

Four Rivers Currents

November 2017

From the Principal's Desk...FOUR RIVERS EARNS EL EDUCATION CREDENTIAL

At the recent national gathering in Chicago of EL school leaders and teachers, Four Rivers was celebrated for achieving status as an EL Education Credentialed School. This was the culmination of months (and years) of work by faculty and staff to put together a portfolio and presentation.

On Friday, September 29, Susan Durkee and I sat with a panel that included two national leaders of EL Education (the new name for Expeditionary Learning) and two of our local EL leaders. With personal stories shared by teachers Bethany Hobbs, Alex Wilson, and Andy Patari and by seniors Taylor Nichols, Rhi Stafford-Wolfram, Tim Stuart, and Michael Hill, we presented claims and evidence captured in a [SCHOOL PORTFOLIO](#) (linked on our homepage).

We hope you'll take a look through the portfolio itself, but I'd also like to share a number of quotes from a letter summarizing what the panel and additional reviewers saw in our portfolio and presentation:

- "Four Rivers has recently achieved status as an EL Education Credentialed School, which honors schools that have achieved significant student impact results across our expanded definition of student success- mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high quality work. Their remarkable results are detailed in their credentialing portfolio. Four Rivers was one of six EL Education school partners celebrated at our National Conference in Chicago for creating rigorous learning environments that get remarkable results in these three areas."
- "We believe that Four Rivers is a national model for the possibilities of public education, especially in its success serving low-income rural students and students with special academic needs."
- "Teacher-built curriculum and student work from Four Rivers has been used by EL Education for almost 15 years as exemplary models to inform teachers across and beyond our network."
- "Students at Four Rivers score above the state in math and English on state standardized tests, as well as track their growth in habits of scholarship, own their learning through student-led conferences and passage presentations, and produce high quality work through projects and products that align standards-based learning with real world issues and learning connected to their community. As their credentialing portfolio shows, the growth of students from 7th grade to 12th grade is remarkable, a standard for the nation."
- "The curriculum at Four Rivers is unique, in that the staff design cross departmental, project-based learning opportunities that require mastery of academic standards, purposeful support of academic mindset and character skills (such as responsibility, courage, perseverance and integrity), and result in products that serve and educate the real world."
- "Four River students not only shine through test scores, their credentialing portfolio demonstrates that they have become more effective learners, ethical people, and active contributors to their community and world."
- "Being a credentialed school, we have also asked Four Rivers to now consider becoming a mentor school and a site for future site seminars--an opportunity for local and national schools to visit and learn about the best practices of this school."
- "As a national non-profit school improvement organization that partners with district and charter public schools, particularly schools in low-income communities, the most



Peter Garbus, Principal

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Grade 7 News

PIECES OF THE PAST EXPEDITION — Ms. Dunnington

Our Pieces of the Past expedition took us to the Green River Swimming Area, where students were joined by Abenaki educator, ethnobotanist and artist Judy Dow. Students were challenged to look at the land and use critical thinking tools to figure out why it is shaped the way it is today. They used a variety of lenses to look at the land, including an ancient Pocumtuc story told by Judy Dow. Afterwards, Judy Dow helped the students make "story maps" that students would then use to retell the story of the Green River. Here are some of the things they said:

"People lived here for a long time when the Ice Age glaciers were melting 11,000 years ago. The story about Lake Hitchcock and Mount Sugarloaf is told by the Pocumtuc to explain where the mountain of Sugar Loaf came from. It tells about Lake Hitchcock." -Naomi Kulp

"[With Ms. Locke], we were drawing how far down the river went. We were watching the river move on like it was a regular day. We weren't touching the river or throwing any sediments into it. This is because we just wanted to see how the river was at that time, and not change anything about the river. We wondered where the water came from and why in some parts it's faster, and others are slower." -Julian Rodriguez

"My felt art piece was a bird eye's view of the car graveyard. The brown is the rusty cars, the green is the treetops and some plants, and the red, orange, and yellow are what represent the fire that I imagined happening. I think that someone pushed them down a hill because they didn't want the cars anymore or maybe they thought it would look cool. If those were still in half decent condition, they could still be worth a handsome sum, which leads me to believe that a few dozen years ago they were put there." -Avery Keller

"Judy told us about intervalles. Intervals are the flat grassy part of land dipping in with the river. They were also called common pots because they have the best fertile soil to grow all the berries and vegetables. So everyone in the tribe would go pick and eat there. I particularly like the idea of that, so that is what I did my story map on. I made flowers to represent food that grew on the common pot. Another reason I chose the Meandering River with the intervals was because people were not the only ones who enjoy the sweet tender berries. Humans share the common pot with animals. Animals would play in the open ground and feed on the fresh berries. On that day we did a lot of super cool things. Hopefully we get to do a lot more field work like this one." - Eve Macek

"We have learned that you don't have to read a textbook to learn about history. Instead, we can go outside and observe nature and infer what had happened not only before we were here, but before humans were here. I have found this topic interesting and I hope to learn more about it." - Bre Daehne

PHOTOS: Left — Lilly finishes her art piece, a story map rendered in felt.



Right — students explore an area near the Green River



Grade 8 News

HUMANITIES — *Ms. MacNeish*

The 8th grade kicked off our Survival unit by heading into the woods on fieldwork. The class was split into three groups which each had the challenge of obtaining fire, potable water, medicine for scurvy, and edible food. Groups were given specific resources which they could share, trade, or keep. Although in many ways frustrating and exciting, the exercise taught the 8th graders a lot about communication, leadership, the individual and society, and a little bit about what the group in *Lord of the Flies* might have felt like as they found themselves stranded on a deserted island!



BARRILETES — *Mr. Guillaume*

Eighth graders recently finished an expedition centered around what they are learning in Spanish class about the Barriletes of Guatemala. These large kites acted as the focus for learning about radial symmetry in Math and learning about the particulate nature of air pressure in science. Students also continued their learning about experimental design by collecting data about the effectiveness of tail design, and they included the Barriletes in their English and Social Studies classes.



Last Friday, November 3rd, students had a chance to show off their engineering and artistic work to the school. They presented at an all-school meeting, reading their messages of hope that were printed on their kites (in both English and Spanish) as well as a bilingual presentation on the nature of the Barriletes. After the presentation, students took their kites outside to share the beauty and excitement of seeing their creations take to the sky.

DIVISION 2 NEWS

HISTORY — *Bethany Hobbs*

9th grade US History 1

Fieldwork brought the ninth grade to the riverside section of Turners Falls with David Brule of the Nolumbeka Project. Students are analyzing the perspectives portrayed by local histories about the early colonies of Massachusetts. The Nolumbeka Project works to promote a deeper, broader and more accurate depiction of the history of the Native Americans/American Indians of New England before and during European contact and colonization. (Photo—David Brule with students).



10th grade US History 2

What is a livable wage? After a case study on the Pullman Palace Car Company strike and boycott of the railways in the 1890's, students are asked what it will take to prevent an uprising like this from happening again. They are reading *Nickel and Dime*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, and investigating current statistics to determine what might improve the class divide today.

FARMING EXPEDITION

Ninth graders visited several local farms and non-profit organizations to get more information for their food manifestos. The students were split up into three groups and each group went to three different spots. Some students went to the Food Bank of Western Mass. to learn about ways our community helps support people who are food insecure. They also visited Wheel-View Farm which raises grass-fed beef. Another group visited the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at UMass to learn more about permaculture and also the use of technology in growing food. The last group visited the Community Development Corp. (CDC) in Greenfield where they got to see the new freezer which will be freezing local broccoli to be consumed this winter by the students who buy school lunch. Students also visited Bartsow's Farm in Hadley where they got a tour of the methane digester. You are all invited to come to our culminating event on November 14th to hear the 9th grade talk more about this fieldwork and share their food manifestos.



YOU ARE INVITED !

Do My Food Choices Matter?

WHO: Students and their Families; Friends and Neighbors interested in Food Issues; Local Farmers

WHEN: Tuesday, November 14th from 6:00 to 7:30 pm (Students arrive 5:45 for set-up)

WHERE: Four Rivers Charter Public School—Common Room

BRING: If possible, please bring a Pot-Luck Dish to share that features some local ingredients.

DIVISION 3 NEWS

SENIORS — ENERGY EXPEDITION UPDATE

The kick-off of the seniors' energy expedition started with excitement and curiosity. The Common Room was buzzing like a bee hive as students joined in hands-on activities exploring "mystery power sources." Hand-held generators were spun, lighting up bulbs simulating the workings of each group's mystery power source. Next, students watched a variety of documentary films about energy. There followed work on energy Systems Thinking Maps, helping the student focus on how energy interacts with other constituents of the system.

Fast forward several weeks, and student chose topics to research in small groups. The goal was to convince their classmates, the class of 2018, that their topic will be the most compelling for this year's documentary film. Some topics were: Massachusetts Leading the Way; Carbon Taxation; Transportation; Urban vs Rural; Block Island Wind; and Hydraulic Fracturing in Pennsylvania. Student groups pitched their topics and then voted. Chosen as the most accessible and most interesting, and with the strongest future impact, was "Block Island Wind." The class of 2018 looks forward to seeing all of you in February at the Garden Cinema for the screening.



JUNIORS

Junior have jumped in with both feet! In modern world history, they are studying world revolutions, current independence movements and the effects of nationalism on nations and their citizens. They are honing their writing skills by developing their own current issues blogs.

In chemistry class, a trip to BigY had students searching food labels for ionic compounds to understand if and how often they are present in food. In Algebra 2, students just finished a unit on functions and permutations and are now working on solving and graphing inequalities.

In English, students have chosen from a list of titles to read. In facilitated, guided conversations, they are gaining the skills needed to give focused feedback on literary analysis essays.

SUCCESSFUL SEASON FOR CROSS COUNTRY TEAM — *Ms. Beardslee & Ms. Ritchie*

The Cross Country team finished their season with an amazingly successful day on the race course at the Putney School on Wednesday, 11/1. Boys placed third overall! Mac Sloan-Anderson was 2nd place (17:46) and Eli Smith was 4th. Toby Hughes, Charles Dean and Jayden Skelly all placed in the top 25! Rufus Seward (23:15) was 28th and Dylan Dubay (23:16) was 29th. Josh Lavigne, Noah Pitcoff, Manny Ferrer and Gavin Slaymaker raced incredibly strongly as well and all placed in the top 55! On the girls side, Sophie Jacobson-Carroll was 37th (32:41) and Tove Schweitzer was 38th (32:32). Olivia Vasar (32:45) was 39th, Katie Deso (33:52) was 41st, Skylar Craig (34:16) was 42nd and Aliza Paysnick (40:18) was 46th! Please congratulate these courageous athletes when you see them! Thanks to all for your lovely support throughout this 2017 season! ~



SOCCKER SEASON ENDS WITH A SPLASH

The boys varsity went into the finals of the RVAL Soccer league undefeated beating PVPA and Charlemont in the tournament to get there. On a rain filled Sunday at Stonleigh Burnham we lost to Eaglehill 2-1 in a disappointing end to an excellent season. As we have all season, the boys handled adversity the same way they did victory — with good sportsmanship. It was the last Four Rivers soccer game for Milou Rigollaud, Tim Stuart, Luka Newcombe, Mac Almeida, Kiernan Crough, Keegan Hamilton, and Josh Gibson. They are a classy and spirited bunch. The photo shows the varsity team during an earlier home game during a downpour.

Coach ~ Terry Plotkin

The girls varsity soccer team ended the season in 3rd place with an 8-4 record. This is an amazing feat considering we lost 10 soccer players from last season and gained 5 new players and had a new, first year goalie. It's been a solid building year and we're looking forward to having a strong year next year with this team. Congratulations! ~ *Coach Amanda McNamara*



photo by Charlie Olchowski

NURSE'S NOTES

We all have a better day when we eat breakfast. Many students tell me they don't have time for breakfast. We want to remind parents and kids that Four Rivers offers a low-cost breakfast available to all students, from 7:30 to 7:55 every morning. The full cost of \$1.70 (or reduced price 40 cents) is billed to your child's account. The menu varies, but includes juice, milk, fruit, cereal bars, bagels, French toast, pancakes and cereal. You should eat! ~ *Jeanne Milton, RN*

DIVISION 2 5K — WELLNESS — *Ms. McNamara*

Ninth and tenth graders ran a 5k in October as a culminating event for their cardiovascular unit. This proved to be a stretch for many, as they set goals and trained for the event. The race was a preset course (FRCPS XCountry course) that lapped our campus and the GCC campus and back. The overall top 3 runners were Henry Zwart (1st, grade 9), Avani Richardson (2nd, grade 9) and Evan Leaf, (3rd, grade 10). The top 3 finishers for girls were Alexis Dimitriou (7th, grade 10), XiHu Arfa (9th, grade 10) and Anna Goldstein (10th, grade 10). When asked what was one thing that they learned about themselves during the unit, here is what some said:

I don't like running down hill. I don't mind jogging. If I go at the right pace, I can go pretty far. [I learned] that I can push myself to run for a long distance. I hate steep hills. When I have the support of friends, I can do better. I enjoy talking while walking. I am not good at motivating myself. I can run! I can push myself and think about my decisions. I need to get in shape. I enjoy exercising in private when I can focus on myself. I don't like not trying. I enjoyed the race more than I thought.



COLLEGE ADVISING

Financial Aid

Families of college bound seniors are reminded that they need to complete all required financial aid forms by the deadline specified by the college. Look for financial aid requirements and deadlines on the admissions pages of individual college websites. We recommend that all families file the FAFSA which is available at fafsa.ed.gov. Information on the CSS profile, an additional form required by many schools, is available here:

cssprofile.collegeboard.org.

Financial Aid Night

Four Rivers is hosting its annual financial aid night next Wednesday, November 8th, from 6:00 - 8:00 pm in the common room. Michael Ireland, Associate Director of Financial Aid at Smith College, and Andy Stenson, College Counselor at Four Rivers, will talk about the ins and outs of financial aid. Topics covered will include:

Financing a college education; Tools for future planning (Net Price Calculators and EFC Forecasters); How financial aid is calculated—the impact of income and savings; detailed instructions re submission and timeliness for the FAFSA and CSS Profile forms; Need-based financial aid packages (grants/loans/work study); "Need Blind" and "Need Aware" school practices; Merit aid and scholarships.



Although some of the evening will focus on information most pertinent to senior families, other families (especially those with Juniors) are welcome to attend. There will be ample time for questions.

Free Help with Completing the FAFSA

There are a number of local FAFSA days where families can get help and support completing and filing the FAFSA. On Sunday November 5, starting at 1:00, both HCC and Turners Falls High School are hosting events. Details and registration is available here: <https://www.masfaa.org/fafsa-day/>

WINTER SPORTS

Sign up for winter sports is happening. We will have 2 basketball teams- varsity and junior varsity. The teams will be co-ed and they are open to students of all ages. On Tuesdays and Thursdays after school Intramural Ultimate will be offered at Indoor Action. This program is open to all students who want to play ultimate and stay fit during the winter. If you have interest in playing on our competitive teams in the spring, this is an excellent opportunity. Both seasons begin after Thanksgiving break.

Terry Plotkin, Athletic Director



CHANGE OF ADDRESS? YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS TO KNOW!

While we mostly communicate with students and families by email, it is nevertheless very important that you notify us right away if you change your residence or mailing address.

Several times a year the school reports to the state the residence address and town of every student. This information is used to calculate tuition payments to Four Rivers. A report is going out soon to local school districts and we want it be accurate.

If you move, please make it a priority to notify the school of your new address and the date of your move. **THANK YOU!**

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important resource we bring are models of great public schools in a range of settings. Four Rivers Charter Public School is an incredibly valuable model for Massachusetts and the nation, and we could not endorse more strongly its continued contribution to education.”

We are so proud of what our staff, students, and families have achieved over Four Rivers’ 15-year life span. The most profound reflection on this process came from co-founders Ed Blatchford and Susan Durkee who said, to paraphrase, that the school seen through our portfolio is the school they envisioned when they developed the original charter. Look for the flag at the school, displaying the EL logo and the symbol of a compass. The flag signifies that Four Rivers is a compass point other schools might look to for direction and promising practices. ~ Peter Garbus, Principal



“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 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
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