

Four Rivers Currents

September / October 2017

From the Principal's Desk...

TOWARDS A STRONGER SCHOOL CULTURE

Our faculty decided to focus on school culture when determining objectives for professional development this year. Our theory of action is as follows: *Students who believe they belong in a school community -- where their voice matters, where they can be themselves, where they are respected by peers and adults-- perform better academically.*

What then are the components of school culture that we might strengthen? One of my mentors, Ted Sizer, used to say that the culture of a school is shaped by the thousands of small interactions that take place every day. Are students trusted? Are teachers respected? Do students treat each other with kindness? He and his wife Nancy, also an educator, emphasized that it matters that students are known well by at least one adult (hopefully more) in school.

Current data from the annual Four Rivers School Climate Surveys (the % of students who agree or strongly agree) shows that we have some room to improve:

The school creates a positive social and emotional environment.	82%
Every student is known well by at least 1 adult.	82%
I can be myself in this school	86%
Students respect our differences and allow individuals to be individuals.	79%
Teachers respect our differences and allow individuals to be individuals.	89%

Some might say that four fifths of students agreeing with statements such as these is quite good. However, we're thinking about the one fifth who don't agree. What are they seeing in our school? What are they experiencing?

To strengthen our school culture and see even more students agree with these statements, faculty set the following three objectives:

- OBJECTIVE 1: All members of the community can explain and demonstrate our school's character virtues -- becoming an ethical person.
- OBJECTIVE 2: All members of the community can explain and uphold community norms (consistent expectations) for classrooms, other campus spaces, and all school activities.
- OBJECTIVE 3: Teachers can use circles in crew and in class to discuss community issues, resolve conflicts, solve problems, and address infractions to school norms.

We think that working on teaching character, upholding norms, and using restorative practices will have impact on school culture and student achievement.



Peter Garbus, Principal

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Grade 7 News

A day participating in the Green River Clean up was the perfect transition for seventh grade as we wrapped up our **Mini-Expedition** and launched into our **Pieces of The Past** expedition. In the **Mini Expedition** we learned about Expeditionary Learning, our Four Rivers Character Virtues and working together as a team. The clean up provided lots of opportunities for that! In the **Pieces of the Past** expedition we are using what we've learned about making strong observations and supported inferences in order to answer our guiding question: "How can we learn what happened before we were here?" Below are a few examples from students reflecting on the day:

Trash observations - What was the most interesting piece of trash you found at the river clean up?

- "Me, Drea and Caleb found a really rusty metal bed frame. It was half buried under lots of fallen brown, yellow and orange decaying leaves." ~ Molly
- "A huge rug that when you grabbed and pulled it, fell apart. It looks like it used to be pretty..." ~ Jocelyn
- "A chair. It was red and gross." ~ Liv
- "A rim of a tire. It was rusted on one side and clean on the other. It was damp and bumpy and smelled like metal." ~ Eli
- "A shopping cart. It was rusty and old. It was filled with rocks and mud." ~ Breanne

What inferences can you make about how the trash got there?

- I think people throw the trash from their car. ~ Bennett
- People throw their trash by the river. I don't think those people care. ~ Parker
- The most trash we found I think was by Big Y. There was a lot because people will just go shopping or out to eat and won't have anywhere to put their trash so they will just toss it out the window. ~ Eve
- Maybe it blew out of a trash can. ~ Katie
- The wind blew stuff around and water swept things down stream. Raccoons moved stuff and lazy people littered. ~ Elsa

River observations - What did you notice about the water in the creek and how it moved?

- "where the river was extremely low the rocks that were jutting out of the stream gave it swirling patterns" ~ Ella
- "I noticed that the water was relatively clean compared to what was around it." ~ Isaac
- "It always moved in one direction, never still" ~ Zayne
- "The water was always flowing. If you listened, you could always hear it trickling. It moved in a soothing way." ~ Cyrus



Grade 8 News

SCIENCE — *Mr. Guillaume*

Science started this year with a very engaging project that helps students understand how engineers go about solving difficult problems: defining the problem, understanding constraints to the solution, brainstorming, making a prototype and communicating are all important skills to deal with complex issues.

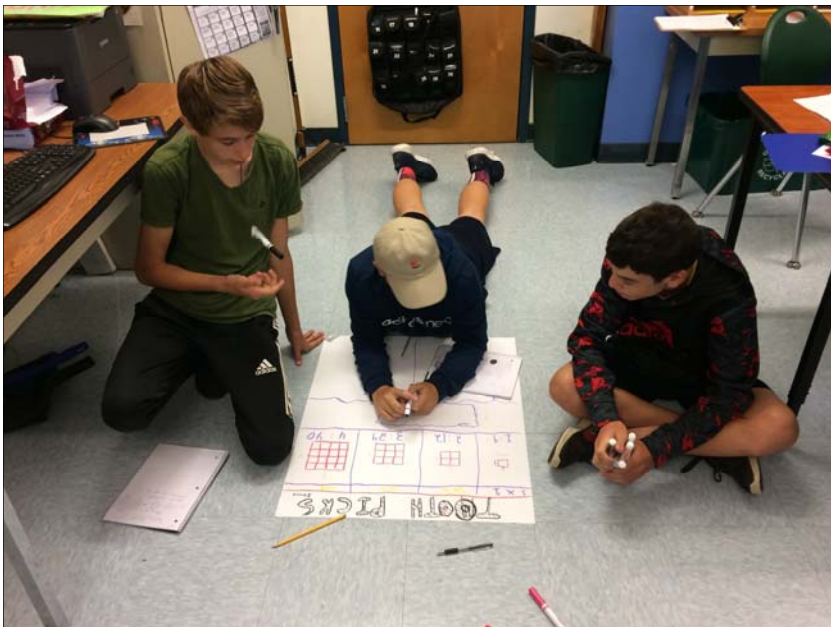
Students are experiencing this process by pretending to take part in a 10,000 Villages call for submissions. Students work in engineering teams to develop a product, made mostly from newspaper, that can be manufactured at a fair-trade factory in Africa and sold in 10,000 Villages stores here in the US. Student teams will then present to a "buyer" to see if their team will be provided with seed money to develop their product further. (We'll stop the process after they present to the "buyer.")

Students have come up with some very cool furniture from newspaper. You can ask your student about their product, as well as how well their team is doing with group work norms. They will have some nice data points to share.



MATH — *Ms. Farwell*

In 8th grade math we have been working on setting positive math norms and positive math mindsets as we begin the year. Students have been doing great work as they approach challenging, open-ended problems with creativity, an appreciation for mistakes and experimentation, and a focus on sharing and listening to the wide variety of approaches each student has to a problem. We are setting the stage for a safe place for all students to improve their math skills and challenge themselves this year!



DIVISION 2 NEWS

Math

Ninth graders started their year in math class by exploring the impacts of equality and inequality through changing air pressure. They found that adding hot water to a bottle can cause a big enough change in air pressure to crush the bottle, and they watched a video of a tanker collapsing after a steam cleaning. Once the importance of maintaining equality was apparent, we began working on solving equations and discussing the different solutions equations can have. Our next steps are extending our skills to inequalities so we can define solution sets to linear inequalities.

Tenth graders are beginning to explore geometry through transformations. Students are moving shapes around the coordinate plane and investigating how the movements mathematically affect the coordinate points. The students are then asked to define mathematical rules that will allow them to perform the same transformations in the future without graphing on the coordinate plane. Students will use this knowledge to understand how microscopes transform tiny objects to images that our eyes can see.

9th Grade Environmental Science

The students have been discussing the characteristics of sustainable agriculture. They have been learning about different methods of agriculture that are used in Franklin County to grow food. After comparing and contrasting organic and conventional farming the students worked in groups to design an organic pesticide that they are testing on the Cabbage Butterfly Larva infestation in our school vegetable garden. Looking ahead in the coming weeks the students will be doing activities and conducting labs and learning about GMO's, monoculture, food waste, and food miles.

10th Grade Biology

The 10th graders have been looking at the fascinating properties of water to learn about the chemistry of life. They started by exploring why water bonds to glass but does not bond to wax paper. Through several different demonstrations, labs and activities they learned about atoms, molecules, and different types of bonds. They have each chosen an element that plays a role in Biology for their element superhero project. We are starting to launch into how molecules are broken down by your digestive system and our next big lab will focus on enzymes.

9th grade Spanish:

In our full Spanish immersion classroom, 9th graders have been looking at the food that we consume and where it comes from. We have described our diets and what we eat and have read articles for discussion and writing. We have dived deep into vocabulary to allow us to express our opinions about processed, foreign and local foods. We completed our first big debate of the year where students discussed in Spanish the pros and cons to an all vegetarian diet, and are beginning to connect their learning to answer the question: "How does what we eat affect the world around us?"

DIVISION 3 NEWS

Grade 11

The Juniors got the year started with orientation which included service work at local farms as well as the first ever sleepover at Four Rivers. Students especially loved breakfasting with Mr. Garbus.

In classes, they have been hard at work already. In Modern World History, students read the graphic novel, **Abina and the Important Men** as a core text for their study of Imperialism. It also served as an introduction to the work of historians and how they create a narrative from a primary document. In English, students have been completing writing pre-assessments and have just begun literature circles.

In Chemistry, students delivered an elevator speech on elements, electron configuration, atoms, and the chemical composition of flames. In Algebra 2 they started the year studying and mastering functions.

Grade 12

The senior class tradition of starting the school year on Star Island off the New Hampshire coast continued. Students did service work, set intentions for their senior year and started work on their post-Four Rivers life plan.

In classes, the Energy Expedition began right away. Students were taken to the movies where they met local filmmaker, Steve Alves. Mr. Alves screened his films and gave commentary and answered questions throughout. The seniors will now set off on the journey to create their own documentary on a regional energy issue.

In order to build background knowledge on energy, students have been using Systems Thinking in Civics to gain an overarching view of the topic. In Physics, they participated in an “energy draft” where they were pressed to create their own perfect energy source.

In English, students have been writing college essays. Math has begun with an independent statistics research project.



Senior Class and Advisors at Star Island

*Continued from page 1.....***From the Principal's Desk / TOWARDS A STRONGER SCHOOL CULTURE**

For our students, we hope they experience greater voice and agency in the day to day of how our school feels and functions. Which of our norms truly make sense to them? And if the norm doesn't make sense to them individually, can they recognize it's importance for the community and go along with it anyway? Disagreement or resistance seems strongest when it comes to dress code, or phones being off and away. The focus on school culture means we're talking more about such norms. There are increased opportunities to offer input about school rules, to look at examples of character virtues in action right around us, and to use restorative circles to discuss sometimes complicated or controversial issues. A new structure for Crew Council intends to formalize students bringing forward Kudos, Questions, and Concerns.

For our families, a structure gaining traction is the Local Education Council (LEC), newly formed and still combined with the monthly *Coffee With The Principal*. While the Coffee is more informal and runs by the same Kudos, Questions, and Concerns as other structures in the school, the LEC is working more formally to prepare parent workshops and contribute to other Wellness-related initiatives in the school. For parents, a strong school culture might be defined mostly by how happy and healthy their children are. But it can also mean how connected they feel, as parents, to the school community.

We hope this year's focus on school culture is an investment that pays off for years down the road. All of these efforts really rely on just one thing: us knowing each other and forming positive working relationships. Back to Nancy for the reason why we try to know our students well:

"If I have 70 students or 65 students, I'll probably only lose about 20. And that will probably be because of personality differences where we really weren't going to connect too well. But the others will be a real factor in my life for that year and I'll be a real factor in theirs. ***And it seems to me that's really the honest way to do this job, to be a human being in somebody else's life for a while.*** Because then when you say to them, "I puzzled through this second paragraph and I really tried to give it my best shot, but it still isn't clear to me," they're likely to say, 'She's right, she must be right, I know she tried.'"

We'll work on school culture and try to be human beings in somebody else's life for a while.

~ Peter Garbus, Principal ~

NURSE'S NOTES

Welcome to another school year; summer "flew" by! Students require more fluids than they can get at the water fountain. Please send your child to school with a water bottle every day.

Fall allergy season is here. To be most effective, allergy medication needs to be taken prior to going outside in the morning. I do not stock antihistamines at school. If your child will be taking this medication during the school day, please send the pills to school along with a doctor signed medication order.

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.

Jeanne Milton, RN

COLLEGE ADVISING

Upcoming College Representative Visits in October:

Monday 10/2 @ 9:30 UMaine, Farmington

Monday 10/2 @ 2:00 Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA)

Wednesday 10/4 @11:00 Umass, Lowell

Thursday 10/ 5 @ 2:00 Bard College

Friday 10/6 @ 1:00 Whitman College

Friday 10/6 @ 11:30 Becker College

Monday 10/23 @ Framingham State College

Tuesday 10/24 @ 8:15 Eckerd College

Tuesday 10/31 @ 11:30 Bennington College

COLLEGE TASKS for SENIORS & THEIR FAMILIES

- Research and finalize list of colleges to which you will apply. 5 – 8 colleges Include “first choice”, reach, target and safety schools. Consideration to a financial safety school. Should have target list by December 1.
- Update Naviance page to help track deadlines and submission.
- Attend college visits at Four Rivers
- Attend Local College Fairs.
- Sign up for and take any additional standardized tests — SAT/ACT, Subject tests, Check individual school websites
- Complete applications and Common Application
- Work on your College Essay
- Request teacher recommendations — Many schools require 1 teacher plus counselor. Check school specific websites for additional needs

FINANCIAL AID

- Check with Mr. Stenson if you need fee waivers for SAT/ACT registration, or college application fees.
- Four Rivers will host its annual **Financial Aid Evening** in December.
- Start working on the FAFSA, CSS Profile – check school specific web sites.
- FAFSA forecaster/Cost Estimator — These are good tools for estimating your real college cost.

Questions? Call or email Mr. Stenson! astenson@frcps.org.

Americorps Volunteer Kathy Leone

Ms Leone will be serving at Four Rivers this year working with our academic support team. She'll also be volunteering in the surrounding region this year, responding to student, administrative and community needs.

In the past she has worked with several organizations including the Appalachian Mountain Club, leading outdoor education and adventure trips. She has also done animal research in many parts of the world, working with wildlife including great white sharks, lions, leopards, wild dogs in Africa, and elephant seals on the Farallon Islands in California. She enjoys anything to do with the outdoors including hiking, biking, and kayaking.

Welcome to Ms. Leone!



FRANKLIN COUNTY YOUTH LEGISLATIVE FORUM

It's time to stand up. It's time to share your voice. Finally, it's time to be heard!

On Friday, October 20th, between 3:30 and 5:30 PM, Four Rivers will host the Franklin County Youth Legislative Forum. This is an opportunity for students to present ideas and current issues to legislative officials and peers to make your concerns known. There will be pizza. There will be snacks, and there will be many people ready to listen. All we need now is you! For more information, contact:

Ms. Leone at kleone@fourriverscharter.org or Mr. Leaf at mleaf@fourriverscharter.org

This year's musical: Godspell

The Drama club will be producing *Godspell* this year for our winter musical. Written by Stephen Schwartz, this rock musical includes a large cast, an incredible score, and a powerful message of love and community.

Based on the gospel of Matthew, *Godspell* uses Jesus's parables to tell a compelling story about the power of community to change the world for good. Although *Godspell* tells the story of Jesus and his disciples, it is not a call to Christianity. (In fact, Stephen Schwartz, who wrote the musical, is Jewish.) The musical is performed frequently at public schools and is one of the most popular musicals of all time.

Director Leah Plath believes that today's tumultuous social climate is the perfect time to showcase a message of goodness and loving one's neighbor. Interested students will be invited to an informational meeting in mid-October, and auditions will be held the first week of November.

The show will be March 16th and 17th at the Shea Theater.

W E L L N E S S — *Amanda McNamara (Coachie)*

In Division 1 Wellness, students are beginning to establish class norms and tie those into our 6 character virtues – compassion, integrity, respect, responsibility, perseverance and courage.

In Division 2, students are training for a Division 2, Four Rivers 5k on Friday, October 6th! Students created individual cardiovascular exercise plans, including daily goals, that help support the long-term goal of completing the 5k. Students are tracking and reflecting on their progress.

In Division 3, students are beginning to think about their Independent Wellness Projects.

Guatemala April 2018:

Fostering Global Citizenship through International Travel

Four Rivers high school students have the opportunity to travel to Guatemala in April 2018 during intensives! We will be making our way down to a community outside of Antigua to learn, work and play while being completely immersed in the Spanish and K'iche languages.

Our program to Guatemala is unique to our group of students and Four Rivers school wide learning targets. This is a 9 day program where we will spend time volunteering on a community project, immersing ourselves in Guatemalan culture, and adventuring around magnificent Lake Atitlan. The trip will offer our students the opportunity to practice their Spanish through an authentic immersion and live with a home-stay family, all the while learning more about Guatemalan culture.



With our world becoming increasingly connected, it is essential that our students have a global vision and understanding. It is important for us as a school traveling to a foreign country to promote the values of discovery, creativity, excellence, diversity, integrity, and stewardship. This trip will immerse students in Guatemalan culture—playing a critical role as they become more culturally aware and globally-conscious. Students who participate will earn service hour certification for their hours volunteered, grow their social skills, and make real-world connections to their Spanish language studies. Interested students should see Ms. Rice.

<https://smithsonianstudentadventures.com/product/2018-four-rivers-guatemala/#>

CROSS COUNTRY TEAM

The Four Rivers Cross Country team enjoyed their first race on Wednesday, September 13th, at BART. On the boys' side, Four Rivers raced to 3rd place! The speedy Mac Sloan-Anderson captured first place (well done, Mac) and he was followed by athletes Eli Smith, Charles Dean, Dylan Dubay, Rufus Seward, Josh Lavigne, and Gavin Slaymaker. Skylar Craig was the only girl to race on the girls side at BART and she finished in 27th place (woot woot!). Huge shout out to first time racers: Charles, Josh, Rufus and Skylar.

On Wednesday, September 20th, runners again raced to 3rd place as a team on Dublin's hilly course. Mac Sloan-Anderson was first (at 17:33, he was ahead of 2nd place by 45 seconds!) followed by Eli Smith, Casey Davey, Dylan Dubay and Josh Lavigne.

The team races next at White Oak, Ashley Reservoir, on September 27th and then at Four Rivers on October 4th starting at 3:30 both days. We hope to see you there!

Call for volunteers!! ~ ~ Four Rivers is hosting our home meet on **Wednesday, October 4th, 3-5 pm**. We are looking for volunteers to help guide runners on the course, to help with timing, and to help support teams when they first arrive at the Four Rivers campus. If you are free and available to help between 3:00 and 5:00 pm on Wednesday, October 4, please email Eliza Beardslee or Lisa Ritchie at (ebeardslee@fourriverscharter.org) (lritchie@fourriverscharter.org).

Thanks for considering!



Runners clockwise from Top left: Dylan Dubay; Elias Smith & Charles Dean; Gavin Slaymaker; Josh Lavigne; Mac Sloan-Anderson



SOCCKER NEWS

We have a record number (70) soccer players sign up this year and so added a junior varsity boys team right at the start of the season to accommodate everyone.

The boys varsity has gotten off to a great start with 4 wins, 0 losses and 1 tie. We defeated Eagle Hill, last year's RVAL league champion, 7 -1 in our strongest match of the year. This team knows how to pass, score, and plays solid defense as well. Four Rivers has never won the RVAL soccer league so we are going hard for it this year. Playoffs begin on October 23rd and the finals, at Stonleigh Burnham, will be on Sunday, October 29. In the meantime, come on out and watch some great soccer. ~ Terry Plotkin, Athletic Director and Coach

The Girls Varsity soccer team is 3-3 on the season, lead by team captains Jaida Buchannan, Eolann McMillan and Anna Goldstein. We have a first year goalie, junior Alouette Batteau, who has made 46 saves over her first 5 games. Our next home game is home on October 11th against Eagle Hill. Hope to see you there! ~ Amanda McNamara, Coach

This year's edition of Middle School soccer is very young and inexperienced, but eager to learn. And for the first time in many years, co-ed. Avery Keller and Gillis MacDougall have been admirably sharing the goalie duties. They have been ably supported by a busy set of deep backs led by Gabe Rhodes and Isaac Larkin-Harmon. Toby Sol has added some scoring punch. A spirited match and team effort against Athol Middle School earned them a 4-1 victory. ~ Charlie Olchowski, Coach



7th and 8th Orientation—Circle at Wendell State Forest

Orientation



Division 2 kicked off the year with an overnight camping trip and paddling excursion to the Path of Life Garden in Windsor, Vermont. We bonded with our classmates and set the tone for a meaningful and respectful school culture this year.

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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.



Four Rivers Charter Public School
248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301