

# Four Rivers Currents

September 2016

## From the Principal's Desk...

IN A MORE PERFECT WORLD, CHARTER SCHOOLS HELP ALL IMPROVE

It's a tough time to be part of a charter school in Massachusetts. The upcoming ballot measure to authorize 12 new charter schools above the cap has stirred up more criticism and opposition than I've seen over the nearly 20 years I've been working in charters. Arguing back and forth about which schools are better or whose funding is fair or unfair takes energy, largely ignores student learning, and contributes little to improvement of our public schools. Is this political environment our new reality?

Imagine a day -- long after a divisive ballot measure is behind us -- in a land where adults with differences have dialogue and work together for the benefit of all young people. It might be hard to see, but I like to experiment with optimism.

As originally envisioned, charter schools were supposed to serve as engines of innovation for the public system. The two authors of "[A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education](#)" report that the original idea behind charter schools started with the president of the American Federation of Teachers, one of the two main unions for teachers in the U.S.:

"In a 1988 address, Mr. Shanker outlined an idea for a new kind of public school where teachers could experiment with fresh and innovative ways of reaching students. Mr. Shanker estimated that only one-fifth of American students were well served by traditional classrooms. In charter schools, teachers would be given the opportunity to draw upon their expertise to create high-performing educational laboratories from which the traditional public schools could learn."

Four Rivers is one of those "high performing educational laboratories." Why not let us pursue Mr. Shanker's vision and invite us to contribute to improving traditional public schools? Why not let us demonstrate the advantages of school programs that are mission-driven, student-centered, and teacher-empowered? Let us share with other public schools what happens when strong relationships with students, created through advisories and smallness, help students face into their challenges feeling supported. Let us share lessons from things we've tried that haven't worked -- nutty schedules, policies that may be too loose or too tight, or repeated first drafts of policies without disciplined documentation. We know what's worked and hasn't worked in our crew program. We know what's worked and hasn't worked in preparing our students for standardized tests. We know a great deal about project-based learning. We could sit around arguing about why such collaboration hasn't happened -- and actually, it might be quite valuable to do so. It seems more worthwhile to ask what it would take -- what conditions and structures need to be in place -- to make such collaboration work.

Almost 30 years have passed since the idea of charter schools germinated. Not all charters are like Four Rivers, and a lot has happened in the interim to set up today's political divisions. As with the baby and the bathwater, I don't think the politics and finances should keep public schools in Franklin County and the Commonwealth from working together to make all schools better.

Please join me at Coffee with the Principal on October 6 from 8-9 am if you'd like further conversation on this -- or other -- topics.



*Peter Garbus, Principal*

## Grade 7 News

### WE ARE A TEAM

The seventh grade has made the transition into a new school seem easy! They just completed their first learning expedition, focusing on the following essential questions:

- What are the tools we can use for learning at an Expeditionary Learning School?
- Who am I?
- Who are we?
- How do we move from me to we?

As one of the culminating events of this expedition, the students helped clean up the Green River together. Featured here are some photos from the day, along with captions written by the 7th graders.

*"Teamwork makes the dream work." Isaac, Joy, and Liv pull an 8 foot pipe from the ground. Clearly we all have our own character traits, but when we put them together, this is what it looks like.*



## Grade 8 News

### SCIENCE & MATH

Eighth grade math and science classes are off to a great start! In science, we have been working on making accurate and precise measurements using the metric system, while at the same time beginning to learn about the Engineering Design Process. Students have taken on several design challenges and then have had to accurately and precisely measure data about their structures. In math and in science we have also been exploring how we work together as a group. In the pictured challenge, students had to work together as a class to construct a geodesic dome out of newspaper and tape that they could then fit inside.



### HUMANITIES

In Humanities class, we started out the year exploring the guiding question, "Who Am I?" by composing detailed and sensory-rich *Where I'm From* poems and drawing creative and unique *Who I Am* visuals. Last week, we began exploring the second guiding question of the year, "Who Are You?" by interviewing and collecting data on Bioflyer partners (practicing perspective and empathy as we get to know one other 8th grader better). This week we kicked off our third guiding question, "Who Are We?" with fieldwork with WolfTree in the woods of Montague. The 8th graders were divided into three groups, given certain resources to use, and given the challenge of acquiring water that was safe to drink, food that had protein, and medicine to cure scurvy - a frustrating and fascinating survival scenario, indeed! The following photos were taken as the groups struggled with and then practiced the Character Virtues: Compassion, Perseverance, Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, and Courage!



***Making fire***

## DIVISION 2 NEWS

### SOPHOMORES TO VISIT SENIORS

On Thursday, October 6, the tenth graders will be at the Greenfield Council on Aging (Senior Center) from 11-11:45am. They will be participating in the "Kindness Rocks" project and sharing and painting rocks with the seniors. This event is open to grandparents and family friends who would like to participate! Contact Lisa Ritchie ([lritchie@frcps.org](mailto:lritchie@frcps.org)) or Winfield Hall (413) 772-1517x4 at the Greenfield Senior Center for more information.



*Tenth graders went dragon boating in Springfield on the Connecticut River. Teamwork required!*

*Ninth graders performed community service. They did some trail work in Ashfield, and spent some time weeding and doing field work at Just Roots, the Community Farm in Greenfield.*



## DIVISION 3 NEWS

### Orientation

The school year got off to a great start in division 3 with the entire Senior class taking a trip to Star Island and the Juniors camping at Savoy State Forest.

The Seniors annual trip to the New Hampshire Isle of Shoals provided an opportunity for service, team building, and focused intention-setting about senior year. On the island, the seniors designed the school-wide stepping in ceremony that they would lead upon their return to mark the opening of the school year. They also began their senior expedition by brainstorming big project ideas and by looking at the island as a model topic. The highlights of the trip are always the moments of contemplation and reflection as well as the fun competition of the rowing challenge. This year's rowing champion was Alex Wilson's crew. The Seniors returned to the mainland primed and ready for the demands of senior year.

The Junior class journeyed to nearby Savoy State Forest for one night of camping. They took part in group challenges, prepared delicious camp meals, and held discussions about what types of skills are necessary in division 3. One focus of these conversations was the idea of emotional intelligence, or the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. Developing these types of skills is difficult for children and adults alike, and yet the Juniors approached the challenge with interest and openness. Students returned to campus ready for a fresh start in their new division.

*Photo right: A game of hacky-sack before breakfast on Star Island?*



### The Senior Energy Expedition

The academic year for seniors began by diving into the Energy Expedition. Students were taken to the movies at The Greenfield Garden Cinema, where their 6-month task was revealed: create a feature documentary film about a regional energy issue. The work began soon after, building background knowledge. Students are studying various energy sources in Physics, compiling energy data in Math, and using systems thinking mapping skills to get an overarching view of the energy issue in Civics. The next step on this project is for students to work in groups to pitch film ideas to their classmates. The class will then vote on which film it wants to make. Look for the premiere of the film on Thursday February 16, 2017 at The Garden.

## SAFE SCHOOLS SAFE STREETS COALITION (4SC) GREENFIELD, MA



*"We're all in this together."*



**4SC** (Safe Schools, Safe Streets) is a federally funded, community supported coalition which aims to use evidence based programs to reduce substance abuse among the youth of the town of Greenfield. We are funded by the Drug Free Communities funding through SAMHSA. We work in collaboration with the school department and the Town of Greenfield. The grant is meant to be a school/community grant and GPS is our fiscal agent.

**OUR MISSION:** 4SC and our partnering agencies aim to increase the well-being of Greenfield's youth by coordinating the efforts of schools, families and community partners to promote healthy behaviors and settings. We support effective environmental approaches to, primarily, reduce substance abuse, increase school connectedness and encourage supportive community relations.

**OUR VISION:** 4SC envisions a safe and supportive school, family and community environment where youth can develop the essential tools and strategies to develop a healthy, productive life of learning, community engagement and personal fulfillment.

The Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition, of the Greenfield Public Schools, welcomes Suzie Hale as their new Parent Outreach Coordinator.

Her first effort in this new position is to grow an email list of parents and caregivers in Greenfield. This will assist her in easily and quickly distributing information such as upcoming events, resources, drug facts, or how to talk to your child about substances. Please, if you would like to be a part of this great resource, email Suzie at [suzhal1@gpsk12.org](mailto:suzhal1@gpsk12.org) to get your name on the soon to be most popular email list around! Your name will not be seen by others on the email list serve, nor will it be given out to anyone else. At the very least, if you are not comfortable with sharing your email, please check out an outstanding and informational presentation by Dr. Ruth Potee @ <https://vimeo.com/155764747?ref=fb-share&1>

Also, it would be so helpful to have you take a quick 10 minute survey @ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HV99P8Y> Survey results help us know where to put resources to help our community combat youth substance abuse.

Thanks so much for your time!

## SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

### VARSITY BOYS SOCCER

The Boys varsity soccer team is off to a good start at 4 - 1. We defeated last year's RVAL tournament winner Putney by a score of 3-2. Barnabus Yu scored the winning goal with just 5 seconds left! We also beat Dublin, another top team, 1 - 0 again with Baranbus getting the only goal with 5 minutes left. We won easily against White Oak and BART before losing to a strong Academy at Charlemont team 2 - 0.

~ *Terry Plotkin, Coach* ~

### MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCCER

Despite a short preseason to condition and organize, the Middle School Soccer Team was off to a fast start. They won their first four games against Pioneer (3-2), Smith Academy (5-3), Bement (7-3), and Athol (5-2). They forged ahead 2-0 against Hartsbrook, but lost 3-2 on a disputed goal. They then succumbed to Eaglebrook by a 6-2 margin, playing against a solid, highly skilled team. The team is comprised of veterans and those new to the game. Things are progressing well and there are many more games to be played for the 25 person squad. Come see us play!

~ *Charlie Olchowski, Coach* ~

### CROSS COUNTRY

The Four Rivers Cross Country Team is off to a fantastic start! Jumping right into the season, the team placed 2nd in their first meet hosted by The Putney School in Putney, VT on Wednesday, September 14. Mac Sloan-Anderson was first with a time of 17:53. Oscar Gibson, Casey Davey, Jayden Skelly and Elias Smith all finished in the top 18. On the girls' side, Jemma Dickson placed 18th that day. For the second meet, hosted by Dublin School in Dublin, NH, the boys' team placed 2nd. Mac Sloan-Anderson finished again in first place with a time of 17:35! Oscar Gibson, Casey Davey and Jayden Skelly also finished in the top 15 that day. On the girls' side for the Dublin meet, Jemma Dickson placed 21st and Lily Harris Hendry finished 25th.

Four Rivers hosted a HOME meet on Wednesday, September 28th. Mac Sloan-Anderson and Oscar Gibson again led the pack, finishing first and second overall. Four Rivers took second place in the meet behind Dublin School.

On October 5, the team races at the Academy at Charlemont. Come out and cheer on the team. See you in the woods! ~ *Lisa Ritchie & Eliza Beardslee, Coaches* ~



# COLLEGE ADVISING

## The College Application Process

### **Senior Year Timeline:**

- Sept—Dec:** Continue researching and identifying schools. (Web, guides, college rep visits, local fairs, open houses etc.) Meet with Mr. Stenson as needed.
- Oct – Jan:** Complete any outstanding testing requirements.
- Oct – Jan:** Complete and submit applications (including any school specific financial aid forms)
- October 1** FAFSA becomes available. Complete as early as possible. You will be using your 2015 tax return.
- Jan – April:** Apply for local scholarships. Information available at school, but also be on the lookout locally for scholarship opportunities.
- March – April:** Review offers of acceptance. Attend accepted students days. Visit colleges again if needed. Review financial aid awards.
- May 1** Deposit!

### **Complete any outstanding testing requirements:**

- Most seniors take the SATs or ACTs for a second time early in their senior year.
- Check the testing requirements of individual schools to be sure that you are completing all of the required tests.

If applying Early Decision, November or December will be the last opportunity to retake the SATs for them to be considered with your ED application.

### **Finalize list of schools**

- We typically recommend a list of 5 – 8 schools; this should include target and safety schools, as well as being consistent with the family's financial resources.
- We use Naviance to help manage the application process. Ask your child to share their list of prospective colleges and colleges they plan on applying to with you on Naviance.

### **Complete applications**

- The Common Application or school specific applications.
- College essay (seniors work on this during English class). Complete any school specific supplements and/or portfolio requirements.

### **Apply for Financial Aid**

- FAFSA – available after OCTOBER 1, 2016 (THIS REPRESENTS A CHANGE FROM PRIOR YEARS - YOU CAN USE YOUR 2015 TAX RETURNS)
- EFC forecasters are available to help with planning.  
<https://fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm?execution=e1s1>



**Apply for Financial Aid** *(continued)*

- All schools are required to post a Net Price Calculator on their website and these can be helpful to get a sense of YOUR estimated cost of attending a particular school.
- We'll host a financial aid evening in December

**SAT's and ACT's**

<http://sat.collegeboard.org>      <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/>

**Upcoming College Fairs:**

- **Northfield Mount Hermon College Fair** – Sunday, September 25<sup>th</sup> @ 4:00 pm
- **Hampshire County College Fair** - Tuesday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 - 8:00pm, t Smith Academy, Hatfield.

**Questions? Contact Andy Stenson, [astenson@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:astenson@fourriverscharter.org) 413 7754577 ext. 222**

**COLLEGE INFORMATION EVENING at FOUR RIVERS**

**WHEN:**      Wednesday, October 5

**WHERE:**     Four Rivers ~ the Gardner Room in the Farmhouse

**WITH:**      Andy Stenson, College Counselor

The evening will include an overview of how we support our seniors and their families throughout the college application process. We will review what supports are offered at school as well as offer suggestion as to what you can do at home. Topics covered will include:

Application Timeline, College List and **Naviance**, Testing Dates and Deadlines, Common Application and School Specific Applications, Teacher Recommendations, The School Profile and Transcripts, Financial Aid, Federal and Institutional Aid, FAFSA and CSS Forms, Local Scholarships.

There will be time for questions.

**FINANCIAL AID INFO NIGHTS ~~ Four Rivers Families are Invited:**

OCT 20      FRANKLIN COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOL is offering a MEFA College Financing Seminar with Amy Proietti from 6:00—8:00 pm at the school's Assembly Hall. All are welcome .

NOV 14      MOHAWK TRAIL REG. H.S. Financial Aid Night with David Belanger of the Smith College Financial Aid Office. Event is at 6:30 pm in the Mohawk cafeteria.

DECEMBER    FOUR RIVERS CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL will host a Financial Aid Information Night on a date to be determined.

### FOUR RIVERS ACCOUNTABILITY STATUS PLUS MCAS AND PARCC RESULTS

Four Rivers Charter Public School tenth grade students achieved 100% proficiency on the English Language Arts MCAS test for the seventh year out of the past nine. Only 2 students in 9 years have scored less than proficient. The school met all performance targets for 10th grade math and science as well.

The state indicates performance with what it calls the Progress and Performance Index (PPI), which is defined as follows: “The PPI combines information about narrowing proficiency gaps, growth, and graduation and dropout rates over multiple years into a single number. All districts, schools, and student subgroups receive an annual PPI based on improvement over a two-year period and a cumulative PPI between 0 and 100 based on four years of data.” The state is looking to see if schools can narrow achievement gaps, especially for high needs students and other subgroups of students.

This year, Four Rivers achieved a cumulative PPI of 83 for all of its students and 92 for its high needs students. These scores are the highest in Franklin County and among the highest in the valley.

	School Percentile Within School Type	Cumulative Progress & Performance Index - All students	Cumulative Progress & Performance Index - High Needs Students	Met PPI Targets for All Students & High Needs Students
Four Rivers	79	83	92	Yes
Greenfield	29	59	49	No
Gill-Montague	17	63		No
Mohawk	39	61	55	No
Frontier	54	63	57	No
Pioneer	62	64	53	No
PVPA	71	67	73	No
Chinese Imm.	98	97	81	Yes
Franklin Tech	27	74	77	Yes for high needs

This year’s scores would have earned the school a Level 1 accountability status. However, having 2 eighth grade students opt out of the science MCAS meant that our participation rate fell below the required 95%, earning the school a Level 2 status.

Four Rivers is a charter public school serving 220 students in grades 7-12. Charter schools, while autonomous in terms of budgeting, hiring, curriculum, and pedagogy, are subject to all state public school regulations, including the MCAS. Four Rivers is in its 14th year of operation. . . . .CONT ON NEXT PAGE

**NOTICE FROM DIRECTOR OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT**

**If you have a concern that your child may be in need of an evaluation, accommodations or special education services, please contact Kate Conant, Director of Academic Support at 413-775-4577, ext 217.**

Here is a summary of scores for MCAS and PARCC for 2016

Four Rivers MCAS Scores	Proficient or Higher		Advanced		Proficient		Needs Im- provement		Warning/ Failing		In- cluded	CPI	SGP	In- cluded in SGP
	SCH	STATE	SCH	STATE	SCH	STATE	SCH	STATE	SCH	STATE				
Grade and Subject														
GRADE 10 - ELA	100	91	67	47	33	45	0	6	0	3	36	100	65.0	35
GRADE 10 - MATHEMATICS	94	78	56	54	39	24	6	15	0	8	36	97.9	66.0	35
GRADE 10 - SCIENCE	88	73	44	29	44	44	13	21	0	5	32	95.3		

Note: For PARCC, level 5 represents the highest score; level 1 represents the lowest score.

Four Rivers PARCC Scores	Level 4 and 5	Level 5 %	Level 4 %	Level 3 %	Level 2 %	Level 1 %	Avg Scaled Score	Number of Stu- dents	Trans. CPI		Trans. Student Growth Percentile	
	SCH	SCH	SCH	SCH	SCH	SCH			#	Mean	#	Median
GRADE 7 ELA	78	34	44	19	3	0	774	32	32	96.9	28	61.0
GRADE 7 Math	59	3	56	38	0	3	754	34	34	89.0	28	42.0
GRADE 8 ELA	82	21	61	9	3	6	767	33	33	93.2	29	52.0
GRADE 8 Math	75	13	63	9	6	9	766	32	32	87.5	27	33.0
ALL MS GRADES	80	28	52	14	3	3	770	65	65	95.0	57	54.0
ALL MS GRADES	67	8	59	24	3	6	760	66	66	88.3	55	38.0

If you have questions about MCAS and PARCC results or student participation, contact Peter Garbus, Principal.

## NURSE'S NOTES

Just a short reminder that the school policy is for a student to see the nurse before going home ill. If your child contacts you to come get them due to illness, please remind him/her to see me. I will then contact you for pick up. Thank you for your assistance with this policy. You may contact me at: (413) 775-4577 X211 or e-mail me at:

[jmilton@fourriverscharter.com](mailto:jmilton@fourriverscharter.com)

~ Jeanne Milton, RN ~

## ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

### FUND-RAISER

Saturday, October 1, 9:00—Noon

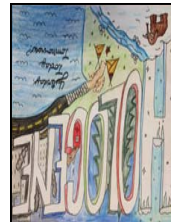
**This is a great time to clean out your garage, attic or basement. Bring your old electronics, small appliances and metal to the blue barn at the school this coming Saturday. The school is asking a donation of \$5.00 per item (maximum of \$30.00). CRT monitors and TVs will be charged by the pound as they cost more to recycle.**

**Help us make this a successful fundraiser!**

## ACADEMIC CALENDAR REVISED

Check the school web site for recent revisions to the Academic Calendar. The dates of Semester 2 Student Led Conferences have changed.

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  
248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301



### SILVER MAPLE SURPRISE



When the old silver maple out front came down in September, a 15 year old bee hive was discovered in the hollow trunk, along with tons of honey and 200,000 bees.



Local bee-keepers David and Nick Moscaritolo rescued the bees and relocated them to hives in Shelburne. Amazing to watch. Many thanks!

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20254"