

# Four Rivers Currents

April 2013

From the Principal's Desk...

## FROM THE DESK OF: CHECK OUT THESE BOOKS ON MY DESK

Part of my job is to stay current with ideas that might affect schools. Very often these ideas help guide our staff as we make day to day decisions about the school. So that you know what's on our minds and in case you're looking for some good non-fiction to read, I want to share with you some ideas from three books that are literally on my desk.

The first book is *HOW CHILDREN SUCCEED* by Paul Tough, which has a particularly great subtitle: "Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character." The author was the keynote speaker at last month's Expeditionary Learning National Conference (which several of us went to) -- suggesting that there is an important link between EL and his ideas. Tough presents stories and research which show that a person's character is more important for success than their brainpower. Characteristics like perseverance, optimism, conscientiousness, and self-control matter more than how well someone scores on standardized tests. His research says further that people can learn these characteristics and they do. The key is that children experience some adversity in their lives, but not too much. Those who experience too much can become traumatized and fearful. But those who experience too little build no capacity for resilience and persistence. This idea connects well with a founding design principle of Expeditionary Learning -- Success and Failure -- which says, "All students need to be successful if they are to build the confidence and capacity to take risks and meet increasingly difficult challenges. But it is also important for students to learn from their failures, to persevere when things are hard, and to learn to turn disabilities into opportunities." Let's hear it for grit!

The next book is called, *FIRES IN THE MIND: What Kids Can Tell Us About Motivation and Mastery*, by Kathleen Cushman. The author set out to discover what it takes for young people to get really good at something. She interviewed hundreds of adolescents to find out what they choose to work hard at and why. It turns out that there are many activities that motivate teenagers to work hard; it's just that those activities rarely overlap with school. And schools rarely tap into what students care about. Cushman takes these lessons about what fuels students to persist, she adds in reporting on recent research, and she discusses implications for school.

Last is a book by Tom Grove and Howard Glasser called, *THE INNER WEALTH INITIATIVE*. This book introduces ideas for schools related to The Nurtured Heart Approach. The overall approach was developed to help parents deal with very challenging children. It has evolved into a general set of ideas that can help all educators and parents respond to negative behaviors and encourage positive ones. One specific idea is to frequently name and "energize" any hint of positive behavior witnessed. A second is to be very clear about the rules. And a third is to call for very simple resets when those rules are being violated. Our full faculty learned about this approach in a two-hour workshop and the Division 2 team is currently trying out a number of the key practices.



Peter Garbus, Principal

Happy April.

## Grade 7 News

### ENGLISH & SOCIAL STUDIES—Ms. Hobbs

The seventh grade students know the word “democracy” comes from a combination of Greek words: demos: “the people”, and kratos: “power”. Additionally, the direct democracy that was once practiced in the city-state of Athens, in which the people voted directly on legislation and bills in their own right, is not “all Greek to them.”

Over the past few weeks, 7th graders have been comparing the involvement of people with laws in the ancient world to today’s legislative process by participating in a mock Congressional session, reading current bills in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate, and writing their own bills to send to local Congressional members. *At right, representatives Henry, Micah, Casey, Ollie and Oshen present their committee’s bill to the House after making some amendments.*



### SPANISH—Ms. Beardslee

In 7th grade Spanish students have used the Pobre Ana text as a jumping off point for seeing vocabulary in context and asking and answering questions and deepening what they can say in conversation. The class read the first 4 chapters together, dissecting plot and vocabulary and comparing Ana's life to one's own. The next step is that small groups of students have the responsibility to present their chapter to the rest of the group. They choose important vocabulary, prepare a small teaching lesson and practice sheet and then will evaluate their 'students' based on how they did and what they learned. They are also putting together an audiovisual piece to show the important events of their chapter with original dialogue, costumes and connections. Up next, the 7th graders will be combining with the plant challenge in science class and will be looking at what makes a fruit. They will be learning about fruits in this country and abroad and creating fruit piñatas with accompanying information cards that explain some of the science behind what they look like and taste like.

*Below left to right: 7th está sorprendido; 7th está preocupado; 7th esta triste.*



## Grade 8 News

### SPANISH—*Seña Arnold*



As a culminating event students translated recipes into Spanish using commands and food vocabulary, and cooked and served their Latino dish to friends, families and teachers at school for "La Noche Sabrosa" *The Delicious Night!*

*Above: Nocha sabrosa, Lucia and Syl; at right, Tynan and Soleil perform a skit.*

During our investigation of food and culture in Latin America The 8th graders learned about different recipes from varying Latin American countries. We visited the Latino Market in Hadley, MA and met with the owner of the store who explained to us the cultural tradition of eating "Cuy" or Guinea Pig in Ecuador. Students explored the market and learned about products from Latin America.



### MATH—*Ms. Gilbert*

In 8th Math & Science we're investigating electricity and energy transformations. Students have explored and filmed short science shows related to static electricity, wired up a variety of circuits, and are currently designing and building working wind turbines. For this project they have to engineer blades, construct a stand and gearbox, document their design process and answer questions about their turbines as well as wind energy issues in front of a panel of guest judges.



All 8th graders are also invited to attend the Western Massachusetts Science and Sustainability Expo to enter their wind turbines in the KidWind Challenge (see [www.kidwind.org](http://www.kidwind.org) for a short video on the event). This event takes place on Saturday, April 13th, from 1:00-3:30 pm at Greenfield Community College. It is optional, but it is an outstanding event and we hope that all who can will enter!

*Left: Matt Mitchell and Isaac Blodgett complete a circuit.*

## DIV 2 NEWS

### **MATH**—*Ms. Howard*

In 10<sup>th</sup> grade math, students have been working on presenting some algebraic topics as a review from last year. In small groups they re-learned the topics, created and organized a lesson, and created an assessment. Once the ELA MCAS is over, they will resume the actual presentations. The topics range from linear equations, to exponents, and even multiplying polynomials. All students will be responsible for knowing all of these concepts that their peers are teaching, plus all of it is a wonderful way to review for the upcoming math MCAS in May. Prior to these review assignments, students were learning about circles and all of the many types of angles that can occur in them, on them, and outside of them.

In 9<sup>th</sup> grade math, students recently finished up a unit that concentrated on inequalities, absolute value, and absolute value inequalities. This year 9<sup>th</sup> graders are exploring them more in-depth than in past years due to the changing state standards, as Massachusetts has changed over to the Common Core Standards. In addition to the concrete skill work of inequalities, students had their 3<sup>rd</sup> Problem of the Week (POW) to deal with, centered around some broken eggs. The way that the 9<sup>th</sup> graders tackled this problem and rose to the expectation of a clear write-up shows so much growth compared to their work in October on their first POW. It is thrilling to see the different approaches students took, with some turning the work into solving a mystery, while others turned it into a fact-based essay and others created a PowerPoint.

### **U.S. HISTORY**—*Ms. Tabachnick*

Ninth grade history students are busy analyzing the documents that shaped America hundreds of years ago. They have looked closely at why the Articles of Confederation failed and are studying the issues that the founders were trying to address. Students are acting as delegates to the Constitutional Convention, taking on their viewpoints and arguing their opinions in regards to representation, slavery, and individual rights. They are quickly realizing that the Constitution of the United States was not meant to be, nor is it a perfect document. Soon we will begin our study of the Bill of Rights and begin to revise it to better meet the needs of the 21st Century.

Tenth grade history scholars are in the midst of an independent Civil Rights study which will result in the culmination of the DO SOMETHING expedition. After studying the multiple ways that people chose to be active in the Civil Rights movement, they will choose how to develop their own campaigns in order to spread the information and insight gained during the youth workshops that they researched, created, and led. Their campaign will have the potential to reach our campus, our community, and possibly even further. Upon completion of their campaigns, students will create an artistic representation of the Civil Rights movement, advocacy, and action. Soon after, we will begin our study of the final standard in U.S. History 2, Why War?

### **SPANISH 2**—*Seña Arnold and Seña Beardslee*

Seña Arnold's students are reading legends about the creation of animals, nations and cultures in Latin America. They are studying various country traditions and histories. Seña Beardslee's students have explored and created maps of their own homes using the verb *estar*, *soler* and *gustar* to describe their activities and the location of items. This served as a building block for a MY CRIBS video product, modeled after the MTV show. Students were celebrities themselves and gave in-depth tours of their homes in small groups. Their attention then turned to bigger scale and the investigation into ancient Mayan cities: Teotihuacan, Tikal and Chichén Itza. From observations they made (quantitative and qualitative) they began to get ideas for what they would want their own cities to look at. Concurrently, they explored LA LEYENDA DEL MURCIELAGO which tells the creation story of the bat. From seeing and deconstructing this story in action, they have come up with ideas and focus for creation legends they will write that relate to their own country that they will invent. Over the next few weeks, they will be looking closely at Mexico as a sample country and then designing a flag, a national anthem, food, dance, sports and a legend for their own place.

## DIV 3 NEWS

### ENGLISH — Ms. Plath

#### Seniors

Seniors have finished the poetry unit of their Creative Writing course, and have now moved on to fiction. We've been reading short stories and discussing the elements of fiction writing, which students practice with short writing exercises. Most recently, the class has been working on creating memorable characters, and now they're learning how to "show" rather than "tell" in their writing.

#### Juniors

Juniors have recently completed an analytical essay on the dystopian novels they read. This past week, we've been studying spoken word poetry as a medium for persuasion and social commentary. Students are writing and delivering their own spoken word poems on topics related to justice or human rights. When they come back from April break, we'll begin our satire expedition, which will culminate in the fourth annual production of the much-anticipated *Undercurrents*.

### SPANISH 4—Seña Arnold

In Spanish 4 students created travel guides to Spain! They learned about different regions of Spain and each came up with comprehensive travel packages including cost of flights, hotels and transportation. Students had a SKYPE conversation with two Madrileños (people who live in Madrid, Spain) and talked about the current social, political and economic climate in Spain.

Students will meet with Liz Castro, an expert on Catalan Independence in Spain, to discuss how the past Civil War in Spain still contributes to the national tension that exists today.

### CHEMISTRY—Mr. Patari

**Juniors:** In our last unit students used what they know about chemical reactions to design small stoves built from aluminum foil. They calculated the carbon dioxide output of each stove in an effort to maximize carbon efficiency. Students are currently working with the gas laws to see if they can create a thermometer out of a balloon.

**Seniors:** After studying the iodine clock reaction, seniors are now trying to synthesize pure silver from a silver nitrate solution using copper wire and measuring their success by employing the mathematical technique known as stoichiometry. Did they manage to come up with a process that can extract 100 percent of the silver? Next time you see a senior ask them how it went!

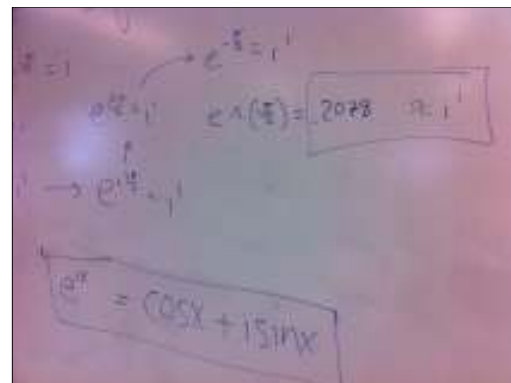
### ALEBRA 2 — Mr. Hornick

The mathematical modeling unit is well underway. Students are now modeling elevator usage, faculty staffing, inoculation timing, and pasture fencing. Soon they will undertake their individual modeling projects. They also continue to work on their standard algebra two materials.

### ADVANCED MATH

— Mr. Hornick

The Fourier unit ended with our using McLaurin expansion to derive Euler's formula. Sigh. . . Euler's formula. Now, we move into our next unit, creating short math videos.



### GARAGE SCIENCE

— Mr. Hornick

Most students are completing their mandatory paper towel experiments, and some are into their independent experiments. Experiments underway involve chemistry, biology, physics, and psychology. Stay tuned.



## 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 April 8th.

Questions?

Call Melinda  
McCall at  
413-584-2680

or Email:

Mmccall@fourriverscharter.org



## ADMISSIONS

### FALL ENROLLMENT

#### Interim Lottery—April 9th

Waiting lists for Grades 9 through 12 are short for enrollment next fall. Therefore we continue to take late applications and will hold interim lotteries through the spring and summer.

Tell friends and neighbors to call or visit the school for information and for dates and deadlines.

**Leslie Taylor, Registrar**

**413-775-4577**

## FAMILY COUNCIL

Spring is on the way and so is the next Four Rivers Apparel order! We will be offering Ultimate Frisbee and Non-Sport Four Rivers Apparel.

Completed order forms are due Friday, 4/12/13 for May delivery.

Next Family Council Meeting:  
Thursday, April 4th at 7:00 pm  
at the Farmhouse

## NURSE'S NOTES

Believe it or not SRING will arrive! Two items to keep in mind:

1. FLIP FLOPS are totally inappropriate for sports/ P.E. They offer no support and contribute to injury. I am aware they are a major fashion statement and can not be eliminated. Please make sure your child has sneakers at school for all running and extended walking activities.
2. ALLERGIES: the season is predicated to be one of the worst in a long time. If your child exhibits watery eyes, frequent sneezing; and nasal congestion please contact his/her physician re: over-the-counter allergy medication such as Claritin or Zyrtec which do not cause drowsiness. Allergy medications are best given in the morning **before** going outside.

Please contact me if you have questions or concerns.

*Jeanne Milton, RN*

*jmilton@fourriverscharter.org*

## COLLEGE COUNSELING NEWS

Colleges that have said YES! to our current senior class include....

*Alfred, Beloit, Boston University, Clark, College of Wooster, Curry, Curtis Institute, Earlham, Emerson, Emmanuel, Fitchburg State, Framingham State, Gannon, Goucher, Grinnell, Hampshire College, Hartwick, Hofstra, Ithaca Colegew, Johnson State, Lasell College, Macalester, McDaniel, Manhattan College, Marlboro, Massachusetts College of the Liberal Arts, New England Conservatory, Ohio Wesleyan, Pratt Insittute, Principia, Regis, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Simmons, Skidmore, Springfield College, Suffolk, Temple, University of Maine, UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, UMass Lowell, University of New England, University of New Haven, UNC Asheville, University of Vermont, Westfield State.*

*Congratulations to all!*

### FOR JUNIORS and FAMILIES—COLLEGE INFORMATION EVENING

**Wednesday, April 3rd, at 7:00 pm in the Common Room**

Our speaker for the evening will be Karen Kristoff, Senior Associate Director of Admissions at Smith College. Karen will provide insights and an overview of the college admissions process from the perspective of an admissions officer.

### SATs FOR JUNIORS

Finally, it's time to start thinking about standardized testing. We encourage all juniors to take the SAT's in May or June of their junior year and again early in senior year. We will be offering some SAT prep in both math and English and there are lots of good resources available online. All of the juniors have access to a college board account which offers test preparation resources, as well as a detailed breakdown of how they did on the PSAT's. In junior seminar we have also been looking at a free online program, **Dome SAT Prep**, which is available at <http://www.domesatreview.com/sat-prep-study-guide-tests> and offers a comprehensive range of free resources and study program. (It also offers a fee based pro/elite package, but the free one is adequate.)

SAT test dates and deadlines for registration are available at: <http://sat.collegeboard.org/home>

Question? Email [astenson@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:astenson@fourriverscharter.org) or call (413) 775 4577

### SPANISH 3 — Ms. Beardslee



In Spanish 3, students have been reviewing vocabulary words that they choose related to the play we are reading by Federico García Lorca: *BODAS DE SANGRE*. Through keeping a blog, acting out and discussing the plot and the language of the play in class and exploring the vocabulary both individually and as a group, students are entering into the world of this drama. Supporting our work is the Flamenco adaptation by Carlos Saura and seeing his choice of music and movement has sparked debate about the different characters and scenes. Students will finish this investigation with a creative product of their own choosing which will involve some element of working with the rich figurative language and making a connection to the historical importance of this play and Lorca's work.

*Photo—Spanish 3 class in costume for BODAS DE SANGRE*

# ULTIMATE SEASON BEGINS



Above, Coach Griffith's Girls Ultimate Team puts in some practice time at Indoor Action during the early part of season.

Check out the game schedule on the Four Rivers web site [www.fourriverscharter.org](http://www.fourriverscharter.org). Click on *Calendars and Events*; then click on *Sports Calendar*.

***We hope to see you at a game!***

# CREATING GREENFIELD'S FUTURE

## *Visions for 2050*

**Saturday, April 6, 2013**

**8:30 am—1:30 pm**

**Dining Commons,  
Greenfield Community College  
Main Campus**



*Join "Greening Greenfield" for a community conversation about what Greenfield and Franklin County may be like in 2050. Our planning today can make the future happen!*

### **PRESENTERS:**

**Josh Hornick, Teacher, Four Rivers Charter Public School**

**Also: Abrah Dresdale of Farm and Food Systems at GCC; Simi Hogue, Building Systems at UMass-Amherst; and Donna Stern, RN, of BayState Franklin Medical Center**

"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  
248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301