

Four Rivers Currents

December 2017

From the Principal's Desk...

FOUR RIVERS RECOMMENDED FOR RENEWAL

We've earned ourselves another five years! We have just learned that the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education has recommended the unconditional renewal of our charter for another five years. In addition to the statements shared last month from the EL Education credentialing process, what exactly has the state affirmed?

From all available evidence — site visits, annual reports, MCAS scores — the state determined that Four Rivers has met expectations for the following criteria:

Mission and Key Design Elements: The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.

Access and Equity: The school ensures access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.

Compliance: The school is in compliance with the terms of its charter and applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Dissemination: The school provides innovative models for replication and best practices to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located.

Student Performance: The school consistently meets state student performance standards as defined by the statewide accountability system.

Governance: Members of the board of trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.

The Charter School Office, part of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, prepared a Summary of Review which pulled together all of our data. That summary shows that Four Rivers has been faithfully delivering the program we said we would and that our students are achieving good results. From the Commissioner's memo to the Board:

"As demonstrated in the attached Summary of Review, the school is implementing its mission and key design elements, implements a Recruitment and Retention plan, disseminated its best practices, is organizationally viable, and met a majority of measures contained in its accountability plan. Throughout the charter term, the school has maintained rates of attrition that are lower than the median of comparison schools for all students and high needs students."

Here is a link to that [SUMMARY OF REVIEW](#) if you'd like to get into the details.

One more note from the Commissioner's memo: the Department received a letter in opposition to the school's renewal from the superintendents of Mahar, Frontier, and Mohawk stating that FRCPS does not offer unique programming and citing the harmful fiscal effect of charter school enrollment on local school districts. Here is the Commissioner's reply:

"I am sympathetic to the challenges faced by rural school districts with declining enrollment. The Department will shortly be publishing a report analyzing their challenges in more depth. But given that the Legislature has prescribed very specific limits on how much a school district can spend on charter tuition, and given that FRCPS's sending districts are all well within those statutory limits, I believe the renewal decision must focus on the school's performance."



Peter Garbus, Principal

That performance has been strong, and so the recommendation is for renewal.

Grade 7 News

EXPEDITION UPDATE!

Since October, the 7th graders have been considering the question **HOW DO WE LEARN WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE WE WERE HERE?**, honing their powers of observation and learning how to support inferences with evidence. We'll be working toward some culminating projects and products as the semester and expedition draw to a close. Stay tuned to see how these historians and scientists use their storytelling skills to show you all they've discovered!



Left: In science we tried our hand at the archaeology skill of mending pottery in order to make inferences about the shape and use of vessels.



Right: How can we read the rocks in order to learn what forces and events shaped our local topography? We practiced our rock identification skills at the GCC rock park to learn how.



Below: On Archaeology Day, Humanities class went back in time to 1929 to Wadi an-Natuf where we reenacted a dig with British archaeologist Dorothy Garrod to find out more about the mysterious Natufians.

Left:

Our hunter-gatherer role play helped us to think about what it took to survive, over 10,000 years ago, as a small band of ancient humans.



Grade 8 News

SCIENCE — *Mr. Guillaume*

Ever read a book that mentions how heavy some famous landmark is - like the Great Pyramid at Giza weighs almost 6,000,000 tons? (That's 6×10^6 if you're curious.)

Eighth graders have been exploring all that can be done with the concept of density. In a math-heavy exploration, students have become proficient at being able to predict the mass of an object without using a scale as well as measure the volume of an object using only the change in mass. After perfecting their technique indoors, they took their skills outside. They have estimated the volume of the mass of an adopted large rock on campus. They have measured a comfortable amount of mass they can personally lift. Now, the challenge! Can they successfully attach boards and ropes to their rock so that a group of students, with a known comfortable lift capacity, can safely and comfortably lift the rock?



Density in action as rocks are elevated!

SOCIAL STUDIES - *Ms. Cummins*

An Investigation of the Fall of the Roman Empire

Over the past month eighth graders have been busy practicing their skills as social scientists and historians investigating the Roman Empire and its demise. Using primary and secondary sources students have practiced research, note-taking and critical thinking to answer our key questions:

What does a society need to thrive?

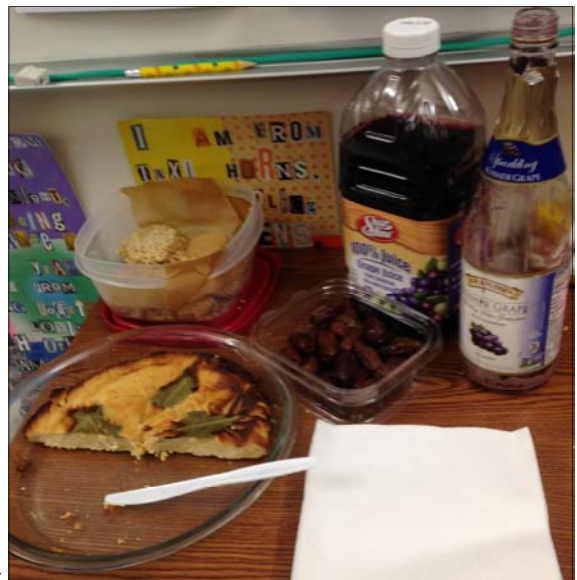
What causes a society to break down?

How can we connect the past and the present?

The investigation of these questions overlap and relates to the work that the eighth graders have been doing in English with Ms. MacNeish on survival and society in William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*.

As a conclusion to our study, students wrote an epitaph, eulogy or elegy for the Roman Empire. These final products, many in the form of songs or poems, were shared in our gallery walk and sing-out on December 5th which included ancient Roman cheesecake, cookies and drink.

Up next: Medieval Europe!



DIVISION 2 NEWS

LEARNING HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE — *Ms. Ritchie, Ms. Hobbs and Ms. Beardslee*

On Thursday, November 30th, the tenth graders spent the day at UMass to kickoff their Social Studies / English / Spanish "Do Something!" expedition. They started the morning meeting with Dr. John Bracey, a professor in the African-American Studies department, who discussed his experience as an activist during the civil rights movement. The tenth graders then divided into small groups and interviewed different activist groups on campus, including Engineers Without Borders, the UMass Republicans, the organizers of the permaculture garden, the graduate student union, and the Center for Education Policy and Activism. Over the next several weeks, the students will be researching topics they are passionate about; they will investigate the people who have taken action on topics in the past, and they will develop a plan to "do something" about their issue today.



Above:

A group of students after their interview with members of CEPA (Center for Education Policy and Advocacy).

Right:

Two student groups pose with Dr. Bracey of the African-American Studies Department at UMass.

MATH — *Ms. Pratt*

Ninth grade:

In algebra class students are beginning to apply systems of equations to real world questions. They are writing equations based on research and then solving the system of equations to answer their questions. The questions are based around climate change which corresponds with their work in science. Students will end the project by creating a visual to share their knowledge with the wider community.

Tenth grade:

In geometry class students are working in teams to solve complicated geometric proofs. They must combine all of the knowledge they have learned so far this year to justify their steps and demonstrate the soundness of their thinking. They are working in teams and getting feedback from other groups. They have been very successful at trying new things that they are not yet confident with as well as pushing each other to try their hardest!

DIVISION 3 NEWS

Division 3 students reflected on their experiences during Intensives Week just before Thanksgiving:

GIVE AND TAKE: We gave trees and plants to community gardens in the Springfield area. Then we helped out a community garden in Northampton harvesting ten chickens. So we gave, and then we took. We went to Home Depot and bought over 200 flower bulbs. We planted them in Springfield, so they'll come up in the spring as a surprise for the garden. ~ Raine L. (right)



COLLEGE BOUND: We went way up north, driving through a snowstorm (which was my favorite). One thing that surprised me was that some schools are so small they don't have any sports teams, maybe only two intramural sports, but no competition. Students visiting colleges should know that tour guides are always overboard happy! There was one school, Champlain College, which was almost the adult version of Four Rivers! ~ Chelsea P.



MODERN ART EXTRAVAGANZA: On this intensive we went to art museums and learned about all the different styles of modern art. We applied these styles to our own art. I particularly liked Impressionism because the colors are unlike any colors I've ever seen in my life and they're super whimsical, magical, and nice! It surprised me that there was graphic art at the Museum of Fine Art. Seeing contemporary and modern art woven together and in such an old, formal space was surprising. ~ Marina M. (left)

TRACKING: The tracking intensive involved a lot of hiking. We didn't see any live animals, but we saw lots of tracks. The Quabbin was awesome. The most memorable tracks were the moose tracks. In one area the entire mountainside was trampled by moose tracks. It was clear that there was lots of moose activity over a spread out area. A highlight was doing some outdoor cooking. On Monday we did a lot of tracking, then at the end we cooked over an open fire, roasting hotdogs with sticks. Someone even made a pancake in a tiny cup over the fire with tinfoil to cover it and a twiggy fire on top so it baked from the top and bottom. We also tried some roast goose which was interesting. It tasted (as the saying goes) just like chicken! ~ Toby F.



ADMISSIONS and ENROLLMENT NEWS — Fall 2018

SIBLINGS OF CURRENT STUDENTS:

- Siblings of current student are given preference in our lottery each year.
- A sibling of a current student who wishes to enroll next fall, for the 2018-19 school year, must complete an admission application and submit it by the due date—February 26, 2018.
- Applications are available on the school's web site under Admissions, from Ms. Taylor at school, or at our Admissions Information Sessions:

Saturdays: January 13 and February 3, 10:00 to 11:30 am

Wednesdays: January 24 and February 14, 7:00 to 8:30 pm

LOOKING FOR PARENT VOLUNTEERS: We are looking for a few current parents to help with the Admissions Information Sessions. Are you available on one or more of the above dates? Contact Leslie Taylor — ltaylor@fourriverscharter.org.

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 please see the nurse. Thank you for your assistance in observing school policy.

Wishing all of you a safe and Happy Holiday vacation. ~ Jeanne Milton, RN

FOUR RIVERS SUSTAINABILITY FUND CAMPAIGN 2017-2018

Four Rivers Charter Public School is in its 15th year of providing learning opportunities that take students beyond our classroom walls. This month's Currents highlights some recent student experiences in Learning Expeditions and Intensives, We need your donation to help support these two programs that make our school what it is.

Go to the home page of the school web site and make a donation today OR click on this link:
<http://fourriverscharter.org/sus.htm>

*Thank
You*



COLLEGE ADVISING

Wondering where our seniors are applying to college? Well, so far students in the class of 2018 have applied to:

College of the Atlantic, Bay Path College, Becker College, Bennington College, Berklee College of Music, California State – East Bay and L.A., Green Mountain College, Hampshire College, UMass-Amherst & UMass-Lowell, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Mount Holyoke College, University of New Hampshire, University of North Carolina, Northeastern, Oberlin College, Pace University, University of Rhode Island, Rochester Institute of Technology, San Diego State, San Francisco State, San Jose State, Simmons College, Skidmore, Smith, Sonoma State, Springfield Technical Community College, St. Olaf's College, Sterling College, The New School, US Military Academies (Army, Navy, Air Force), and the University of Washington.

AND, some schools have already said **YES!** to our students:

Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences, Sterling College, Bay Path College.

****** Financial Aid ****IMPORTANT**** Financial Aid ****IMPORTANT******

Families of college bound seniors are reminded that deadlines for financial aid applications are upon us. Deadlines for financial aid forms are often the same as application deadlines, but this is not always the case. Check the websites for specific schools.

There are two forms that need to be considered. The FAFSA should be completed by everyone who wants to be considered for financial aid. We encourage ALL families to submit the FAFSA. This is completed online at the following location:

<https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

There are a number of locally hosted FAFSA Sundays that provide an opportunity to get help with completing and filing the FAFSA. Information is available here:

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

Also, the financial aid office at GCC will assist any family with completion of the FAFSA.

The second form, required by many private schools, is the CSS Profile and information is available here:

<http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>

Families should also check the websites of individual colleges to determine the specific financial aid requirements. Some schools have additional requirements for select scholarship opportunities.

Questions ? Email astenson@frcps.org.

MORE Intensives — Winter in the Whites

A group of students headed to the White Mountains for the winter experience of a lifetime! They stayed at the Highland Center in Crawford Notch, NH, and spent their days hiking, exploring, reflecting, and playing team-building games, as well as eating a lot of food. They learned the basics of “Leave No Trace”, map reading skills, and trail etiquette, as well as how to hike safely with a group. And there was snow!



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

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
248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301