice
- Presentation: November 12 and 13 at 9:30am
- Reflection
- Seesaw

Thank you all for allowing me the opportunity and privilege of teaching your children! They are all so incredible, talented and unique and I'm excited to see what this term will bring!

As always, I am here to answer any questions or address any concerns that you may have! Please don't hesitate to send me an email, brightwheel, text or have a face-to-face conversation if you need me! I'm always here to help!

Best Wishes,
Savannah McCay