VISITS...

BOULDER CREEK ACADEMY

Bonners Ferry, ID
Shawnale Wilson, Admissions Director
877-348-0848
http://www.bouldercreekacademy.net

Visit by Loi Eberle on January 22

Recently I visited Boulder Creek Academy (BCA), in Bonners Ferry, ID. Now owned by Universal Health Services, Inc., this Therapeutic Boarding School accepts 13-18 year olds with learning differences and behavioral or emotional problems that have hindered their academic performance. I observed that this school has grown and changed, still retaining its original vision. Though planning began last year, some changes have only become apparent in the last few weeks.

Boulder Creek Academy has moved its academic program to the Emerson building on the former Rocky Mountain Academy (RMA) campus located at the East end of the property. BCA therapeutic staff and activities are largely located on the West end of the property, centered in Quixote Lodge, which also houses the study hall computer lab, a game room and eventually a sewing room. Some elective classes take place on the West end of campus. Students walk between the two ends of campus on a new path near the road. Not only providing safety from traffic, the new path offers an unimpeded view of students while they walk between the boys' and girls' dorms.

Near Quixote lodge is the music barn, where I watched a small group of students work with their music teacher to hone their performance skills with electric guitars, drums and singing. They also were learning to negotiate performance issues with each other. Downstairs is a workout room with a large number of workout stations. The adjacent building that once housed the BCA dining room remains set up for meal preparation, used now by culinary arts students. Also used for creative activity, student art, pottery wheels and art materials adorn the room where their licensed art therapist facilitates regular Art Studio times. The woodshop, greenhouse, gardens and farm are also on the West end of campus.

At the other end of campus, the Emerson building buzzes with academic classes. I spent time in an American Lit class where I watched a 'battle of the poets.' One student was passionately reading one American poet out loud to another student who was enthusiastically reading out loud a poet expressing the opposite view. It was entertaining and exciting to watch the class participation and fervor.

Nearby in the comp TA class, students were learning how to become computer technicians, with the opportunity to test for certification. I talked with one of the students in the class who described the computer simulations they worked on to learn computer networking. I saw classrooms where Spanish, French and German were taught by teachers who also used the Rosetta Stone instructional materials. To my surprise, I saw where three different lab classes were offered in Chemistry, Biology and Physical Science, each one offering a full lab credit.

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