

Four Rivers Currents

November / December 2016

From the Principal's Desk...

WHERE IS SCHOOL REFORM TODAY AND WHAT'S NEXT?

I just returned from the 30th and final Fall Forum of the Coalition of Essential Schools, an education reform organization that sparked and inspired several of the most significant school change advocates around today, including [EL Education](#), the [Deeper Learning Network](#), [Big Picture Learning](#), and more. What's more, the Coalition and its founder, Ted Sizer, led me to education in the first place.

All of us who learned from Ted have missed his gentle determination since he died in 2009. His wife, Nancy, helped remind us what Ted cared about most over his 50-year career: that every young person deserves respect and the opportunity to develop his or her individual gifts to the greatest extent possible. He deeply valued and respected teachers and their profession. And he hoped beyond hope that the institution and structures of school could be simplified and focused so those teachers could form close and productive relationships with those students in pursuit of important skills and understanding. Ted spent two years in the early 1980s visiting and studying high schools across the United States and found them shockingly uniform in their approach. Their buildings were the same; their schedules were the same; their pedagogy was the same; and their mediocre results were often the same. He always believed that teachers and students were doing the best they could -- he never blamed them for such mediocrity. He blamed the structures, assumptions, and traditions of schooling, and he told the world that schools must change. From his research and from his knowledge of schools that broke such a mold, he wrote [Ten Common Principles](#) to describe what he thought should be different. Ted may have worn a suit and tie and come from a privileged background, but his vision demanded radical changes -- which he always said were merely common sense.

I learned two crucial lessons over the years I studied with Ted. One was that all institutions are created. They are constructed from ideas, developed over time, and take their shape from a complicated confluence of factors. The second lesson was that if institutions are created, they can be changed and that's where Ted really caused some trouble. I and others became convinced that teachers and principals and policy-makers could change the institution of school. I first had to learn to teach, which took place for me over a period of about 11 years in 4 different schools. Then I led a group of people to establish a brand new school from the ground up. Each of these schools were part of the Coalition of Essential Schools, and in each I worked to implement and uphold the 10 principles. Coming to Four Rivers was my first experience with Expeditionary Learning, but it turns out that these two organizations come from the same original ideas.

What to make of the organization Ted started coming to an end? On the one hand, many of us felt deep sadness. The Fall Forum had been a touchstone for me, allowing me to reconnect with people who shared values and vision. How will we carry on the conversations that have driven our professional lives? On the other hand, there are hundreds of schools across the country and thousands of educators that no longer follow the old traditional approaches to schooling. That genie is out of the bottle and can't be put back in. Today's changing world makes it even more likely that schools will be different, so perhaps the principles will be more relevant than ever.

Continued on page 6



Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

WHAT'S THE REAL STORY?

The 7th grade has been focused on storytelling! We've been looking at the stories told by rocks about the history of earth, determining the story told by graphs in math, and telling the story of our familias in Spanish class through a family tree project! In the photos here, stories took us to the Eric Carle Museum as students prepare to write children's stories in English about our human ancestors from social studies research.



Left: Jayden sketches an illustration into his field work journal.



Top: Henry, Jayden, Owen, Will and Ellis identify the theme in the Library at the Eric Carle Museum.

Above: Vivian reads to Zach, Afri and Isaac.



Left: Henry & TJ consider the materials used by Eric Carle in illustrating **Brown Bear, Brown Bear**.

Grade 8 News

SCIENCE & MATH

In 8th grade Math and Science we have been exploring concepts in chemistry and scientific notation. Students started by exploring the differences between chemical and physical changes, and then began monitoring how the mass does or does not change when the experiment was conducted in an open system or a closed system. We also did a number of experiments where we used and applied scientific notation, including a lab where we diluted flavor extracts to the nanoscale and tested our senses to see how little scent was detectable.



HUMANITIES

In 8th grade Humanities, just before Thanksgiving break, we finished up our Society Collages and Artist Statements. Leading up to these final products, we explored the different key elements of society today, including class, education, government, arts and entertainment, media, technology, and more. Eighth graders then chose one element of society to focus on and created a collage to express their opinion on this element. Here are some examples! Can you guess what element of society they are talking about?



DIVISION 2 NEWS

CIVIL RIGHTS THEN AND NOW

Tenth grade students recently culminated the CIVIL RIGHTS standard. Their study involved a parallel investigation of current civil rights issues and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60's. They began with a current case study about the Boston Police Department and the Boston Police Commissioner's report that supported a pilot program asking police officers to wear body worn cameras. The motivation was to create transparency and trust between law enforcement and citizens. They investigated mass incarceration; they read parts of Michelle Alexander's book, The New Jim Crow, and watched the documentary titled *13th*. Students studied the Black Lives Matter movement and the controversy around "All Lives Matter." After their critical investigations, they were asked to answer the essential question presented at the beginning of the standard, "Have we, as a nation, secured civil rights?" They created multiple products throughout the unit. The culminating event featured student created silhouettes and artist statements. There was a gallery walk on Thursday, December 1st during which the Four Rivers community, teachers and students alike, came to view the art and engage with the artists. It was an amazing day. Feel free to grab a visitor's pass and visit the first and second floor of the high school to see their beautiful and thoughtful work.



Artists:
Isaiah Caron, above; and
Ri Wonkka, right



Artists from top:
Mac Sloan-Anderson
Marcel Pattavina
Isaac Slaymaker

DIVISION 3 NEWS

Eleventh graders in Algebra 2 studied operations on a variety of numbers including exponents, logarithms, and complex numbers. They started to investigate what functions are all about. In World Literature, students wrote their second analytical essay on a book of their choice after they had discussed it with their literature circle. In World History, students studied WWII and the holocaust. And finally, in Chemistry, students learned about ionic, metallic, covalent, and intermolecular bonding.

In Data Analysis, 12th graders created video presentations of data related to energy, and learned some mathematical modeling techniques related to finance, especially the leveled cost of energy. In English and Civics (which have been working closely together), students prepared for and debated divestment of fossil fuel stocks as a political tactic. They also studied film making. In Physics, students used breadboards and soldered the circuitry to construct (mostly solar powered) robots from basic electrical components and scrap.

*Division 3 students (along with Division 2) also participated in a bunch of great intensives in late November including: **Winter in the Whites** and **Rocketry and Astronomy** (photos below).*



From the Principal—Continued from page 1

As a an undergraduate 30 years ago, I might have thought I could change the world. While I still think globally, I now act locally. Our team at Four Rivers strives everyday to value every individual student, to make learning come alive, and to pursue educational outcomes that really matter. Without question, we have changed the way teaching and learning happens -- in at least one school. The one big question I still have is what might change the wider system. Ted's and the Coalition's purpose was to ensure that all young people have an excellent school to attend.

Nancy Sizer closed the conference by suggesting that Ted's greatest contribution was to provide the emerging education reform movement with a steadying hand, the way training wheels steady a wobbly rider. With Ted gone and the organization coming to an end, it's time to take the training wheels off and ride for ourselves. There is work to be done, and we may just be ready to do it.

~ Peter Garbus, Principal ~

COLLEGE ADVISING

Our seniors have starting applying to college! To date applications have been submitted to: *Tufts, Humboldt State, Colby, Clark, Case Western, University of Vermont, Castleton State, Sierra Nevada College, Becker College, Hampshire College, MCLA, Fitchburg State, Saint Michaels, Westfield State, Univ. of Maine, Simmons, UC Berkeley, Endicott, Unity, Quinnipiac, Green Mountain, Johnson State, Juniata, New College of Florida, North-eastern, Eckerd College, Suffolk, Univ. of New England.*

SAT/ACT Testing

January/February is the last opportunity for seniors to take care of any standardized tests that they need for upcoming college applications. Seniors and their families are reminded that testing requirements, including subject tests, are school specific and that they should check college websites to be sure that they have met the requirements.

SAT Test Date: Jan 21 - reg. deadline is December 21

ACT Test Date: Feb 13- reg. deadline is January 13

Questions ? Email astenson@frcps.org.



Eating meals together has so many benefits:

- Better academic performance
- Higher self-esteem
- Greater sense of resilience
- Lower risk of substance abuse
- Lower risk of teen pregnancy
- Lower risk of depression
- Lower likelihood of developing eating disorders
- Lower rates of obesity

Check out this website for easy recipes, conversation starters and much more!

<http://thefamilydinnerproject.org>

Brought to you by the Safe Schools

NURSE'S NOTES

It is becoming increasingly popular for students to call or "text" their parents to come get them because they do not feel well. School policy is that a student must be assessed by the school nurse before going home ill. I will assess the student and contact you for pick-up. If a student will be driving home from school I will contact the parent/guardian first; then have the student call Four Rivers upon arriving home safely. REMEMBER: if you receive a request directly from your child that he/she is not feeling well, TELL them to see the nurse. Thank you for your assistance in observing school policy.

The Community Health Center dental screening will be on Jan. 3rd when we return from our vacation . This is only for students who have enrolled in the program. NO further requests can be honored at this time. Wishing all of you a safe and Happy Holiday vacation.

Jeanne Milton, RN

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCCER CAPS SEASON with SNOW BOWL MATCH

The MS Boys Soccer Team continued to gel and work as a team as the season unfolded; reflected in going 6-2-1 in the last stretch. The highlight was our effort against an undefeated Mahar MS team (actually 2 years undefeated). It was incredible. There were few of our fans on hand, but what they saw was quite memorable. It was nail biting to the end. Every player put their heart into their effort. We forged ahead 2-0, but we were tied at half time. The score then seesawed back and forth with Mahar eventually scoring the winning goal with minutes left for a 5-4 win. It was the most goals any team had made against them in recent memory. It was quite the contest. Our team held their heads high as they walked off the pitch.

Our Tri-Captains led the team exceptionally. Sulli Schnorr and Muiris Loubisky-Lonergan played some fantastic games at midfield and Jonah Goldstein was solid in the net for us all season long. Henry Zwart and Ben Yu anchored and mentored our corps of deep backs. Henry Zaccara and Gavin Crehan scored most of our goals. Their unselfish play contributed to our success. The entire squad took a quantum leap in developing their skills. Above all, they always played as a TEAM.

SNOW BOWL—The MS Boys soccer team ended its season in a unusual way, playing the visiting Hartsbrook team on a snow-covered field with snow filling the air before a large crowd of supportive parents. The official game had been called off, but Hartsbrook's team had already departed for Greenfield. The snow obscured the soccer field lines and the refs would have called the game due to dangerous conditions. Four Rivers warmed up and made snowmen. Hartsbrook's coach arrived and it was decided, since everyone was there, to have a fun match with a relaxed attitude and name it the **Snow Bowl Soccer Match**.

We put up the four corner flags; removed the snowmen; decided on a few rules, 20 minute halves, and 5 minute intervals for stoppage of play for substitutions; and away we went. It was crazy and hilarious. Parents of both teams brought hot chocolate, snacks, and a great attitude which they drank, devoured, and exuded during the course of the game. There was a wonderful spirit and a sense of community between the schools sharing this unusual event. A memorable experience was shared by all. Everyone departed soaked, partially frozen, and quite content with what just transpired. Thank you for the huge turnout under such unusual conditions. ~ Charlie Olchowski



Clockwise from top: Muiris breaks from a crowd of Hartsbrook players; Luke Webb befuddles Hartsbrook; Josh Lavigne and Anthony Rodriguez challenge a Hartsbrook player; the loyal fans sip hot chocolate and defy the blizzard!



WINTER FUN PHOTOS — left to right:

Ms. Falco and a very large snowman.

Poised for takeoff — Winter in the Whites intensive.

Setting up a shot — Pinhole Camera Intensive

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20294"

Four River Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people and 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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