ADMISSIONS NEWS

OPENINGS FOR CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR

OPENING IN 10th

POSSIBLE FUTURE OPENINGS IN OTHER GRADES

We are accepting applications for enrollment in grade 10 and for possible future openings in other grades in which waiting lists are short. Word of mouth via our Four Rivers families is always the best advertising.

If you know of a student who might be interested in our high school, or if you meet someone new to the area who does not know about Four Rivers, please invite them to call for details and deadlines.

Deadlines for our next interim lotteries are 9:00 am on November 15 and November 30!

CALL NOW!

Leslie Taylor—Registrar—413-775-4577

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20294"

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Four River Charter



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

Four Rivers Currents

November 2012

From the Principal's Desk...

WHAT MAKES FOUR RIVERS FOUR RIVERS?

November 6-8, Four Rivers will be hosting a site visit team as part of our application for charter renewal. We've presented reams of documentation to the Charter School Office at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, explaining our program and demonstrating our results on paper. The site visit is our opportunity to show them what we are actually like as a living, breathing school. What can they see in three days?

Visitors over the years have most frequently commented about the combination of relaxed relationships and purposeful learning they see in our classrooms. It is obvious to them that our teachers like and respect their students. And it's also obvious that our students like and respect their teachers. That's not necessarily true every moment of every day. But we clearly know each other well. A small school allows us to work with each other as individuals and to function humanely, even when we might have moments of conflict. These circumstances allow students and teachers alike to be themselves and relax with one another.

Visitors have also observed purposeful, focused, engaged learning going on in every classroom. Again, that doesn't mean every moment of every day. But for the most part, our students focus on learning. What does this purposeful learning look like? Eyes and ears focused on the teacher's instructions. Groups of students solving problems, asking each other questions, suggesting possible solutions, making decisions, discussing a text, etc. Exploring documents to build background knowledge. Individuals or partners involved in a lab, following careful laboratory procedures, and thinking like scientists. Whole class discussions, responding to the teacher's questions. Wrestling with new questions or new information or new skills. Generating a list of criteria for good quality work.

Can they see the stories behind our MCAS scores? The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will decide whether our charter is renewed and they care about our test results. What do our numbers show? For one thing, they show that we serve a diverse group of students. Students entering Four Rivers score at all levels on the MCAS. Secondly, they show very strong growth from 7th and 8th grade to 10th grade. Does relaxed, purposeful learning lead to strong growth and achievement measured through MCAS? I don't have the research to back up my answer, but I'd give a big "yes" to that question based on the changes we've seen student by student. Being known well and supported by their teachers, feeling like they are part of a community, and having to actively engage in learning means that students in our school will put in effort and learn new skills and knowledge.

Four Rivers' mission is to prepare students for lives of learning and service. Specifically, we aim to prepare students for success in college and to be able to think about sustainability in our current and future world. Does our mission live in the real life of our school? My mentor once said that school culture is determined by thousands of small actions and decisions that happen every single day in the life of a school. How do people treat each other? What do the adults care about? What do the students care about? How can people see the mission of the school in our day to day? We feel our culture is strong; we are excited to share our school with the site visit team.



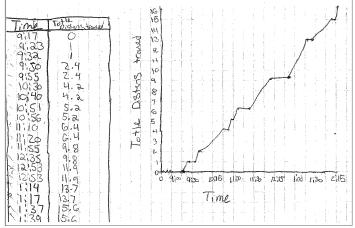
Peter Garbus, Principal

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Grade 7 News BIKE TRIP A SUCCESS

This year marked the 10th annual 7th grade bike trip. As always the mission is to work as a community to have a safe trip and find out how fast we can travel by pedal power. Beautiful weather and a wonderful group of parent chaperones made the day entirely successful! Upon our return the students were asked to tell the story of the trip in three different ways; a time/distance table, a time/distance graph and a written report of our group's ride. Abby Milewski has provided a great example of the table and graph and below you can enjoy excerpts from the stories in the students' own words.

"At around 9:00 the mighty mediums headed out onto the road into the cold morning air... By the time we reached our stop, we were frozen." – Fiona



"We stopped at the bike path parking lot to record our data then began a trip up a very steep hill. Many people walked and only a few (Hanna, Sean) biked the whole way up. When the land flattened out, we went over a bridge. The sun began to come out and we warmed up. We began to bike on the sidewalk but it was enjoyable not to have to worry about cars." – Hannah

"From there we went to Veteran's Memorial Field which took us 15 minutes. I think it took us longer to get there because there were some big hills that we had to go up. And then we went to Beacon Field (I like to call it Bacon field)." - Peter

"On our way to Beacon Field the sidewalk was bumpy and hard to ride on, plus they were flushing a hydrant." - Milou

"Goin to Highland Park parking lot was really fun because we went through the woods. There were lots of roots and rocks hidden under the leaves making it dangerous, but no one fell or got hurt."

"In the woods it was very bumpy and it was hard to see the rocks because they were covered in leaves." -Tim

"It was a breath-taking ride. I really liked going down the big hill that leads to the bridge to Montague." - Henry

"The reason we went really fast is because the kinetic energy along with the potential energy and the gravity that we used to zoom down the hill" - Luka

"We launched ourselves down an amazingly steep hill where we had to go single file and with enough space to brake on our way to the Great Falls Discovery Center picnic spot where we stopped for lunch and a group photo." – Kiernan

"We had lunch at the Great Falls discovery center. I rode my bike very carefully down a set of brick stairs and decided it was not something I want to do again – riding down a normal hill is more fun." -Elliot

"We took a flat bike path, next to a canal with lots of geese." - Tori

"We went under 2 bridges and saw a waterfall, then went over the highway and rode back to Four Rivers." - Tanner

"Finally, as we kept on riding, we came across Ms. Yaz and her posse, who cheered us on, which was cool" –Abby S

"We left the lot at 1:26. We finally traveled back to Four Rivers. It was mostly smooth. It only took us 12 minutes to get there. We even beat Ms. Yaz and her car back! It was awesome!" - Nicky

"... on the last leg, there was a steep slope on a bridge and Mac lead us home. We went at a slow pace. We were all tired at the end but all agreed it was fun." — Fiona

"The best part was: We didn't die!" - Micah



AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL

The Four Rivers Family Council would like everyone to sign up for Stop and Shop's A+ School Rewards. It is an easy way to earn money for the school.

With A+ School Rewards, points accrue with each purchase where the Stop & Shop Card is used. It even works with purchases made online with Peapod by Stop & Shop. At the end of each month, these points determine your school's cash total which is automatically credited to its account and school totals updated each month. (Please note: Gift cards (excluding store brand gift cards), pharmacy, alcohol and/or cigarette

purchases are excluded from accruing points.)

A+ School Rewards are rounded per transaction to the nearest whole dollar amount. At the end of each month, each school's dollar amount is determined and is then automatically credited to its account.

BigY EDUCATION EXPRESS

As of October 17 our school had earned 35,700 Education Express Points. There are 168 shoppers that have designated Four Rivers to receive their points!

SPREAD THE WORD to parents, friends and family that **BigY** is awarding 1 FREE gold coin every time they earn 1,000 Educational Express Points for our school from now until January 2, 2013!

Congratulations to Four Rivers! ID: 7347

DONATIONS FOR SEWING INTENSIVE

The Sewing Intensive is looking for donations of Fabric, Thread, Zippers, Buttons and Teen Friendly Patterns. Please bring in your unwanted supplies any time before November 15th.



Questions?

Call Melinda McCall at 413-584-2680 or

GOT BOOKS?

Donate them to

Four Rivers Reads!

Each month Four Rivers has a book giveaway for all students. Please consider donating your used Adult and Young Adult texts to our program. Books can be brought to Room 203 in the high school.

A BIG THANK YOU

to

World Eye Bookshop

for donating advanced readers to Four Rivers

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SPANISH 3—Ms. Beardslee

Spanish 3 students are traveling to Chile in their minds. As they watched MACHUCA, they paired real events with the ones they saw in the film and used the film to observe the political situation in Chile during the 1970s and the change of power from Allende to Pinochet. They read UN DIA DE ESTOS, and compared themes from the film. Additionally, tying into the essential question of the course WHAT MAKES RESILIENCE they are slowly exploring what created the foundations for the ARPILLERAS workshops and the roles of the different organizations in Chile that helped women to come together and weave their stories. They are piecing together the timeline of Chile's history through more examples of personal stories, clips from interviews, poems, songs, photographs, examples of artwork and more formal documentaries. Next is an in-depth analysis of an Arpillera and the actual design and creation of one!

SPANISH 4 — Señora Arnold

Spanish 4 students are continuing their study of revolutions in Latin American history and have made a stop along Che Guevara's motorcycle journey in Chile. While continuing our pact of Spanish only in the classroom, students are examining some important pieces of Chilean history through listening to "Los Desaparecidos" a song with very poignant lyrics about Chile's political history, and through other primary testimonials from political dissidents in Chile. Students will soon participate in a political debate to join in with some of Division 3's current study of politics. Our debate will focus on some political history of Chile and Venezuela.

PARENTS WANTED WE NEED <u>YOU</u> FOR A FOCUS GROUP

Four Rivers applied this summer for a renewal of our charter for another 5 years. We are preparing for a formal site visit to take place November 6—8. A team from the Massachusetts Charter School Office will be here examining the school in detail, and speaking with various stakeholders including students, faculty, administrators and parents.

We are looking for several parents to be part of a Parent Focus Group on Wednesday, November 7th, please contact Leslie Taylor (775-4577, x 202). We are looking for a small group (around 10) but would like to have representation across all grades, as well as a mix of new and returning parents, and from towns throughout our district.

Please call Leslie Taylor by the end of Friday, Nov. 2nd 413-775-4577 x202

Grade 8 News

HUMANITIES — The Bioflyer Project — Ms. Wilson

What is life like from another person's perspective? What can you learn about yourself by learning about another? Can walking in another person's shoes lead to a more tolerant and compassionate community? For the month of October, eighth graders studied another person in the class who they claimed not to know well. They conducted interviews of one another, collected information from parents, learned about a day in the life of their partner, analyzed "symbolism of the self" collages, and observed their partners' behaviors in the hallways, classes, and at lunch. No, I did not assign them to "stalk" another person, as many of the eighth graders liked to claim. After pages of data had been collected, students used Open Office to create biographical flyers that highlighted their partner's unique approach to life. As they worked, a wide range of questions would pop up around the room, as students realized that they were missing critical pieces of information about their partners. "Hey! What are your struggles?" they would shout casually, "What's your favorite color?" "What are some of your formative experiences?" "What's a formative experience?" Even though the question would be directed to just one person, other students would chime in, leading to an excited chorus of exchanges and conversation. They were learning so much about each other! Will this project lead to a more compassionate and empathetic eighth grade community? When I posed this question to the eighth graders, they answered with a definitive "Yes!"

SPANISH — Ms. Arnold

Eighth grade Spanish students continue their study of Guatemala and comparing Guatemalan culture and daily life with our own lives and cultures in the United States. We will be learning about the tradition of creating "Barriletes Gigantes" (giant kites) for el Dia de los muertos in a community called Santiago Sacatepéquez in Guatemala. Making barriletes gigantes is an ancient tradition in Guatemala that exists for the Day of the Dead. The communities of Santiago Sacatepéquez and Sumpango make giant kites that have strong social justice messages on them. People fly their kites in the



cemetery on the Day of the Dead to communicate their messages to their communities and to the deceased.

Students will be creating "Barriletes Gigantes" of their own as part of a mini expedition in the 8th grade with Math, Science and English. We will fly our kites on El día de los muertos. Students will also be continuing their unit on reading in Spanish as we read two small books: <u>Un barrilete para el dia de los</u> muertos and Patricia va a California.

SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUB

Ski Club Coming: Chaperones (former and new) needed this year.

Contact Brenda Walker if interested in chaperoning,

Email skimom1@comcast.net or call her at 413-773-0026.

Club begins Wed, November 28; Skiing begins January 2.

Watch the FLASH for more info soon.



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DIV II NEWS

ENGLISH — R. Ambuter

The tenth grade believes in family, loved ones gone away, adventure, the power of stories, books, God's word, guardian angels, being carefree, not being alone, the unknown, making things for yourself, soul mates, wood stoves, fire representing emotion, hearing dissenting opinions, Mr. Hyde, best friends, being comfortable and free, converse high tops, memories, hypocrisy, religion, getting the mail, strangers, true dads, self-care, doodles, mystery, subjectivity and breaking the rules. We are working on personal narrative writing, and the results will be printed in a Four Rivers *This We Believe* anthology.

Ninth grade just finished reading *Animal Farm*. We are working on building composition skills through a series of essays, and at the moment students are writing theirs on human nature and corruption as evidenced in George Orwell's allegory. When we finish this essay we'll move on to a dramatic reading of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

SPANISH 1— *Ms. Beardslee*

Spanish 1 students used October to explore adjectives and new verbs that allowed them to make self portraits and then family trees. These portraits and trees formed the basis for vocabulary and verbs they are using as they read the text POBRE ANA. They are learning to tell time and explain their likes and dislikes. Question words allowed them to ask questions of each other in class and also ask questions in their writing. Learning IR A allowed them to express ideas in the future. Their ability to speak in the future will bode well for writing horoscopes which is next. Stay tuned!

SPANISH 2 — Ms. Arnold

Students in Spanish 2 are practicing Fair Trade right here at Four Rivers! As part of our exploration of coffee production in Latin America, students in Spanish 2 classes have partnered up with the Doulos Discovery School, an Expeditionary Learning school in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic that has their own coffee farm, in order to sell their coffee here at Four Rivers. Our students proposed a plan to roast Doulos Discovery's coffee at Dean's Beans in Orange, MA, and Dean Cycon and his staff have accepted! Spanish 2 classes are currently in the process of designing coffee labels in Spanish for bags of coffee that will be sold at Four Rivers. Accompanying each bag will be a bilingual flyer explaining one of our four learning targets that have guided our study of coffee during this investigation. Look for our students' products at the Food and Farming Night on Thursday, November 1st!

HISTORY — Ms. Tabachnick

Division 2 U.S. history students have wrapped up an investigation of the Reconstruction Era. They looked at the different ways our bipartisan leadership proposed to reunite the nation after civil war. They discovered that our leaders did not agree. Students read multiple primary sources, interpreting for themselves how Lincoln, Johnson, and the Congress proposed solving the issues our country faced after the Civil War. They learned about the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to our Constitution. Ultimately they found out that our nation left Reconstruction largely unfinished and that we are still feeling the effects of that decision in the 21st century. We have begun diving into the Gilded Age, discovering that this is when the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. This study will propel us into a focus on rights, race, and class issues in the United States. Additionally, 10th grade history students are embarking on the DO SOMETHING expedition in partnership with English class. Students have identified issues that they are passionate about, issues of justice that have opportunities for local service. This expedition will be overarching and continue to appear intermittently in both history and English classes.

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INTRODUCING FOUR RIVERS TRUSTEE GINA CAMPBELL

We have decided to offer a new monthly feature. Each issue of the Currents will introduce our readers to one of our Trustees. The Board of Trustees is responsible for the general management and affairs of the school; it shall have and may exercise all the powers of the School except as otherwise provided by law, our Charter, or Four Rivers' Bylaws. Trustees are accountable solely to the State Board of Education. They serve on a volunteer basis.

Gina Campbell's day job is Director of Quality and Risk Management at Baystate Franklin Medical Center. She lives in Greenfield and has two children at Four Rivers. Ms. Campbell has been a member of the Board of Trustees for 3 years. Here is what she had to say about the experience, and why she serves:

I was involved in my children's grade schools, an active member of the PTO, treasurer of the Federal Street School PTO for 5 years, on the interview committee for two principals for the same school. I found this volunteer work rewarding and it provided me with rich knowledge of the school my children attended. I was connected to the school in so many ways, and felt I had an excellent grasp of many aspects of the school and could contribute as well as support my children in their education. I was able to get to know other parents and teachers in a way that



cation. I was able to get to know other parents and teachers in a way that was beneficial.

When my oldest daughter entered Four Rives in 7th grade I attended the Family Council meetings and was impressed with the level of commitment by parents and the school faculty and administration to the success of this very new school. I found myself wanting to be involved again in my children's school in a volunteer capacity, but I was ready for something more involved than the Family Council/PTO parent role. I completed a survey sent to parents during the school year, which provided me an opportunity to express my interest in being involved. I was contacted to further discuss my interests, and proceeded to interview for the board of trustees and then was nominated and accepted by board vote to be a trustee.

I have found my time on the board thus far to be extremely valuable both personally and professionally. I have gained a much deeper understanding of the school, its roots, expeditionary learning, work to support a strong school culture and community, and my children's education. I am thrilled to bring my experience as a leader in another organization to my work on the board; and in the same light I have learned from my time on the board and have brought that to my work. I enjoy thoroughly all of the school faculty, administration and staff that I have had the opportunity to get to know.

I am just delighted to serve on the board of FRCPS, and look forward to each and every board meeting, subcommittee meeting and other activities I am involved with to both support the school and my children's education.

Ms. Campbell was recently elected to serve as Secretary of the Board of Trustees. She also serves on the Committee on Trustees and Personnel Policy. If you see her around the school on trustee visiting day or at other events, say hello!

SPORTS AND AFTER SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES
Winter Registration Forms due November 2nd

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Four Rivers Charter Public School

Update on Planning for Additional Classrooms

October 23, 2012

The long-awaited opportunity to construct two additional large classrooms has taken a step forward with the engagement this month of Peterman Architects of Concord, Massachusetts. The Peterman firm was one of three finalists interviewed, and has a track record of creative and cost-effective design of schools, including recent work on other Massachusetts charter schools.

Our existing campus was built by a private developer and in 2004 and 2005, the opportunity to borrow at extremely good terms allowed Four Rivers Educational Foundation, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit corporation ["FREF"] to purchase our campus and lease the buildings to our school.

The need for more classrooms has been the highest priority noted in multiple surveys of staff. Since 2008, a number of designs were considered to try to incorporate the two classrooms with a larger assembly space, a gym, music practice space and additional storage but none of the designs were deemed feasible given the configuration of our existing buildings. The uncertainty about securing additional, affordable financing has also been a limitation.

Meanwhile, the pressure on classroom spaces has increased and remains our #1 priority, so last year FREF decided to move ahead with the two classroom addition which may include other minor functional spaces if funds permit. Over the past ten years, our Foundation has successively made a number of smaller but important improvements to our campus using grant income, donations, a reserve fund required by our mortgage lender, and income from rent. They are now able to commit to a project in the \$300,000 range without borrowing.

Finally, Peterman Architects has been asked to develop preliminary architectural designs and cost estimates for a possible combined Gym/Assembly building. These would be used in potential financing discussions that FREF may also pursue in the coming year.

Our faculty and parents will have opportunities to comment and provide input as the design work progresses.

PRINCIPAL'S MONTHLY MORNING COFFEE IN THE FARMHOUSE

This Friday, November 2, at 8:00 am ~ All Welcome

Spend a few minutes with Principal Peter Garbus to express your Kudos or Concerns.

Food, Farming and Democracy

Thursday November 1st ~ 6:00 to 7:30 pm

Four Rivers Charter Public School ~ Common Room

GALLERY OPENING

An exhibit by the 9th grade of photographs, themed writing, and individual agriculture projects inspired by our visit to ten different farms in our local community.

Local food potluck, Sustainability, Local Agriculture

DIV III NEWS

ENGLISH—Ms. Plath

Junior English — There's a lot of keyboard clacking in English lately as 11th graders write their first analytical essays of the semester. For most, this is their first step beyond the five-paragraph literary analysis essays of the past, and into the longer essays that will be expected of them in Division 3. Students have spent time in different peer groups and with partners outlining, gathering evidence, and revising for quality. They're simultaneously reading Brit Lit books of their choosing, everything from 1984 to The Scarlet Pimpernel, which we'll be discussing in the coming weeks.

Senior English — How do you present effectively to a group? This unit of 12th grade English has been focused on persuasive writing and speaking. Students learned persuasive techniques and organizational structures, then wrote and delivered 3-5 minute speeches on topics of their choice. Some students used this opportunity to enter the VFW's Voice of Democracy Speech Contest, writing their speeches on the topic "Is our Constitution still relevant today?" Wish them luck as they each attempt to win the district competition and move on to the state level. Next week in class, English and social studies will team up for students to present Structured Academic Controversies, presenting President Obama's and Governor Romney's positions on a variety of election issues for the rest of their classmates.

LAW - Mr. Hornick

"I object!" Law class has argued its way through the study of contracts and torts. Now, it's playing mock trial. Currently, we are trying a cyber-bully for intentional infliction of emotional distress and his school for negligent supervision. Throughout November, December and January, we will craft our courtroom skills with the Massachusetts Mock Trial Competition scenario.

YEARBOOKS

Yearbooks are now on sale! From now until November 30th, our full-color hardcover yearbook is only \$35. After November 30th, the price goes up, so order early. Order forms are available in school, or yearbooks can be purchased online at www.jostensyearbooks.com.

MATH — Mr. Hornick

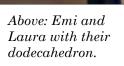
Algebra 2 students continue to pound through the Algebra curriculum. Most students work with a partner. All student teams move at their own pace, maximizing strengths and minimizing stress. In November, the class will build on the traditional curriculum with a unit on mathematical modeling tools, that is, how to explain the world using functions.

Advanced math has played with topics in several realms of mathematics, including--among others--number theory, topology, spacetime, chaos, and fractal geometry. The students are starting to read

math books of their choosing. On October 23, we built Platonic solids. [See photos.]



Alex with his icosahedron made of straws and gemp.



Left: Ben and Levi struggling against the effects of gravity on a dodecahedron.

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SOCCER

The Middle School Girls team did a wonderful job this season. All of them progressed as soccer players and improved their skills greatly. They were team players, playing in different positions, and helping out the Girls Varsity team. Overall the players had a building season and we look forward to next year. Thank you players, parents/guardians, and staff! Cory Brown, Coach

The Boys Varsity Soccer team finished the season with a 7—6 record. They took 4th place out of 10 teams and are ready for the RVAL playoffs. This will mark the end of the soccer career for our seniors Paul Bellino, Sam Sol, Ben Garbus, and Thomas Perham. All of them play the game the way it is supposed to be played, and they set a good example for everyone. We will miss them. - Terry Plotkin, Coach

WINTER SPORTS

Competitive basketball and Intramural Ultimate are the Four Rivers winter sports offerings to be held at Indoor Action. Open to all ages, both of these sports are a fun way to stay in shape for the winter, and the ultimate program is also helpful if you want to play competitively in the spring. Sign-up for these activiplay. Reduced fees are available for those who qualify "I didn't have time; I was late" when I question stufor free or reduced lunch.

Looking for a good holiday present for your child? How about a 4 Rivers disc. \$10. Inquire at the office.



CROSS COUNTRY

The cross country runners are finishing a fine first season. Running a total of 6 meets (the final championship race is 10/31 at Stonleigh Burnham), they showed that together they are a force to be reckoned with. With recent meets at Putney. Charlemont and Stoneleigh Burnham, they placed and paced well. Of note, the boys team placed 3rd at all of these races just steps (and a few points) behind either Charlemont or Dublin (Eagle Hill was consistently first all season). Of note, 11th grader Katie Soltysik finished 3rd in the meet at Stoneleigh Burnham (26:21) after finishing 4th in every other race this season. Top 3 finishers on the boys' side were 9th grader Emory Ketch (25:10), 10th grader Liam Fiske-Mercer (25:13) and 12th grader Zach Elliott (25:38). A huge shout out to Catherine Thacker and Maia and Sophia Buchanan and SO many parents who came to support us in the rain or the shine all season. Come out and watch the final race if you can! ~ Eliza Beardslee, Coach

NURSE'S NOTES — Jeanne Milton, RN

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. We all need carbs and protein for concentration and proties has begun. Check in with the office if you want to ductivity until our next meal. Too many times I hear dents about breakfast. Some quick breakfast ideas are: peanut butter on a slice of bread/toast; cream cheese on a bagel; or a granola/protein bar. These are easily eaten while traveling to school.

> Ask your child what s/he had for lunch today; it may surprise you. Increasingly more students visit the health office complaining of a stomach ache. Some of the answers I receive when I ask the guestion include: 2 cookies and water; nothing, I didn't have time to make it; Rice Krispie treats. School provides a balanced menu, but we cannot police students' choices. PLEASE take a minute every morning to review lunch options for the day.

NEWS FROM THE GUIDANCE OFFICE Financing College

As a college preparatory school, we do a great job in terms of preparing our kids for college. We provide a rigorous curriculum, challenging courses, and opportunities for our students to demonstrate that they are capable of serious independent work. We now have 5 graduating classes behind us and have demonstrated success in getting our kids into a range of colleges, including some of the most competitive colleges in the country.

One thing Four Rivers can't do is pay for our kids' college education. With the rising cost of attending college, early planning on the part of the family is increasingly important.

While financing a college education will likely be very different for each of our families, there are lots of resources, both online and in print, as well as professional help, that can help families understand the steps they will need to take. Four Rivers hosts an annual college financing evening that helps parents understand the types of financial aid that is available and the process for applying for that aid. There are lots of similar events hosted by different community groups, and we try to publish these in the FLASH as we become aware of them.

For those interested in doing some independent research:

Books: Paying for College Without Going Broke, Princeton Review.

Getting Financial Aid, The College Board (a reference book, available in the school college library and local libraries).

Some Websites:

Net Price Calculators – colleges are now required to post a net cost calculator on their website. These can be helpful to get an estimate of the likely cost of attending a particular school and can help inform decision mak-

FAFSA Forecaster – allows you to get an estimate of what your Expected Family Contribution might be: https://fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm? execution=e2s1

MEFA – the state educational financing authority: www.**mefa**.org/

Myfinancialfit.com – a website that turns the tables on the college search process by establishing an affordability range at the outset. There is a cost associated with using the tools on this website.

Professional Advice:

Given the costs involved, and the array of possible scenarios, some families may benefit from professional advice from a financial planning expert. There are a number of local options for professionals with expertise in the area of college financing.

And....Four Rivers will be hosting its financial aid evening on Wednesday, December 12 at 7:00 pm.

