

Peter McAdams

“Danny, what do notice about this painting depicting the Lewis and Clark expedition?”, Peter McAdams asks one of his sixth graders. Mr. McAdams enlarges the image on his Promethean board so that all of the students can view the details more easily.

“I notice that there are Native Americans in the picture.”

“Yes. What makes you think that?”

“The woman is dressed in that kind of clothing.”

“And do you have any idea who that woman might be?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Have you ever heard of Sacagawea? She was a famous Native American on the Lewis and Clark expedition.”

“Oh,” Danny says. “I do remember her from the movie, *Night at the Museum*. She guides Ben Stiller through the museum.”

Everyone laughs and Mr. McAdams comments, “That was her role many years ago too – except then she was guiding Lewis and Clark. Now let’s get started reading two letters written to President Jefferson at the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition.” Personalizing the lesson, he asks, “How many of you have ever written to one of our presidents?”

English taught by Peter McAdams at Benjamin Banneker Middle School is fun and applicable to everyday life. Mr. McAdams’ lessons exude his philosophy, “to be planned and be present.” “Students trust that I will be there for them every day and that my classroom provides a safe place to take risks and learn.”

Mr. McAdams began his MCPS career as an English teacher in 1989, arriving at Banneker in 1995. He is passionate about teaching and learning and also about student achievement—a winning combination. Banneker principal Sam Rivera

comments, “For the second straight year, nearly 90 percent of Mr. McAdams’ students were proficient on the Maryland School Assessment for reading and half of them were deemed advanced. This was true across all demographic and ability groups. That is no accident. Pete takes high-stakes assessments and puts them in perspective – by engaging kids and helping them to attain success. Pete was even chosen as one of 25 teacher leaders, from among many applicants, to support other MCPS educators on using Promethean technology to embed critical thinking across the curriculum.”

Students instantly recognize that Mr. McAdams cares about them and their learning. “He is so fun. He is playful with kids and helps them with their work no matter how long it takes,” remarks Banneker sixth grader Danny Mahn. “He relates well to the children and makes learning personal by asking questions like, ‘Have you ever dealt with this in your own life?’” Adds Principal Rivera, “In his free time, it is not unusual to find Mr. McAdams in the loud, crowded cafeteria enjoying lunch with the entire Grade 6 class. There is nothing that Mr. McAdams will not do for his students and nothing they won’t do for him.”

Mr. McAdams’ impact on the Banneker school community doesn’t end there.

Move over *Glee*!

Long before this hit show began, Mr. McAdams had created the school’s Rock N Soul Revue, a musical showcase of the songs and entertainment of the 60’s, 70’s 80’s, and today. Parent and staff development teacher, John Weinschel, praises his colleague, “His day certainly doesn’t end when the bell rings. Each year for the past ten years, Mr. McAdams has taken on this tremendous after-school, student-run production. He commits three to four afternoons a week of his own time for up to five months on this project.”

Banneker parents David and Connie Shaw add, “As one of the original founders of the Rock N Soul Revue, Mr. McAdams has an outstanding ability to mentor, train, and build the confidence in each student that is needed to perform... they often are encouraged to perform outside of their comfort zone to stretch and try new things.”

Mr. McAdams humbly attributes his success to the people that surround him. He has refused repeatedly to leave the classroom for administrative positions. He says, "I truly enjoy sharing the things that I am passionate about with the students each day. I think it makes for a more engaging and fun classroom - and the classroom is exactly where I want to be." The Banneker community is very thankful that Mr. McAdams feels exactly that way.