

Four Rivers Currents

February / March 2018

From the Principal's Desk...

"ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. STOP SHOOTING KIDS!"

There are times when the adults just need to be quiet for a minute and listen. Listen to the 17 minutes of silence when most of our school stood along Colrain Road to commemorate lives lost in Parkland, FL. Listen to the student speeches delivered out in the barn after the silence. And listen to the chants of over half our student body as they gathered in the center of Greenfield to be seen and heard, shouting "Enough is enough. Stop shooting kids!" Once we've listened, then it will be time to act. Here are words from our students on the March 14 National Student Walkout.

Gage Bennett, Grade 7

When I heard about Parkland, I had almost no reaction. . . . As I sat out the rest of the car ride, I slowly realized that I had been so desensitized to the subject of shootings. Sandy Hook, Pulse Nightclub, Las Vegas, Texas, Parkland--they have been driven into my mind since I was young. . . . We had 17 minutes of silence. But I think we should have 5 hours of silence for the 300+ students killed in school shootings in my lifetime alone. Or we could do nothing, just continue the same old crap that's been repeating itself since Columbine. Kid driven insane, kills innocent children, we share our stupid hashtags, then we say we should change something to STOP THIS. But then we forget about it. Nothing is done; nothing changes. But I can try. Trying never hurt anyone. The people have already been hurt. So I will keep trying, to STOP THIS.

Jaden LeBreux, Grade 10

The Academy for Critical Incident Analysis collected data on school violence around the world with two or more victims. Out of the 57 incidents from 36 countries, the U.S. accounted for half of them alone. This was for 2000 to 2010, and we have done just the opposite of getting better. During the 9 weeks of 2018 we have had 14 school shootings and counting. What will it take before we see a problem that has been right in front of our faces for years. How many deaths? We need better gun control laws to make sure that the owner will not kill us. To ensure that the person is mentally stable and capable of purchasing a deadly weapon. If you love guns that's fine, if you love shooting up kids that's an issue. So let's make better decisions on who we give these weapons to because so far we have done a shit job and there have been fatalities due to it. It is past the time that we give a voice to the kids who have been killed.

Skylar Craig, Grade 10

The ban of semi-automatic weapons is almost the same as the banning of the 2nd amendment with all the guns that fit under that phrase. If a person were willing to murder children, I am sure they would be willing to illegally buy a weapon on the street. Do understand, I am for gun control to an extent. I think if other states in this country would take on gun laws similar to Massachusetts we would benefit. On this day, I chose not to sit in the Common Room or join the walkout. I made my own protest.

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Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

Communication, Collaboration, and Presentation



In 7th Humanities, we began our new expedition "Could it Happen"? with a study of science fiction. Students have been writing and reading a variety of science fiction comics and poems, sharing them with each other during "Open Mic" on Wednesdays.

We are halfway through our class novel, "House of the Scorpion", using it to develop questions around biology and possible technologies of the present and future to delve further into in Science class. Students are also practicing their reading analysis by identifying clues from the text to analyze character, making real-world connections to historical and present-day events, and sharing these in small group discussions. — Ms. Dunnington



SCIENCE — Ms. Locke

Seventh grade scientists collaborate on making sense of Molecules, Membranes and Movement in and out of cells by representing their thinking about what could explain phenomenon they observed. Ask them about salty potatoes, expanding gummy bears and bags of starch in iodine water!

Grade 8 News

Exploring the European Middle Ages — Ms. Cummins

Over the past two months, eighth graders have been immersed in an exploration of the European middle ages. We began our study with a “Building Background Knowledge” workshop where students were tasked with connecting-the-dots between primary and secondary sources to guess what our unit of study would be. From there, we made connections between the fall of the Roman Empire and the development and rise of feudalism in Western Europe.

In January, eighth grade Social Studies and Science curriculums aligned for a fabulous Feudalism Simulation with monarchs, nobles, knights, serfs, and ... catapults, oh my! Students conducted in-depth research on a societal role in medieval Europe, and used their findings to create a fictional but historically accurate medieval character. Using this character, students developed a character profile, a 2-dimensional character model, Medieval I-Am Poems, and a Medieval Ballad!

Our unit wrapped up with a Medieval Feast and Reader's Theatre where students shared their ballads and ate medieval gingerbread, girdle bread and apple cider. Next week we'll be travelling to the Smith College Art Museum for field work on our next unit of study: The Early Modern Period and European Renaissance!



SCIENCE — Mr. Guillaume

Science in 8th grade is going out of this world! Students have been researching choice topics in Astronomy and will be presenting a 10-15 minute lesson to the class about their research. To help them get ready for their date (happening on multiple dates), I have asked them to practice with an adult. They will have a homework sheet that includes specific areas for you, as the adult, to give them feedback for their presentation. Thank you in advance for helping your student produce quality work.

Also in science, we will be doing a mini-expedition with the guiding question of "How do we know what we know?" Specifically, we will explore how scientists know the distances to stars. We will be traveling to Poet's Seat and using the same techniques astronomers use to gauge stellar distances and instead gauge distance to objects in the valley. We will finish by producing booklets that can show visitors to Poet's Seat what they are looking at in the valley, how far away those objects are and technique we used to gauge those distances!

DIVISION 2 NEWS

U.S. HISTORY

Students went on fieldwork to Gateway City Arts in Holyoke, MA to see the Robert Templeton exhibit. This trip helped students research and prepare for their upcoming silhouette project, which will focus on the following essential question: to what extent have we achieved civil rights?

Tenth grade social studies students became members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee as they discussed their next moves in the context of Mississippi in 1961: a focus on voter registration or direct actions, such as sit-ins.



ENGLISH

The ninth graders have embarked upon their I-Search, an eight-week-long research project on the topic of their choice. Students have chosen topics they are passionate about, fascinated by, or want to learn more about. Topics range from dance, music composition, and photography to string theory, biomimicry, and art therapy. As part of the project, students must interview two experts in their field. We are still seeking experts in a few topics. Are any of you an expert or know someone who is an expert in the following topics? *Cryptography, cosmology, ancient Chinese art and culture, the mafia, and cannibalism (all of which many people study, but no one is emailing us back!)*. If you have an idea for an expert for any of these, please email Lisa Ritchie (Iritchie@frcps.org). Thanks for your help! The I-Search Fair will be held at GCC the first week in April—more details soon.

Tenth graders just wrapped up their study of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and are now reading and discussing books in literature circles. Some of the book choices include *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, and *Kindred* by Octavia Butler. Please put on your calendars that the tenth grade ELA MCAS will be held Tuesday, March 27, Wednesday March 28, and Thursday, March 29.

MATH — Ms. Pratt

Ninth graders are working on analyzing statistics for their I-search project. They have asked 2 quantitative questions and are researching for graphs that support them to answer the questions. To demonstrate the significance of this type of work, 2 experts visited class to explain how they use statistics and graphs in their own research. Students were able to ask questions and learn about real research happening at UMass.



DIVISION 3 NEWS

SENIOR ENERGY DOCUMENTARY

The senior class at Four Rivers Charter Public School created and premiered a documentary film focused on the movement for renewable energy, specifically offshore wind. The documentary, **Blades of Change**, compared the struggles of the Cape Wind project to the success of Block Island wind and analyzed how we can learn from these projects and move forward with offshore wind in the United States.

The film was shown for one night at the Greenfield Garden Cinema on Thursday, February 15th. Students, families, Four Rivers staff and faculty, along with interested members of the community packed the house to watch the product of the seniors' hard work. The documentary had been four months in the making. Members of the class of 2018 were responsible for all stages of the documentary from initial creative planning to filming and post-production. In December, all 33 members of the class traveled to Boston, Providence, Cape Cod, and Block Island to interview people involved with offshore wind projects.

The event and the film were well received and the seniors have been asked to show the film at other locations such as UMass. If you would like to watch the film, search for "Blades of Change Four Rivers" on YouTube or look for it soon on our school webpage. ~ Andy Patari, Physics teacher

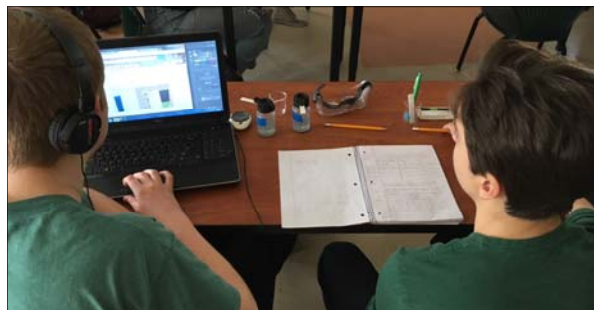
JUNIORS

The juniors have embarked upon their Arsenic Expedition in chemistry. In collaboration with UMass and Chemists Without Borders, students are inventing lab procedures and running experiments to gather data on the EZ Hach test kits. The kits are low-tech tools to measure arsenic contamination in water, which is a huge health risk in many parts of the world, and are currently in use in Bangladesh. The juniors have set out to determine whether different acids, the addition of specific salts, or replacing the zinc reactant with borohydride can improve the function of the test kits, allowing lower levels of contamination to be detected.



Counter clockwise from top left:

Arsenic Testing Kits; measuring concentrations; running tests.



Continued from page 1 — Listening to the Kids

Cedar Noonan, Grade 10

It is time for change. As Parkland survivor, Emma Gonzalez, so powerfully said: “We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Not because we’re going to be another statistic about mass shootings in America, but because we are going to be the last mass shooting.” We CAN make this a reality, so that never again will kids know the horror of being gunned down in school. Never again will teachers have to put themselves on the front lines to protect their students. Never again will bullets shatter a classroom full of promise.

Never again.

The raging gun violence in this country is unacceptable. But together we can make a difference. First, register to vote. If you are 16 and have your learner’s permit or license, you can pre-register to vote online. And when you turn 18, get out and vote. Vote for people that value citizen safety over money from the NRA, vote for a ban on assault weapons, vote to end gun violence in our country.

Second, stay engaged. Be aware of what’s happening here in our state and elsewhere across the country. Write letters and make phone calls to state and federal representatives, join protests, march in the street, and use your voice to demand stricter gun control.

Finally, be kind. Reach out, make connections, smile at someone, lend a hand, clean the computer cart. We are stronger together. Happiness is a bridge between us.

It is time for us to take the torch and carry it forward to the end, so that others may see our light and carry their own torch. Before long, we will be able to illuminate the darkness. Consider this moment a rite of passage for our generation. So that never again will students have to walk out of school to honor the victims of senseless violence.

Never again.

Hailey Weller, Grade 10

School shootings affect all the inhabitants of the country--except, apparently, the lawmakers who have the power to prevent them. If these lawmakers refuse to see the murder of children as their problem, then the children of this nation will simply have to make it their problem. When young people march out of school, chanting, waving banners, unified by one belief, we are not engaging in typical youthful rebellion. We are moving with a force that has swept across the world many times throughout human history. When something is wrong, it must be rectified. When the law does not protect its most vulnerable people, it must be changed radically.

I am a sixteen year old girl. I have lived a short time on this earth. Even so, I am smart enough to recognize a severe flaw in our society, especially when the first thing I learn in the morning is that yet another group of girls and boys like me have been killed because the grown-ups couldn’t agree to make dangerous weapons a little more difficult to obtain. We do not regret our decision to walk out of school, and we encourage others to do the same.

THANKS FOR LISTENING

COLLEGE ADVISING

COLLEGE PLANNING - information for Junior Families

Spring of junior year is an important time in terms of the college application process, and a number of things are underway here at school. I meet with juniors each week in junior seminar, and during this time we focus on junior internships and post Four Rivers planning. Other things that you should know about include:

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT MEETINGS: I have begun individual meetings with juniors where we discuss their hopes, aspirations and post-high school plans. Together we think about different aspects of college, gap years, and employment. Based on our meeting, I create a preliminary list of colleges, as well as suggest gap year options if appropriate, for the student/family to consider. These lists are accessible via Naviance, a web based college application management system, and will get refined over the next year. The timing of these meetings hopefully allows kids and families to think about some college visits over the April break.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS EVENING: Four Rivers hosts an Annual College Admissions evening, and this year it will take place on **Wednesday, April 4, from 6:30 - 8:00**. Our speaker for the evening will be Karen Kristoff, Associate Director of Admissions from Smith College. Karen will provide an overview of college admissions from the college admissions office perspective. This evening is open to anyone in the Four Rivers community, and is highly recommended for juniors and their families.

SAT's: Juniors typically take the SAT's toward the end of the year, and again early in their senior year. Dates, deadlines, and registration information is available here: www.collegeboard.org/SAT

We strongly encourage all juniors to do some independent test preparation. An excellent source of free test prep is the Kahn Academy resources available directly on the College Board web site. The Kahn Academy test prep is connected to the student's PSAT scores, and provides targeted practice based on their prior scores. The College Board, The Princeton Review, Barron's and Kaplan also put out comprehensive print based resources, and these are available in bookstores and online.

COLLEGE FINANCING: As we begin to develop lists of possible schools, the earlier that consideration can be given to the associated costs of individual schools the better. Net Price Calculators, which are available on the websites of every college, are particularly useful tools for getting an estimate of what it might cost to send your child to a particular school. Schools vary greatly in the percentage of need that they meet as well as the types of aid that they offer. We will host a financial aid evening in the fall. For those who want to learn more about college financing, and strategies for maximizing aid, a couple of good print/web resources are:

Paying for College Without Going Broke, The Princeton Review

The College Solution, The Right College at the Right Price. Lynn O'Shaughnessy (Or her accompanying website, thecollegesolution.com). <https://www.edvisors.com/> www.finaid.org

Questions about the college process and how we support kids and their families at Four Rivers? Email: astenson@frcps.org or call Andy Stenson at 413-775-4577 x222

SPRING ULTIMATE

Ultimate practice began on March 22nd. We have 3 boys and 3 girls teams running, along with a great group of coaches and players. Really! - I am excited about this season.

SUMMER REMINDER: We are already receiving signups for the Summer Ultimate Intensive from June 25 -29. If you are interested in the program go to the school web site - fourriverscharter.org click on Our Programs and then click Summer Ultimate Intensive or contact Terry at tplotkin@fourriverscharter.org
~ Terry Plotkin, Athletic Director and varsity boys coach.

Leapfrog Programs presents The Wood Frogs!

a weekly after school nature program for K-4 at Four Rivers Charter School



- Explore the natural world around us
 - Harvest, and cook wild pancakes
- Make a winter shelter with snow & sticks
 - Follow and identify animal tracks
 - Learn how to start and tend a fire



Meets Fridays from 3:30 to 5:30, beginning 4/1 Cost: \$125-\$325, sliding scale per 10 week session. Sign up online or email leapfrogprograms@gmail.com

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248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301

Four Rivers Charter Public School



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.