

Four Rivers Currents

November/December 2018

From the Principal's Desk...

LEARNING THROUGH INTENSIVES

Articles in this issue of Currents offer glimpses into what teachers and students do for Intensives, a special program of EL Education schools. Regular classes in the high school stop for four days in November and four days in April to allow activities and experiences that don't necessarily fit into the regular program. (Eighth graders also get to participate in the April Intensives). While we don't make a big deal of explicit learning targets for Intensives, there is a ton that students do and learn.

Intensives, like the ones shared in the following pages, take students outside the normal routines of school. They stretch students in new ways, sometimes through physical adventure, sometimes through travel, sometimes through topic or activity. Students who have never been up before daylight might do a sunrise hike in the White Mountains. Students whose families might not be able to take them to visit colleges see 6-8 different kinds of schools over a few days. Students who may have only skateboarded by themselves in their driveway have a group to learn with and from. And most of us have not been present when an animal's life is taken so we can nourish ourselves; students in *Give and Take* have now had that very experience. A number of students over the years have even set future directions based on things they experienced through Intensives, such as farming, the arts, or service.

We see Intensives also helping students develop aspects of character. The ways they treat others in their group, how they handle new situations, taking on physical challenges they didn't think they could do, learning new skills--all such moments call on students to open themselves up and face uncertainties. Such moments relate to ***becoming an effective learner*** if the student can see learning a new skateboarding trick as similar to learning to think through a new math problem or persisting with an art project the way they might persist with a piece of writing. Intensives experiences can relate to ***becoming ethical people*** in the ways that the Service Intensive or Youth Mental Health exposed students to the lives and needs of other people. And sometimes Intensives offer opportunities for students to ***contribute to a better world*** by planting trees or organizing a food drive.

While we don't tell students that Intensives have academic outcomes, we know our students are learning a great deal. One more thing to mention: there are no fees for Intensives. Included in our overall budget and supported by donations to the school's annual appeal, the costs of Intensives are covered--all students can participate and select any experience they want. Check back in March and April for the next round.

We could not highlight ALL of the recent intensives offered in this last round. See page 7 for a short description of some that didn't make it into the Currents.

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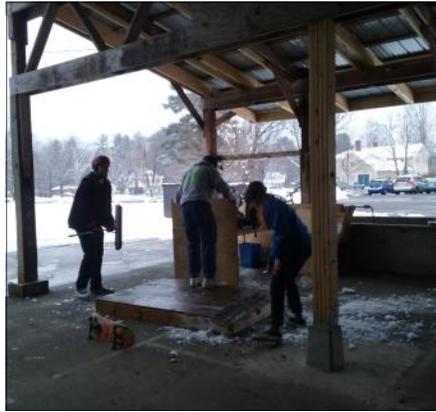
Peter Garbus, Principal

WINTER IN THE WHITES INTENSIVE

This year was the 8th annual trip for Four Rivers students to the Highland Center in Carroll, NH for **Winter in the Whites**. Twenty-two students joined Ms. Plath, Ms. Hobbs, and Coachie (Ms. McNamara) on this trip. We had more snow than ever before! Students learned about proper layering and nutrition for staying warm in the winter, as well as Wilderness First Aid basics. We divided into teams to climb one, two, or three mountains: Mt. Avalon, Mt. Field, and Mt. Tom. The trip culminated in a sunrise summit of Mt. Willard, although for the first time in the trip's history, the Mt. Willard summit was socked in with clouds and we had no view. We had an amazing trip anyway!



SKATEBOARDING INTENSIVE – Ms. Chamberlain

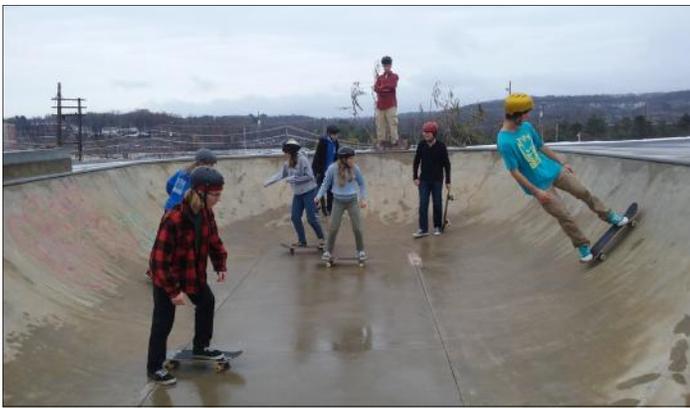


The weather outside was frightful.

The students started the week by building their own skate park in the blue barn (very industrious).

They finished the intensive with a trip to the Holyoke Skate Park.

FUN ON WHEELS!



ALTERED BOOKS AND EPHEMERA INTENSIVE — Ms Lyons

In Altered Books and Ephemera we looked at artists who use books and ephemera (old photographs & “stuff”) in their creative practice. Then we visited an antique emporium in Greenfield to purchase materials for experimentation with transforming

books and photographs into unique works of 2D & 3D art. We also had the great pleasure of visiting Spot 22, the unique studio and vintage photography shop of Amy “Banner Queen” Johnquest and Stacy Waldman.



FOREST FORENSICS INTENSIVE ~ Mr. Patari and Mr. Wilson

Students spent a few days in the woods learning how to read the signs of past activities and events in the Forest Forensics intensive. By looking at the shape of the forest floor, the age and shapes of trees, and finding clues such as stone walls, rock piles, plow terraces, basal scars and more, we identified evidence of logging, fire, agriculture, epic storms, and old growth forest that hasn't been disturbed in centuries.

On our first day, we hiked to the Pinnacle in Putney Vermont with Dr. Tom Wessels, an expert in forest ecology. He demonstrated how to spot the signs of sheep farming, which was a huge industry in this area during the early 1800's. Students were surprised to learn that enough stone walls were constructed in central New England during that time to wrap around the Earth four times.

The second day in the woods found us in Pisgah State Forest in New Hampshire. We used measuring tapes and math to estimate the age of multiple-trunked trees. We spotted beaver-chewed stumps and found old-growth white pines and eastern hemlocks that were hundreds of years old. By the end of the week students had earned a new sense of the activities that shaped our area as well as how to see the impact these activities left on the natural world.

BAND CAMP INTENSIVE — Dan Lederer

The Band Camp Intensive gave students an opportunity to experience multi-track recording, working on music in groups or as soloists, and totally improvisational jamming as a full group. For some students, playing with others was a totally new experience as was the ability to get ideas into a computer, where one can layer other instruments and voices, one at a time.

The camp was also highlighted with kitten time, ping pong, friendly snow ball fights, and Ashfield's Country Pie Pizza.

A seven minute documentary on the 2 1/2 day event is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2XFQftM8hH8>



SERVICE INTENSIVE – Ms. Roll & Ms. Beardslee

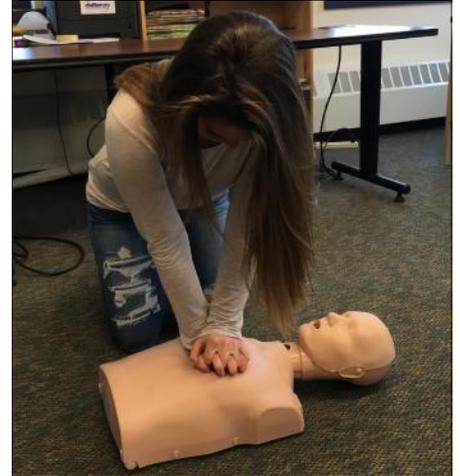
The service intensive started the week with an all day training with our Dean of Students, Mr. Leaf, in which participants earned their CPR/First Aid certification.

The students then traveled to the Survival Center in Northampton to learn about the resources and options for clients there ,and also completed two hours of sorting and organizing donations. Students considered whether service should be a mandatory part of the high school curriculum and they planned a Food Drive for the Four Rivers Community.

On the final day students completed service on the Four Rivers campus: organizing and cleaning the Blue Barn, trimming and cutting the gardens outside the main office and repainting and the trash bins for the Common Room. The Food Drive is happening from now until December 14th and we encourage everyone to bring non-perishable items to the collection boxes in the hallways of each division!

Finally, participants had a discussion prompted by the following question: SHOULD SCHOOL HAVE MANDATORY SERVICE HOURS? Here are some responses:

- I think that service should be required for school. But I also think students shouldn't be forced to do it. So I'm kind of in between. As a compromise the hours should be reduced to 10 hours in my opinion.
- I love the idea of service as a requirement because it's almost like a class. You may not learn what you intended to learn or what you set out to learn, but you will learn something that's valuable!
- Yes, as long as schools are aware that there are a lot of things going on in people's lives, I think it should be required. Any opportunity for REAL engagement, problem solving, meaningful work, exposure to different people/situations/occupations is valuable. Maybe getting out of our comfort/routine and authentically being of use is even more valuable than what happens in the classroom. But lots of teens are busy. Maybe also give some credit for other types of community participation like playing sports, leading on Crew Council, or being in the play?
- I think service should be required in schools because it is an important habit to learn. Just like math/English, service work is something that people should learn to do/enjoy. It also opens up opportunities (resume, recommendation, future jobs...).
- Yes, service is important. Helping others is important. It is something everyone should do and be able to do.
- Forced work benefits no one. We need choice.
- School strengthens knowledge. Service strengthens community. Put them together and get perfect harmony. Build knowledge, community, and positive character traits. It should be encouraged but not required. If you have prior engagements, flexible requirements.
- I think it should be required because there are probably a lot of people who wouldn't do it if they didn't have to and it's a good experience and they might find out they love it. It's also a good way to give back to the community they grew up in as they get ready to maybe leave it. Maybe we need more in-school opportunities since we're busy, or not have it be forced.
- I think that schools should be required to have some service time for students. I believe it is an important part of growing up: to help the community voluntarily. They don't have to do a lot, but they should get the experience.



GIVE and TAKE INTENSIVE - Felix Lufkin & Sara Katz

The goal of the Give and Take intensive was to deepen our relationship to the beings that sustain us, contributing to the earth and our community as we learn.

We planted public fruit trees as a source of food and nutrients for all to enjoy, for generations to come! Our plantings included apple, peach, pear, and paw paw, as well as Hydrangea bush and grape vines.

We visited the farm of former Four Rivers student Hannah Sol in Gill where we were invited to respectfully slaughter 5 of their chickens. We cooked the chickens over a fire in the garden after gutting, plucking and butchering them, and learned about their anatomy in the process.

Having feasted with gratitude, we headed out to do more planting at community and school locations in Greenfield and Holyoke. Along the way, we picked up cactus plants for our classrooms and had the opportunity to tour the Pearl Street mushroom farm in Easthampton to learn about mushroom cultivation.



COLLEGE BOUND INTENSIVE — Mr. Stenson and Ms. Haxo

Despite weather related woes, and the need to change plans on more than one occasion, a hearty group of 13 sophomores and juniors boarded a bus and headed off to New Hampshire and Maine to experience life on a college campus.

Our first stop was the University of New Hampshire where we were given a motivational talk and overview of the school before heading off on a tour of the campus. The dining commons also offered our first taste of all you can eat college style dining, and our hungry crowd took full advantage of the array of offerings.

Biddeford, Maine, and the University of New England was our next stop and our introduction to the school was given in the stadium seats overlooking the ice rink. While few in our group had an interest in the many areas of health sciences that the school offered, it was interesting to hear about the variety of offerings.

With the prospect of significant snow the next day, the group decided to postpone our continued trek North, and we headed home. With Bates and Bowdoin now off the itinerary, we took advantage of some great local offerings, and arranged to spend the next day locally visiting Hampshire College and Amherst College. The overview of Hampshire was given in their "Living Building," The Kern Center. After hearing of Hampshire's unique approach, which to some in the crowd sounded an awful lot like Four Rivers, we headed off on a campus tour before partaking in our second round of the dining commons experience. Later that day we checked in at the admissions office before heading off in small groups on our own self guided tour.

We finished up the intensive with a tour and information session at our neighboring Greenfield Community College.

Continue from page 1 — Learning Through Intensives — Peter Garbus, Principal

MORE INTENSIVES DESCRIPTIONS

- Academic Support Intensive: For students behind in credits, this group has roughly 20 hours of structured, supervised time plus some time at home over 4 days to make up a credit through an online course.
- Gender and Sexuality: This group talked about gender and sexuality, learned about LGBTQ movements in Western Massachusetts, met people who are connected to past and current LGBTQ activism, visited sites of LGBTQ history, and saw the musical, "Fun Home" in Boston.
- Not All Who Wander . . .: On naturalist wanders, this group explored local spots, on and off trail, looking for tracks and signs left by creatures.
- Youth Mental Health: This group explored mental health challenges for people ages 10 - 24, learning what they can do as individuals to help out others and what kind of community-based support programs are available to those who are struggling with mental health issues.

NURSE'S NOTES

There continues to be confusion about medications that need to be given during overnight and day long trips or field work. Before school starts you are requested to obtain a doctor's order for ANY medication your child will be taking at school. This includes medications taken during field work. It is vitally important the **form "MED-3"** be submitted prior to the start of the school year. The form can be found on the school web page: Links + Documents; Forms for parents. This is the link:

<http://www.fourriverscharter.org/docs/Forms%20MED3%20Med%20Order.pdf>

This form is mandatory and allows the teachers to administer your child's medication. Thank you for your assistance in assuring all our students will receive the medications they require while away from home. Have Safe and Peaceful Holiday Season.

~ *Jeanne Milton, RN*

MULCH FOR THE BLATCHFORD GARDEN — The school forest garden needs leaves for mulch! Please bring bags to the shed next to the blue barn. Thank you — Felix Lufkin



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Four River Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service. The school offers a rigorous academic program aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and an emphasis on character development for moral and social responsibility. Three central themes – nature, technology and community – pervade the teaching and learning at the school. Four Rivers works closely with parents and seeks both to serve and learn from the many resources of Franklin County.



Four Rivers Charter Public School
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