

# Four Rivers Currents

January & February 2016

**From the Principal's Desk...**

## **PRIORITIES FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT: WHO'S IN?**

We've made various efforts over the years to involve parents in our school, though our children are not necessarily clamoring for that. Nonetheless, they still need us, and schools benefit from parent involvement. What are the most important ways parents can be involved in the life of our school? And what can you do?

Four priorities for parent involvement at Four Rivers come to mind:

**Be involved in our student's life and support their learning.** We ask you to come to school at least 3 times each year: one advisor meeting in August, one student led conference in the fall and one in the spring. These are important moments for you to show up and nearly 100% of you do. What is our role day to day? We get them to and from school, we might see them working on homework, and we listen to their excitement and complaints about the day's events. We might be part of rare moments of genuine, honest reflection on what it's like for them growing up or contemplating their future. Do they want our advice? Do they need our structure and limits? Do they need the car (oh, just wait!)? Each of us probably answers such questions differently, and we take on this part of our role in different ways. It really does make a difference when we let our students know we care about their learning and that we do so on a day to day basis.

**Get to know who our student's friends are and their parents.** This might be one of our bigger challenges. As a charter school, we draw families from many different communities. We don't all live in the same town or neighborhood, so many of us don't know one another. What are we supposed to do when our child wants to go over to so-and-so's house on Friday night? Will the parents be home? What are the rules of that house? Should I let them go? Will they be safe? We've had different ideas over the years about how to help parents in a grade get to know each other. We at least try to have people introduce themselves at Back to School Night. We've thought of having potlucks by town before school begins or perhaps potlucks by grade at school right before Back to School Night. We've tried to set up Class Parents who would communicate more directly (and insistently) with other parents in their student's grade. This priority seems important, but we need to know what would work for all of you and what you are ready to lead and show up for.

**Learn what we can to help us be good parents.** Few of us have training to be the parent of an adolescent. How are we supposed to know what they need and what we're supposed to do about it? Should we set strict limits? How should we respond to their explorations? What do we do when they change their hair or style of dress or identity? How do we handle their mistakes? It would be great to revive the parent workshops we ran some years back with a terrific facilitator who helped us think about these kinds of issues. Or perhaps there's a group of parents who would simply like a time and place to get together with others to talk about parenting dilemmas and share ideas or experiences. Again, this might need some of you to lead and others of you to make sure you attend.

**Do what we can to support the school.** Ask not what Four Rivers can do for you; ask what . . . . Read the Flash, pay your bill, get your kid to school, etc. Is there more? A few people attended a meeting before this fall's Back-to-School Night to give input on what role our Family Council might play. We're now in the third consecutive year without parent leadership of this organization. Not too many of us get excited by fundraising -- and we've worked very hard to limit our fundraising -- but we really do

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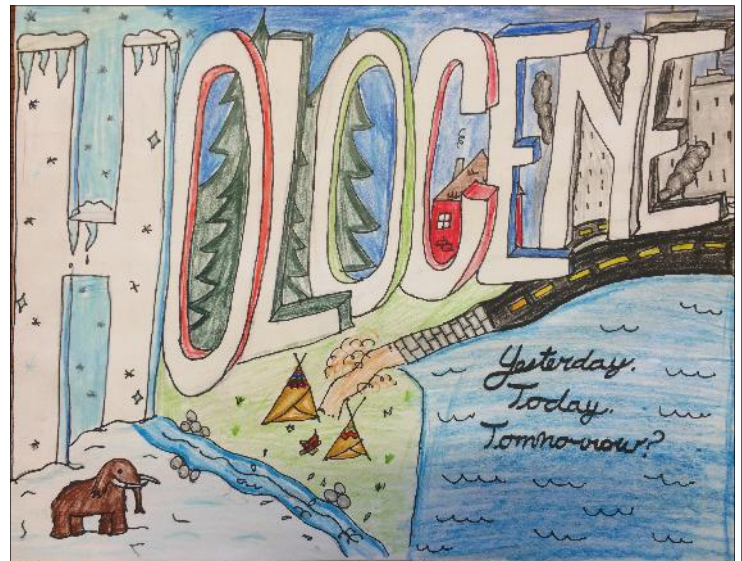
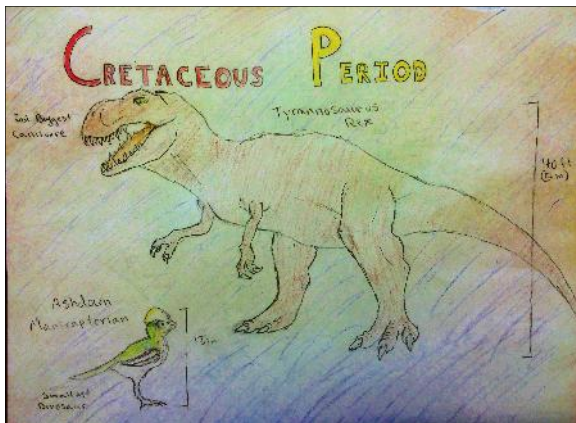


*Peter Garbus, Principal*

## Grade 7 News

### SEVENTH GRADE TIME TRAVELLERS

The seventh graders have returned from their time traveling adventures. Come see the 7th grade paleontology project *Postcards From The Past* displayed on the Amherst College campus at the Bedneski Museum of Natural History! This is the culminating project for a Science and English expedition where students work to communicate science facts through science fiction.



Even now they are continuing to analyze the literary elements of science fiction as students read *THE HOUSE OF THE SCORPION* by Nancy Farmer in English class. And in science class they will soon be considering how realistic the biotechnology presented in that novel may be.

#### SPANISH ~ Ms. Beardslee

As students in 7th grade Spanish completed their family trees, students turned their attention to vocabulary about school and created their own ideal school with rules and requirements. Students have now jumped into being able to talk about their likes and dislikes connected specifically to writing horoscopes and predicting the future. Stay tuned!



## Grade 8 News

### FUN AND CHALLENGE IN CREW

The 8th grade participates in Crew Team Challenge in the winter. We kicked off our Team Challenges with Flashlight Sing, in which each crew comes up with a list of songs that contain a key word, and then they sing them!

This past week, the 8th grade split up into groups of six to take on the Marshmallow Challenge - to build the tallest freestanding structure with a marshmallow on top, using only 50 pieces of linguine, three feet of tape, and two feet of string. Some of the other challenges we will face this winter include the Costume Race, Valentine's Trivia, the Web, and Pyramids.



Above Left — Contemplating the challenge before us.

Above Right— Ideas flying!

Below Left — A tower begins to rise.

Below Middle — A beautiful and strong arch could do the trick.

Below Right — This could be a winner — if it can hold the marshmallow aloft.



## DIVISION 2 NEWS

### NINTH Grade Update

Ninth grade U.S. History students just wrapped up a dialogue about democracy. They each emailed two people to gather opinions about how a current issue challenges the U.S. constitution. They researched to form their own opinions and wrote position papers to defend their conclusions.

Next up, the ninth graders are launching a History/English expedition on immigration. They are studying the history of immigration in the United States and are reading fiction and non-fiction texts with immigrants' stories. This week, they will be speaking with immigrants all over Massachusetts to learn more about challenges immigrants face and how we, as Four Rivers students, can advocate for their rights.

In science, ninth graders just started the ecology standard and have been having great discussions about population growth. They are putting their knowledge into practice through a duckweed lab; their goal is to grow the largest population of duckweed that they can, taking into consideration all the factors that can impact the duckweed's survival.

### TENTH Grade Update *by Abigail Schlinger and Mac Almeida*

On the first day of second semester (Jan 19), several brave souls in Ms. Tabachnick's history class presented their **Unsung Hero Monologues**. For this assignment, students were given a list of activists. Each student chose an activist to research who they were and what they did to make a change. Students then wrote a monologue from the point of view of their subject, reflecting their beliefs and telling their story. Activists included Langston Hughes, Harvey Milk, Cesar Chavez, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

In math, students just finished a unit on trigonometry. They used sine, cosine, and tangent to find missing side lengths of right triangles, and the inverses to find missing angle measures. Then, they began finding the missing side lengths of a right triangle **without** our handy sine, cosine, and tangent. And no calculator! Luckily, the triangles are 30-60-90 and 45-45-90 triangles, so there are tricks to figuring these equations out, but what will happen if they drift off from these conveniently angled triangles? Ms. Pratt might have to teach them some "wizarding" skills to help them get by!

In English, the tenth grade class is preparing their **Do Something** workshops, which they will present to the school (and families who would like to attend) on Friday morning, February 12. The workshops are on topics students want to do something about, such as improving diversity in the media or living more sustainably. Workshops are designed to inform students about an issue and create a plan to do something to fix it.





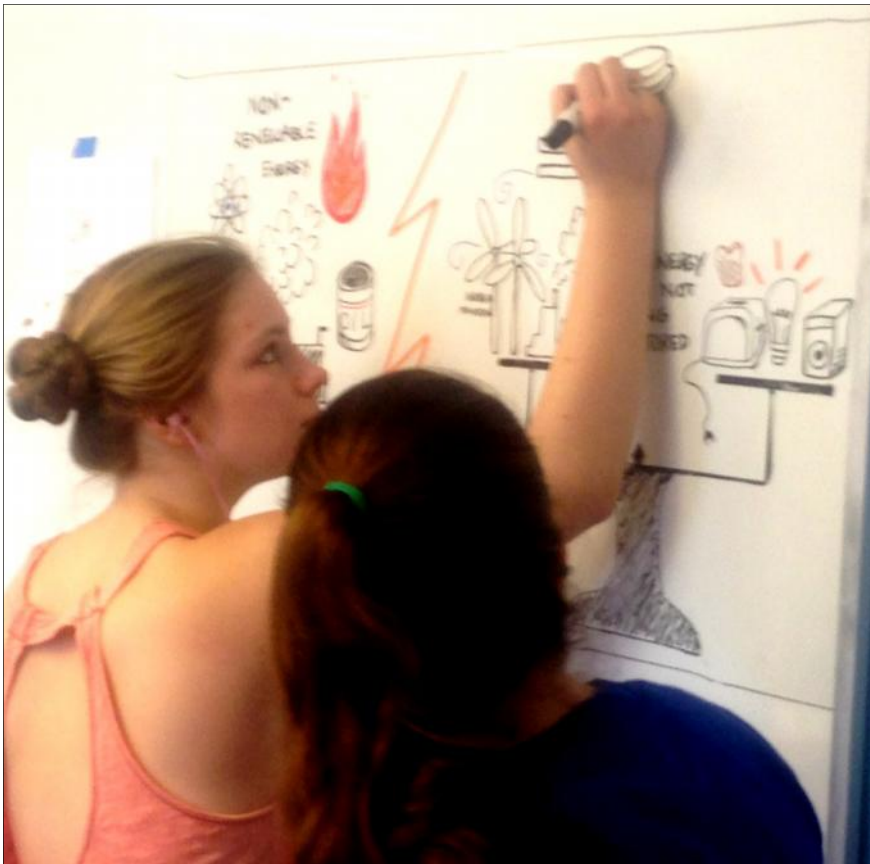
## DIVISION 3 NEWS

### SENIORS

Seniors are now running full throttle, preparing for the premiere of their documentary about Burlington, Vermont's all-renewable electric energy initiative. This is the conclusion of their energy expedition that has woven through all their classes since the beginning of the year.

On December 9th and 10th, the full senior class went to Burlington to film a dozen interviews with, among others, Burlington's mayor, Miro Weinberger; Sandy Levine, lawyer for the Conservation Law Foundation; and Neil Lunderville, the General Manager of the Burlington Electric Department. They also interviewed people on the street and shot B-roll (background footage).

To produce the film, the class has divided into five different teams: script, editing, graphics, auxiliary footage, and file management. It's intense. The film will premiere at the Greenfield Garden Cinemas on Thursday, February 11, at 7:00 p.m. Please join us.



*Above ~ Annaleah Gregoire of the graphics teams confers with Sara DiPaolo of the script team about the whiteboard animation explaining renewable energy credits, a key element of the Burlington renewables plan.*



### JUNIORS

The second semester of junior year is when students become the kings of school. The seniors are looking toward college, and the juniors are the lieutenants to whom everyone looks up. They are in the thick of it. Algebra 2 students are starting to work with rational expressions. Modern World History students are starting to do research for their papers on World War II. Chemistry students have been mastering chemical reactions. And English students, heaven help us, are starting to study satire. Look out!

## NURSE'S NOTES

I will be conducting state mandated health screenings when we return from winter break. Please complete the opt out form if you do NOT want your child screened.

Students who sustain a mild concussion require 3 to 5 days rest at home without screen time and/or homework. A delay in cognitive rest will delay healing. I have included a link to Cape Cod Times summarizing a recent forum on concussions. Do NOT allow your child to return too early if he/she sustains this type of injury.

<http://www.capecodonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140212/NEWS/402120329&emailAFriend=1>  
<http://www.capecodonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140212/NEWS/402120329&emailAFriend=1>

~ Jeanne Milton, RN ~

## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ARTIST

The creative work of three Otters (Robert Naranjo, Michah Goldstein, and Tori Koncz) will be on the walls at Artspace's annual Teen Art Exhibit. The show features art work by Franklin County teens and will run January 25 through February 19, 2016. There will be an opening reception on Friday, January 29th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Check out [www.artspacegreenfield.com](http://www.artspacegreenfield.com) for regular gallery hours! ~ Sara Acton, Art Teacher ~

## JV BASKETBALL

First of all, let me say that I feel truly lucky to be a coach at Four Rivers CPS. A huge part of what we try to do as coaches is build a culture that promotes learning and success. At Four Rivers so much of that hard work has already been done by the students, teachers, and administrators. Because of this, we have a group of players who already understand the importance of community. Our team works hard, is supportive, has fun, never quits, and continues to improve. We currently have 3 wins (Smith Academy, Bement and the Chinese Immersion Charter School) and 2 losses (Eaglebrook and Pioneer), but that seems a poor measure of what I see as a truly amazing group of young, athletic players who are working together day after day to find success as a team. ~ Coach Mike Schnorr ~

## ADMISSIONS SEASON IS NOW!

### SIBLINGS OF CURRENT STUDENTS:

Siblings of current students receive preference in our lottery BUT they still must submit an application by the **Deadline — February 24th !!**

There is ONE Admissions Information Sessions remaining:

**Wednesday, Feb 10, 7:00 pm**

### OPPORTUNITY FOR PARENT VOLUNTEERS:

Contact Leslie Taylor if you would like to help at an Admissions Information Session;

ltaylor@fourriverscharter.org OR 413-775-4577 x 202

## COLLEGE ADVISING

**COLLEGE APPLICATIONS** — Ever wonder what colleges our students apply too? As of today, just over half of our seniors have submitted at least one application, and the schools they have applied to include:

*Allegheny, Amherst College, UConn, Franklin Pierce, Hampshire, MCLA, UMass, Amherst, Cleveland, State, New England College, Bowdoin, Bennington, Boston University, Columbia College, Connecticut College, Florida Institute of Technology, Olin, Hamilton, Ithaca, RISD, Rensselaer Polytech, Vassar, UVM, Rochester Institute of Technology, Wentworth, Colby, Brandeis, Brown, University of New Hampshire, University of Rhode Island, Quinnipiac, Westfield State, Florida State, University of Tampa, Carleton, Clarkson, Dartmouth, Drexel, Emerson. Lewis and Clark, MassArt, UMass, Middlebury, Skidmore, New England Institute of Art, University of Hartford, Tufts, Ursinus, Wesleyan, WPI, Earlham, Bucknell, SOKA University of America, Smith College.*

And, while it's still early in the admissions season, the following colleges have already said **YES!** to our students: *Allegheny, Clark, Colby-Sawyer, Franklin Pierce, CGG, Hartwick, Keene State, MCLA, University of New Hampshire, New England College, Wheaton.* **Congratulations to our Seniors!**

### FINANCIAL AID

We encourage all families to apply for federal financial aid by filing the FAFSA form. The FAFSA for the 2016/17 school year is now available at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov).

FAFSA Support. Need help filing the FAFSA? Free information and support is available at FAFSA Sundays. Information available here:

<http://www.fafsaday.org/locations.php>

### JUNIORS AND TEST PREPARATION

Scores for all juniors who took the PSAT's in October are now available by logging on to the student's College Board account. Our plan is for all juniors to take the SAT's this coming June. We will be providing some test preparation in English and math class. Juniors are encouraged to complete some test prep independently. An excellent source of FREE test prep is the Kahn Academy and their resources which can be accessed directly from the College Board site.

**Questions regarding the college application process?**

**Contact Andy Stenson – [astenson@frcps.org](mailto:astenson@frcps.org).**

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need someone to take over managing the apparel orders. Another idea was to have more of our parents serve as experts for expeditions, fieldwork, internships, and other projects. And we really want to continue the annual Otter Soirée. There might be more.

For now, are any of you out there ready to step up and get involved? I see at least 3 initiatives that need parent leaders: planning the Otter Soirée, organizing a series of parent workshops, and setting up systems for parent community-building and communication. If we could accomplish just these 3 things, our school would be stronger. Let me know if you're ready to lead or be part of one of these efforts.

*Peter Garbus ~ Principal*

## SPANISH ~ Ms. Beardslee

**Spanish 2** students have finished market skits in which they depicted authentic bargaining scenes and dialogue. They then, in small groups, adopted a room in a house and presented vocabulary related to that room to the entire group. This vocabulary will build on a bigger short video product students will work on for the next 2 weeks. It is a discussion of house and home that will serve as an introduction to the topic of immigration.

**Spanish 3** students were deep in the dissection of UN DIA DE ESTOS and that ended with short scenes from the story, different reading comprehension activities to show the social statement being made in the story, and a letter to Gabriel Garcia Marquez about his work and how it connects to their own feelings about activism and what topics they would include and how they would put his story to film. Now, students are traveling to Chile. They are building background knowledge around the presidency of Allende and then the power and dictatorship of Pinochet. Upcoming is more new vocabulary, a short story that plants students inside the day of the military coup and a deep investigation into the art of the arpillera in preparation for making their own.



Random act of crew silliness: Seeing how many students can fit into Mr. Ritchie's classroom closet!

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Four Rivers Charter Public School  
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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.