

Dare To Be Me - 2023-24 Semester 1 Syllabus



Photo courtesy of Anja Pfeffer (2022-23 DTBM cohort)

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Course Description:

Dare To Be Me (DTBM) is a pedagogical philosophy and practice that invites students to embark on a personal and educational journey of courage, growth, belonging, and expression. It aims to turn the traditional public school system on its head by fostering *aliveness* through exploration and dialogue grounded in deep connection to place, to each other, and to their full selves. In this course, students engage in a process of self-discovery and empowerment centered on holistic wellbeing so they can expand their comfort zones and become the best version of themselves.

As its title suggests, the focus of DTBM is on being rather than doing. By blending time in Nature with physical exercise, mindfulness, quiet introspection, meaningful reading, in-depth conversations and creative writing, students learn to understand themselves better and develop the courage to lean into who they want to become. DTBM addresses the whole heart-body-mind system, therefore growing students' ability to be present, curious, grateful, compassionate, adaptable and resilient even in times of adversity. Simultaneously, students learn to find and own their voice, identify their passions, advance their emotional literacy, and begin to articulate and embody their values. As a result, students leave this class with essential life and transferable skills that will complement and enhance their learning in all other academic subject areas.

Guiding Question: *How can I learn to thrive personally and academically?*

Course Format: The class will run every day during Block 1 of Semester 1. Lots of time will be spent walking on the Hazen trails and engaging in a mixture of indoor and outdoor activities

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that are designed to make you come alive, build character, and grow your inner and outer strength. At the same time, major emphasis will be placed on developing your English skills. Aside from writing regularly in your journal, you will participate in many conversations about things that matter to you and your peers, read a variety of relevant texts about a topic of your choice (The Big Journey Project), and present your learning to the group. In order for you to foster your sense of self as well as your academic confidence, you will often be asked to share excerpts from your work and receive positive feedback and constructive criticism. Expect to become an engaged and respectful participant in the classroom discourse and to contribute to a thriving and rigorous class community.

General Course Outline & Topics of Discussion and Reflection:

Time Period	Themes	Key Questions <i>(partially adapted from The Six Equity Stances of Liberatory Project-Based Learning)</i>
1st Quarter	Self-Expression (“Me”) & Belonging (“Be”)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On whose shoulders do I stand (land, ancestry, community, ...)? 2. Where is the place I feel most alive and connected in my heart, body, and mind? 3. Of which communities am I an integral part? 4. What does it look and feel like for me to be fully present in my life?
2nd Quarter	Growth (“To”) & Courage (“Dare”)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When have I felt that I was part of something bigger than myself? 2. What are values I admire and respect in others and for which I would like to strive? 3. Who are my role models in regards to developing my inner strength and courage? 4. What would it take to “change my story?”

Disclaimer: This course outline is preliminary and subject to change based on the needs of the class and the discretion of the teacher.

Proficiencies:

HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

DTBM students move A LOT. Through daily breathing and stretching circles followed by walks in Nature, they develop the knowledge and skills to evaluate and improve their wellbeing as they begin to understand the role physical balance and fitness play in their overall health. Individual and group activities teach

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them to cooperate with classmates to solve problems and advocate for themselves and others in a respectful and responsible manner. In order to become health literate individuals, DTBM students gradually recognize how their own holistic health impacts their entire being and extends to everyone and everything around them. The DTBM class also provides students with ample opportunities to practice their interpersonal communication skills. This, in turn, increases their confidence in analyzing incoming information and influences and therefore helps them make more informed decisions. As healthier young people, DTBM students can access all other learning opportunities in deeper and more comprehensive ways.

Your ½ PE credit is based on the [SHAPE America's National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education](#). These were adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education in 2015 to guide physical education curriculum development in Vermont.

Standard 1: The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.

Standard 2: The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.

Standard 3: The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.

Standard 4: The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.

Standard 5: The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

DTBM students take ownership of their learning by developing their own unique voice and expressing their opinions clearly and effectively. They engage in respectful collaboration, hone their reading skills, and practice deep reflection and thoughtful revision in order to produce their finest work. Effective listening skills are essential for taking into consideration multiple points of view and refining one's own opinions. DTBM students learn to determine the reliability and validity of sources of information as well as identify potential biases. Through regular creative writing practices, students build their confidence, grow their imagination, increase their ability to feel into their own and others' experiences, and therefore improve their own overall sense of physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

The following [English Language Arts Proficiencies](#) are woven into almost every aspect of the DTBM class, but they are specifically targeted and assessed in the daily small and large group discussions, regular reflective and creative journaling, and "The Big Journey" Passion Project:

RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.9-10.10: By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade

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10, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

W.9-10.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.9-10.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.9-10.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

W.9-10.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.9-10.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.9-10.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

L.9-10.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

L.9-10.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L.9-10.6: Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Assessment:

1. Habits of Work (HOW) Grades

Your participation in class will be assessed weekly by using the [school-wide rubric for HOW grades](#). As stated in the [2023-24 Hazen Student Handbook](#), these expectations are monitored, graded, and reported separately from academic standards. For Hazen Union teachers, students, and parents, strong habits of work are as important as the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire.

2. Academic Performance Grades

You are expected to participate in all activities and discussions with a curious mind and an open heart. If

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you are absent from a class (no matter whether it is an excused or unexcused absence), it is your responsibility to contact Ms. Pfeffer and make up any missed assignments / tasks (see Canvas). All work will be graded on completion, effort, and growth.

“The Big Journey” Project is your opportunity to immerse yourself deeply in a topic that you are passionate and/or curious about, that will teach you and your audience something new, that will enhance your academic skills, and that will expand your comfort zone. You will design your own learning experience (research and presentation) based on these questions:

1. *What do I want to learn?*
2. *How do I want to learn it?*
3. *How will I know that I have learned it?*

You will base your inquiry on a wide range of diverse texts and sources, including articles, books, interviews, surveys, videos, as well as artwork. While we will do our best to provide you with structure during class, you will regularly be expected to complete some of the research, reading and writing outside of class. If at all possible, we will also try to match you with a mentor who is an expert in your field of interest and who can provide you with additional support.

“The Big Journey” consists of 4 integral parts:

1. Brainstorming, Topic Approval, & Action Plan (by 9/29/23)
2. Research & Documentation (by 10/27/23)
3. Writing & Peer / Mentor Review (by 12/1/23)
4. Written or Digital Document & Presentation (by 1/12/24)

Activity / Assignment	Timeframe for Assessment	Focus Standards	Percentages of Grade
Movement-Based Activities	Ongoing	National PE Standards 1 through 5	100% of PE grade
Discussions (small and large group)	Ongoing	SL.9-10.1	20% of ELA grade
Journal Entries	Ongoing	W.9-10.4 W.9-10.10 L.9-10.1 L.9-10.2 L.9-10.6	20% of ELA grade
“The Big Journey” Part 1	9/5/23 - 9/29/23	RI.9-10.10 W.9-10.4 W.9-10.5 W.9-10.10 SL.9-10.1 SL.9-10.4	15% of ELA grade
“The Big Journey” Part 2	10/3/23 - 10/27/23	RL.9-10.2 RI.9-10.10	15% of ELA grade

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		W.9-10.7 W.9-10.10	
“The Big Journey” Part 3	10/30/23 - 12/1/23	W.9-10.2 W.9-10.4 W.9-10.5 W.9-10.10 SL.9-10.1 L.9-10.1 L.9-10.2 L.9-10.6	15% of ELA grade
“The Big Journey” Part 4	12/4/23 - 1/12/24	W.9-10.4 W.9-10.5 SL.9-10.4 L.9-10.1 L.9-10.2 L.9-10.6	15% of ELA grade

IMPORTANT: Course grades will be the average of all proficiency scores for the course.

Late and Incomplete Work

Late work: Please know that failing to submit work on time will impact your HOW grade and the opportunity to sufficiently revise your work. While you are allowed to turn in an assignment until two weeks after the due date without a grade penalty, the delay will set you back and greatly diminish your chances of achieving the desired depth and quality of the final product of your work. We therefore ask you to communicate any extenuating circumstances as soon as they come up so that we may develop a plan for you not to fall behind. Also know that late will be marked “late” in the gradebook and will receive a score of “0” until it has been handed in.

Incomplete work: If your work is incomplete, you automatically risk not achieving the mastery of the proficiency that is being targeted in the assignment. That, in turn, can lead to not receiving a passing grade for the class. Please do your very best to hand in work that is completed to the very best of your ability and, again, communicate if there are hindering circumstances. Note that incomplete work will be marked “missing” in the gradebook and a score of “0” will be entered.

Plagiarism Policy

When you present someone else’s ideas as your own, you plagiarize. This can be related to you copying notes from your peers or copying and pasting information from books or the Internet, but it also includes using artificial intelligence tools from various platforms, such as Chat GPT, Bard, Bing, or Claude. Such academic dishonesty harms you and everyone else in the class because it keeps you from growing. We ask you to respect yourself and others by being keenly aware of and avoiding these kinds of practices. If, however, you do fall into the traps of being academically dishonest, the following will happen:

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1st offense: Conference with Ms. Pfeffer and Sol and a phone call to your parents/guardians. You will still be allowed to redo and resubmit the work, but your HOW grade will be impacted.

2nd offense: You will receive a “0” for the assignment and a meeting will be called with your parents/guardians and the administration.

3rd offense: You will not receive credit for the course.

Required Texts & Resources:

Any texts we will read as a class will be provided. Your texts and resources for “The Big Journey” will be highly individual and we will do our best to help you find and access them.

We are working on getting water bottles, backpacks, rain and snow gear for all students. That being said, please make sure you wear weather appropriate clothing to each class and let us know right away if that poses a problem. You are welcome to keep a dry set of clothes and/or shoes in Ms. Pfeffer’s classroom. Aside from that, always have your journal ready and computer charged.

IMPORTANT: If you have a medical prescription for an Epi-pen and/or Inhaler, please let Ms. Pfeffer and Sol know and have both with you at all times.

Electronic Device Expectations:

We will adhere to this year’s Hazen policy for students to have their phones off and in their backpacks during all classes. If you struggle to abide by this rule, we will either ask you to keep your phone in Ms. Pfeffer’s desk or in the cell phone hotel until the end of class. There will, however, be times when we will specifically ask you to use your phones, such as for taking photographs or recording interviews or presentations. This is up to the discretion of the teachers and should not be abused. If you have any extenuating circumstances and need your phone, please communicate with us ahead of time.

Food & Drink Policy:

Please make sure you have eaten breakfast before coming to class. You will need the nutrition and energy in order to participate fully in all class activities. If you nevertheless get hungry, please let one of the adults in the group know and we will try to provide you with a snack.

Always have water with you, but avoid any soda or other carbonated drinks. Juices and milk are fine.

Additional Words of Caution:

With the amount of time we will be spending in the woods, there is a good chance of encountering ticks. Please do a thorough tick check when you get home every day!!

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PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN:

My parents / guardians and I, _____, have read and understood this syllabus for the 2023-24 Dare To Be Me (DTBM) class. I hereby agree to abide by all the policies.

I can be included in photographs and videos. _____ Yes _____ No

I can participate in all outdoor activities. _____ Yes _____ No

Student / Date

Parent / Guardian

Parent / Guardian