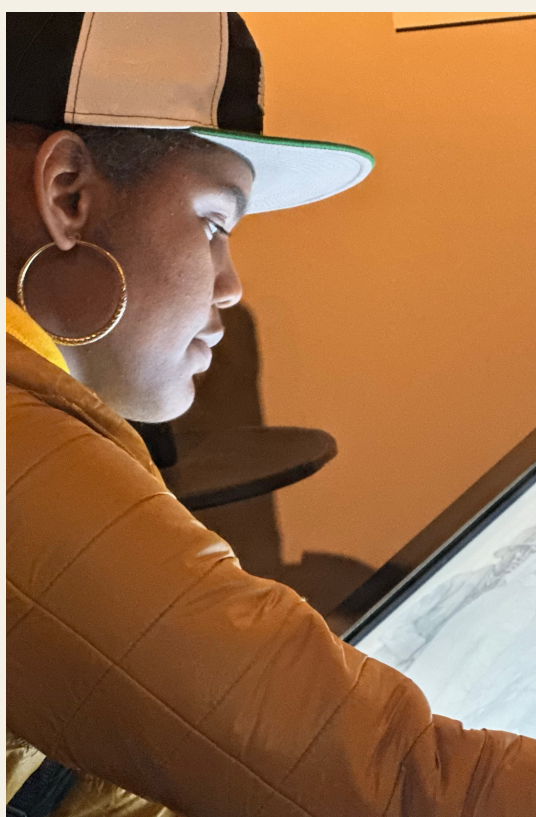


FIELD TRIPS AT BVA: MAKING LEARNING REAL

MR. ANDREW WAGNER, BVA WORLD HISTORY/ENGLISH/PSYCHOLOGY INSTRUCTOR



I am thrilled to share the journey that Mr. Aragona and I began with our students over nine years ago when we ventured out to the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire for BVA's very first field trip.

Over the years we would explore course content *onsite* at various locations, ranging from The Mutter Museum in Philadelphia to the historic sites of Valley Forge, Fort Mifflin, and beyond. During these outings, students met other online learners and their families, and some lasting friendships were forged while learning. However, these events were spread out throughout the school year. We felt that we were limiting ourselves. We wanted to give our students more opportunities! An idea was born...

Our program, BVA, is unique in so many ways and this singularity is our strength! Honestly, I am not sure there is another program in the entire commonwealth like ours. We can push the boundaries that other cyber and brick-and-mortar schools cannot!

We believed that our fresh take on experiential learning could expand the learning environment beyond walls and screens! Our thought was to meet our students in their backyards where they could discover history and learning opportunities, much of which we do not notice in our everyday lives, by offering our students *WEEKLY* History Hikes/Experiences.

...JOIN SOME OF THEIR TEACHERS IN REAL LOCATIONS LEARNING AND DISCOVERING WHAT IS NOT OFTEN FOUND IN A TEXTBOOK, ONLINE COURSE, OR CLASSROOM. THE LEARNING BECOMES REAL!

We felt that doing this weekly and moving it throughout the region where we serve our districts would give greater opportunities for students to join us rather than scattering a few events throughout the year. In addition, these trips provided students with a healthy option to get out and move and to discover places that they may visit time and time again on their own. History Hikes move the learning outside (no pun intended) of the textbooks/course material. The learning gains life as we visit museums, parks, historical sites, and much more.

BVA's asynchronous secondary program benefits the student in so many ways. Not only do they have the obvious advantages of working on their own time, finding their best learning style, involving themselves in more extracurricular activities, etc., but they now can join some of their teachers in real locations learning and discovering what is not often found in a textbook, online course, or classroom.

The learning becomes real!



Sumaiyah Dorsey (also pictured above left) and her mother Ms. Stokes visit the Museum of the American Revolution with Mr. Wagner & Mr. Aragona

With this excitement, we approached our supervisor of secondary learning, Dr. Mark Slider, who quickly recognized our enthusiasm and the possibility for our students and our program. With his gracious support, Mr. Aragona and I scoured the region for learning opportunities.

Our search led us to the Iron and Steel Heritage Trail (consisting of forges and furnaces throughout the southeast Pennsylvania region including Valley Forge, Pottsgrove Mansion, Hopewell Furnace Community, Warwick-Coventry Forge, Coatesville Iron & Steel Museum), The Museum of the American Revolution, President James Buchanon's residence, and of course, the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire.

All these History Hikes/Experiences were completed this fall. In our quest to discover local learning, we partnered with colleagues and joined the Science department, led by the department chair, Dr. Horvat. This co-curricular teamwork allowed us to level up the experiences!

We have many more locations in store as we plan these weekly events throughout the area. These include Fonthill Castle, Washington's Crossing, Fort Mifflin, The Jewish American Heritage Museum, Bethlehem Steel Museum, Brandywine Battlefield, Joanna's Furnace, and many more!

Be on the lookout for Mr. Wagner, Mr. Aragona, and Dr. Horvat, and catch up with us on a History Hike/Experience—Let's get out, hike, and learn!