

Four Rivers Currents

April / May 2017

From the Principal's Desk...

WHAT DO STUDENTS KNOW? WHAT CAN THEY DO? ASSESSMENTS AHEAD

With April break behind us, we suddenly see the month of May and the rush of another school year's end. We set out in August with certain goals in mind, things we wanted to accomplish in our own teaching and ways we hoped our students would grow. How did we do? What did our students learn this year?

To answer such questions, we assess student learning in many different ways. Throughout the year, in every unit, we use formative assessments to help students reach the learning targets we set. Formative assessments are aimed at giving students feedback on how close they are to hitting a target, where they might be off, and coaching to help them make adjustments to get closer. Homework assignments, pop quizzes, first drafts, peer assessments all check a student's understanding during the learning process, without concluding anything "final" about what a student knows or can do. EL Education calls this Assessment *FOR* Learning.

With May's arrival, we turn attention to summative assessments—Assessment *OF* Learning. We remove some of the scaffolding previously provided to see what students can do on their own. We might ask students to apply their understanding to new contexts or new sets of data to see if they can transfer concepts or skills. Students might face outside audiences, people they don't know, or standardized tests devised by strangers. Here are just a few examples of the summative assessments our students face—opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skill—as this year winds down:

Seventh, eighth, and tenth graders take MCAS tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics, with eighth and tenth also taking MCAS in Science.

Twelfth graders present their Senior Expeditions on Thursday, May 25th to audiences of students, families, faculty, and community guests.

Many eleventh graders take their first round of SAT or ACT tests in preparation for the college application process next fall.

Tenth graders create vignettes about war and perform them on the National Mall in Washington, DC, at the end of this month. Dress rehearsals are Friday, May 26 from 1:30-3:00; the public is welcome.

Ninth graders complete I-Search papers, which ask them to research and write about a topic of personal interest.

Through Passage Presentations, eighth graders reflect on growth, challenges, and their readiness for high school.

Seventh graders participate in a Socratic seminar discussion of whether humans are a part of nature or apart from nature, demonstrating the ability to form ideas based on evidence and conceptual understanding from throughout the year.

Our faculty has its own forms of summative assessments, as well. One is called a Quality Work Protocol. This process asks every teacher to pick one assignment from the year with 3 examples of student work that met the learning targets for that

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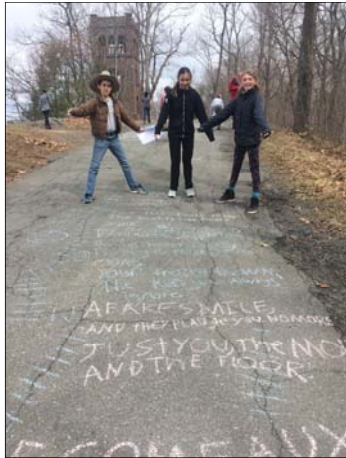


Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

In humanities classes, seventh grade students learned about sound devices and figurative language in poetry, and then tried writing their own original pieces. In celebration of their effort and National Poetry Month, 7th graders completed fieldwork at Poet's Seat Tower in Greenfield on Thursday, April 13.



In the above photos, 7th graders read or perform their poems at Poet's Seat Tower:

Clockwise from top — Jayden shares his poem with the 7th grade from the Tower; Evan, Nayana and Julia pose in front of Evan's poem; and River rides off on his unicycle as part of his poetry performance.

13 by Tove

They leave home before the sun
has risen.

A parade of blank faces wandering the streets
Towards the dark factories to work. The sound of their footsteps
on gravel, a giant centipede crawling through the
town.

The machines loom up over their heads
Casting shadows as they stare down at them.
Clang! Clang! Their sharp teeth eat the
plastic like a predator and it's prey.
They work for hours, the bright lights
Shining on them.

The constant humming of the belt
And roar of the machines left in
Their head to play again and again.
In a never ending loop. The smell of
Chemicals lingering in their noses.

All day they work so we can have more clothes and toys,
They come home at night with blistered
Hands and sore feet to help cook food for their
Family because their parents are out, still working.
The meal is tasteless like all the others.

They fall into bed and dream of far off lands where
They could sleep all day and not have to work.

And here we are in such a land on such a day.
What if the clothes on our backs were made by someone older
Than 13, who got paid what they deserve.

13,

13.

What if tears didn't fall down their sweat stained cheeks
What if their throats didn't scratch from breathing dust filled air
What if they didn't have to work for careless men and women
Who take the profit those children make.
What if someone cared to change their lives
What if they got to play in the sun and breathe clear air.

13,

13.

Grade 8 News

HUMANITIES

The Friday before April break, the 8th grade celebrated studying the Renaissance and reading *Romeo and Juliet* with a performance by and workshop with the **New Repertory Theatre's Classic Repertory Company**. Leading up to that final celebration was weeks of investigation into the life of a Renaissance innovator, writing, practicing, and giving a Renaissance speech about that innovator, reading, acting out, and analyzing *Romeo and Juliet*, finding and studying vocabulary, finding evidence in the play to back up a thesis in a five paragraph essay, and relating all of this to ourselves and modern day society! It was a huge and interesting adventure through the Renaissance and *Romeo and Juliet*.

And now we move on to studying the Hero's Journey through reading books, listening to stories, and watching movies. We will also work on an Upstanders Expedition where we will interview and make posters about community members who make a difference. We look forward to the end of the year and 8th Grade Passage!



These photos are of the 8th graders acting out Romeo and Juliet, and wearing authentic Renaissance attire, of course.



Got Cardboard?

The 8th grade is working on designing and building solar-powered model vehicles, but we're already starting to look ahead toward the final project of the year: constructing boats from cardboard. If you have LARGE, sturdy sheets of cardboard in good shape at your home or workplace (e.g. pallet separator sheets, boxes from large appliances), we'd love to turn them into seaworthy vessels! Please drop them off in the Blue Barn.

DIVISION 2 NEWS

MATHEMATICS

The tenth graders have been exploring the exciting world of probability and discovering how to use analytical tools to create a Fair Fair! First, we explored how to calculate the expected value of a game. This information told us, on average, how much a participant would win when playing a game. We wanted to host a *Fair Fair* for the 7th graders, so we needed to have games that allowed the 7th graders to win and lose. The students worked together to decide which games would have a winning expected value and which would have a losing expected value and by how much the students would win and lose. This created a *Fair Fair*, in which the 7th graders would win as much as they lost, (on average)! At the fair, the 7th graders recorded their results from each game so we could see if the results of our fair were actually fair! It ended up that in both sections of the Fair Fair, the 7th graders won more than they lost!

In other news, the 9th graders have been working tirelessly on an documentary which will be broadcast on GCTV. More information to come in future Currents.



Photos, clockwise starting above:

Tevin explaining how his game works

Amelia at her game table

7th graders visit the *Fair Fair* in the Common Room



DIVISION 3 NEWS

JUNIOR INTERSHIPS

During the week of April 10–14, juniors engaged in week long internships. Students began the process in Junior Seminar with Mr. Stenson, who explained the process. “The junior internship program begins with each student completing a career oriented interest inventory. Based on this, students explore different fields that match their skills, interests and values. Each student then identifies two or three areas of interest and begins the process of researching and reaching out to places and professionals in the field. Once a suitable match is found, students typically meet with their potential mentor, a pre-internship agreement is crafted, and internships happen.”

Many students have a good idea of what they are interested in doing. Juliet Margola (top photo) reported, “I like baking, so I started wondering, where are all the local bakeries? She was placed at Shelburne Falls Coffee Roasters in Greenfield. Her daily routine basically consisted of, you guessed it, baking! Juliet remarked on how welcoming the staff was and sees herself pursuing this as a potential career.



WMUA, the student-run radio station at the University of Massachusetts, was the choice for Milou Rigollaud. His internship provided him with hands on opportunities creating public service announcements (PSA’s) or advertisements for non-commercial events. He researched events, created, recorded, and aired his messages. He was also able to review the 7 to 10 new albums that arrived at the radio station weekly. Milou listened to the albums, researched the bands, and in the end, wrote a review using his own musical background, likes, and dislikes. What an amazing opportunity. His biggest takeaway was that it was “awesome that students could completely run their own radio station.”



Abby Milewski, a lover of all things equine, was able to intern with Stephanie Vassar, DVM, of Great Falls Equine and Veterinary Services, in Gill, MA. Abby’s days consisted of traveling with Dr. Vassar to her clients’ homes to provide spring immunizations and dental check ups; yes, horses have dentists too! Abby’s highlight was treating her own horse.



Elliot Baker shadowed the crew at the Greenfield Water Pollution Control Plant. For Elliot, his days were very routine. He would arrive at 8 a.m., complete the morning routine of checking all pumps, and take water samples throughout the system. After the 9 o’clock break, the morning pump checks were completed and then he headed to the lab where the water samples were tested for bacteria and oxygen levels. His highlight was tightening the bolts that secured the pumps, an integral safety check.

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assignment. With the accompanying assignment sheet and assessment rubric laid out next to the sample work, teachers make observations of the work looking for patterns related to high quality—complexity, craftsmanship, and authenticity. The final step is to examine observed patterns against the last time we did the protocol to determine whether there appears to be progress. We also complete an Implementation Review at the end of every year, looking at how well we've implemented EL Education practices. Our intent is to improve every single year, and these two assessments help us determine if we have or not.

Over time in our school, we want students to experience—and be prepared for—increasing levels of independence, externally defined standards, and public performance presented by summative assessments. When they stand up to present their Senior Expeditions, we want them to speak with confidence and expertise. When they sit for standardized tests, we want them to demonstrate understanding and skill the outside world values. We provide a supportive, safe, close-knit educational environment in order to get students ready for a slightly colder, wider world they'll face when they move on from Four Rivers.

~ Peter Garbus, Principal ~

ULTIMATE NEWS

The **Boys Varsity team** has begun its season with 5 wins and 2 losses, and going 2 - 2 in our first tournament at NMH. Our home tournament at GCC is May 6 for BV, GV, GJV and May 7 for BMS and BJV. Come out and watch our school teams participate at a high level. ~ Terry Plotkin, Coach ~

This year's **Boys Middle School Ultimate team** is doing exceptionally well. We went undefeated at the NMH JV Tournament winning the C Pool. The Team is lead by a very talented group of 8th graders. Their ability to play as a team, score goals and defend as well as mentor the up and coming 7th grade class has led to the team's success on the field. Our record is 7-0. We invite you all to come out, see some awesome Ultimate, and support your Middle School team! ~ David Campolo, Coach ~

The **Girls Varsity team** has been dominating their season this year. They are currently undefeated and have a very good chance to do well in their four upcoming tournaments. This has been quite the year for the girls varsity, and we are all excited to keep playing hard! ~ Dovrah Plotkin, Coach ~

The Four Rivers **Summer Ultimate Intensive** will be held June 26 - 30. This is a great program to have some fun in the summer, stay active, and improve on your skills. We will have boys' and girls' separate sections. Information can be found on the school web site or go to fourriverssummerultimate.weebly.com.

Feel free to contact Terry Plotkin with any questions at tplotkin@fourriverscharter.org

NURSE'S NOTES

We are finally enjoying spring! Along with better weather comes an increase in injuries.

As a reminder: any student evaluated by a licensed medical professional for ANY injury MUST have a signed medical note from the professional. The note should be explicit about the level of participation allowed upon returning to school/work/sports. Also, proper shoes are mandated for all sports. "Flip-flops" are not acceptable.

~ Jeanne Milton, RN ~

COLLEGE ADVISING

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS EVENING

In April, Four Rivers hosted our annual College Admissions Information Evening with Karen Kristof, Associate Director of Admissions at Smith College. For those of you who weren't able to attend, here are a few key take-away points:

- The single most important item for college admission is the student's transcript. It's a record of academic performance throughout high school and the best indicator of likely success in college.
- In addition to grades, the rigor of the courses and the student's performance within the context of their class is most important. The school profile (which is available on the FRCPS website) helps colleges understand Four Rivers and to contextualize individual student performance relative to their peers.
- Test scores (ACT and SAT) are taken into consideration at most, but not all, schools. Different schools have different testing requirements. There are hundreds of test optional schools, see fairtest.org for a listing of those schools.
- Many schools offer Early Decision and Early Action programs in addition to regular admission. There are different deadlines for these programs, and these deadlines will start to come around quickly once senior year begins.
- Plan to do something productive with your summer – work, volunteer, travel, read. Admissions offices like to see that you are active and engaged and make good use of your time.
- Application Essays – use the essay to tell the admission office something about you as a person that is not otherwise available from your application. Start working on your essay over the summer before senior year.
- Take advantage of the Net Price Calculators that are posted on every college's website to get an estimate of what it would cost for your child to go to a particular school. *Going to College Without Going Broke*, published by Princeton Review, is a good print resource for financial planning.
- Visit some colleges. Even if you can't get to visit colleges that you are really interested in, visiting different types of schools close to home can be helpful. The valley's five Colleges (Amherst, Hampshire, Smith and Mt. Holyoke Colleges and UMass-Amherst), Worcester area colleges (Clark, WPI, Worcester State, UMass Worcester) and Boston colleges provide lots of opportunities close to home.

SAT TESTING

Juniors are reminded that they should plan on taking the SAT's on Saturday, June 3rd. Our recommendation is that students take the SAT WITH THE WRITING component. Families need to register at The College Board website (www.collegeboard.org). While we will be offering some test preparation in both English and math classes, juniors are encouraged to study independently as well. The free online resources offered through Kahn Academy, and available at The College Board website, are a good option. Fee waivers are available for those families who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Questions ? Email Mr. Stenson : astenson@frcps.org.

TECHNOLOGY

This year in the Division 2 and 3 Technology tributary, students learned how to edit video using Adobe Premiere and create documentaries that had a 5 minute limit.

Towards the end of the semester we became aware of a short documentary film contest held by a group called "Whole Pictures", seeking movies by students that focus on empathy and address world problems in a positive light. We submitted our students' movies that fit the contest criteria, and our own Caelan Lamere, grade 11, won 2nd place and a prize of \$200! His film is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IU4C1h-wQ2E>. Other student films can also be seen at Four Rivers' Youtube channel at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXiJ-a_VfWZchjrVvQzqTXQ

This semester Div 2 and 3 are using a Computer Aided Design program to turn their ideas into 3 dimensional objects using the school's new 3D printer. Along with designing tools to assist people with various physical needs, the students worked in groups to create small scale bridges which will be entered in an end-of-the-year stress test contest. (Pictured: A bridge, an iPhone holder, a steering wheel grip, and a couple of fidget toys.)

~ Dan Lederer, Technology Coordinator and Teacher



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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.



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