

Four Rivers Currents

January 2013

From the Principal's Desk...

A VERY POSITIVE RENEWAL SITE VISIT REPORT; BESE TO VOTE IN FEB

Welcome back to school, everyone. I'd like to start you off this new year with the findings from November's renewal site visit. This report, the full version of which is posted on our website under "Links and Documents—Reports and Policies," gets combined with other reports and data into a summary for the Commissioner and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. In February, they will make a decision on our renewal. These highlights capture many of the school's key strengths; they also indicate a few areas of concern. As always, we work on the things we can improve and we take affirmation from observations of what we do well.

1. The school's mission and educational philosophy are clearly evident in the daily operations of the school and described consistently by stakeholders on all levels.
2. The school's leadership structure has been stable; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
3. Four Rivers continues to demonstrate a deep commitment to Expeditionary Learning as its pedagogical model.
4. Four Rivers Charter Public School has met seven out of its thirteen measures included in the faithfulness to charter section of its Accountability Plan.
5. The school provides teachers with resources and a collection of documented core practices designed to guide long-term instructional planning and support alignment with the central tenets of Expeditionary Learning (EL). Teachers assume ownership over the construction of learning units and daily lessons.
6. While teachers and school leaders indicated that the work of aligning the school's instructional plans with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core standards is ongoing, the process and current status is not well-documented or clearly articulated.
7. The implementation of instruction observed was generally consistent with the EL guiding documents and stakeholder descriptions of practice provided.
8. The school has an orderly and respectful environment grounded in a strong community and trusting relationships. Clear expectations for behavior and active adult teaching and modeling support rigorous learning.
9. Teachers receive feedback on their instruction from the head of school/principal and are evaluated based on a range of data sources.
10. Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of teachers.
11. Stakeholders are aware of performance gaps on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), particularly in 7th and 8th grade mathematics. The school is currently questioning whether to make modifications to instruction or curriculum in the 7th and 8th grades based on MCAS results.
12. Teachers have significant autonomy in the choice and creation of learning assessments, evidenced by a wide variety of formal and informal tools. The school is in the early stages of establishing consistent expectations for developing rigorous and appropriate assessments and providing guidance around using the results to advance instruction.
13. Four Rivers Charter Public School has met 11 out of its 15 measures included in the academic program success section of its Accountability Plan.
14. The school is financially viable as a result of conservative fiscal planning and oversight. This careful planning and consequent financial savings will enable the school to entirely cover the costs of a facility expansion project that will include the design and construction of an additional two classrooms.
15. The school has an effective system of financial oversight and fiscal controls; however, its Fiscal Policies and Procedures Guide has not been recently updated.



Continued on page 7— POSITIVE RENEWAL SITE VISIT REPORT

Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

4th ANNUAL SERIE MUNDIAL BASEBALL GAME *Photos by Isaiah Caron.*

Students in Wellness and Spanish lined up to play their SERIE MUNDIAL baseball game, the culmination of a combined investigation in both Wellness and Spanish. Students learned parts of the body, how to cheer on their teammates, verbs, foods at the game, positions on the field and used challenge by choice in Wellness class to reach their goals. They learned where some of the professional Spanish speaking baseball players come from and followed the stories of several Dominican players and their transition to the U.S. Students then designed their own uniforms and sold them, using advertising phrases to explain their product's worth.

In terms of the final culminating event, all teams played well on the World Series day and a special mention goes to LOS TIGRES who not only won the series, but also showed the greatest sportsmanship. They heartily supported every other team they played at every point along the way. A special thanks to Tanner Ames, Tori Koncz and Dylan Dubay who showed outstanding play and sportsmanship during the game. Another shout out to Isaiah Caron who played and also photographed the day. Students in 7th grade Spanish will finish the semester presenting their family trees and beginning to learn about how to talk about school and using adverbs to describe how often they do something.



L — Oshen ready to pitch!

Below — Shayla runs the bases



FAMILY COUNCIL NEWS

Next Family Council meeting:
Thursday, January 10th at 7:00 pm
In the Farmhouse at Four Rivers
ALL ARE WELCOME!

Grade 8 News

MATH & SCIENCE

To see what the 8th grade was up to most recently in math it would be helpful to have a computer nearby. If you can, head to this site: <http://www.srri.umass.edu/dgportal>. It's the home page for a set of data games developed by folks at the UMass Scientific Reasoning Research Institute. The idea of "Data Games" is to engage students in developing math and reasoning skills through game play — skills that are needed to get the most out of the games as well as to gain a deeper understanding of math and its applications. Now click on "Play Chainsaw" and "Login as guest." Start up your chainsaw (turn up your volume for maximum effect) and try to cut as many logs as you can to target length before you run out of fuel. Click stop when you're finished. You'll get some feedback on your game, including the number of pieces you cut to acceptable length, how much fuel you had left, and table and graph representations of other attributes of the game.

If you find yourself playing again and again, then you're just like the rest of us in 8th grade. This is how we began our second annual "Chainsaw Week" right before December break. As they played, students called out their top games, and we tried to make sense of who played the game the best. Missing from the game was a score, which set up the challenge for the week: to design a formula for the game of Chainsaw that would give a score at the end of each game. Over two days, students considered game attributes that could be factored in to a formula, and then designed scoring formulas, proposed them, critiqued them, revised them, presented them, and ultimately voted on a scoring formula in each class. The math behind this work was to figure out how to model attributes of the game in the form of an algebraic expression, and to do it in such a way that game players would feel the final score was a fair representation of good game play. Some of the best math discussions of the year emerged during this week. Looking out for ways to cheat the formula was an important topic of discussion.



Ultimately the Connecticut class chose the formula "Score = (Accepted x 5) + FuelLeft" and the Deerfield class selected "Score = (Accepted x 5) + (FuelLeft x 0.5)." We ended our week of work with a Tournament in each class, using revised versions of Chainsaw with the new score formulas in place. You can play those versions by clicking on Tournament CT or Tournament DF on the Data Games home page. Send us your high scores!

In the photos—Who Played It Best? Using the new score formulas, the following students logged the highest scores in a celebratory Chainsaw tournament: L—Kyle Bergmann, Chloe Castro-Santos, Oscar Gibson, Above Top—Sophie Garbus and Isaac Blodgett, Above—Syl Carafiol and Alli Grant..

DIV 2 NEWS

MATH—*Ms. Howard*

In 9th grade math, students have been working on a Problem of the Week, which is a misnomer, since it is actually going to go on longer than one week. The Problem of the Week involves a variety of activities, such as collecting data, analyzing and graphing the data, and then deciding if it has a linear relationship or not. This exploration will also include the graphing calculator and learning how to have it draw a line of best fit. As always, we will be focusing on craftsmanship through revising our work. In ALEKS, 9th graders were recently switched into a new course that ALEKS offered, but it will still teach Algebra 1 topics. The main reason for the switch is that the old course did not allow many topics to be removed, while the new course allows the teacher much more control over specific topics.

In 10th grade math, students have been learning square roots – their properties and operations. Knowing how to simplify and rationalize them are skills that they will need now and for the rest of their math years in high school and college. One way that our 10th graders will be assessed on their knowledge will be through creation and completion of a tool to help teach radicals to the incoming 9th graders next fall. The form of this tool is very open – they can do a power point, a video, a newspaper article, a children’s book, or whatever other creative format that they would like. These projects will not be finished until after the holidays. Math topics that require knowledge of radicals are Pythagorean Theorem, the distance formula, and special right triangles.

U.S. HISTORY—*Ms. Tabachnick*

Ninth grade history students were able to wrap up their lesson presentations on the causes of the American Revolution the week before break. They diligently researched a cause, identified main points, wrote learning targets for their presentations, and presented. The lessons were informative and engaging. Our field work in Boston was amazing despite the weather. While at the Bostonian Society we examined primary source documents in order to determine what we think really happened at the Boston Massacre. Students were also compelled to visit the Granary Burial Ground to see the graves of prominent figures that anchored their research the previous week. After the break we will begin our study of America’s founding documents. We will be dissecting the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. We will become experts, discovering how our union was shaped, and we will look closely at the overarching question of sustainability. What lasts? How well do the documents that were created hundreds of years ago continue to guide our country?

Tenth grade history students performed monologues a few days before the holiday break. They used what they already knew about the Gilded Age, the class divide, and how the rich got richer and the poor got poorer to delve deeply into and essentially become an influential figure that lived during this time period. The performances were informative, insightful, and entertaining. Right before the holiday break they chose independent activities to further their understanding of labor struggles during this time and in the present day. Students either chose to adapt and carry out a Pullman Strike simulation, read *Nickel and Dime*, or watch the film *Waging a Living*. Each of the choices has independent tasks that accompany them that ask students to get to the bottom of the class divide by coming to know labor struggles, then and now.

SPANISH 1 - *Ms. Beardslee*

Spanish 1 students have been deep into finishing the final chapters of POBRE ANA. They have been working hard to use this new vocabulary in speaking and writing context and also figuring out ways to use the verbs with sentences that they invent. They have explored commands and watched several videos for making guacamole, making tortillas and making salsa and even tried their own using the TU command form. As a final culminating product, they will write a letter to another student, using some of the vocabulary from POBRE ANA to describe who they are, what they like to do and at the end, ask some questions of this penpal.

DIV 3 NEWS

ENGLISH — *Ms. Plath*

Juniors—It's a busy end of the semester. Juniors recently wrote and delivered monologues from the point of view of a character in a book they've read, discussing a range of subjects from government surveillance to guilt and forgiveness. To finish the semester, they've chosen an author from any literary period, and they're writing research papers about that author's life and how his/her works fit in that literary period. Students are writing about such authors as Robert Frost, Franz Kafka, Anna Seward, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jane Austen, and e.e. cummings, to name a few.

Seniors—The energy expedition is moving rapidly along. Seniors have studied different forms of energy, and they've also received an introduction to economics in Civics class. To finish the semester, they're writing persuasive papers. Each group of four has chosen an energy company, and they're each writing a paper on why someone should invest in that company's stock. To finish the semester, we'll be gathering for a board meeting, and each group will give a presentation to persuade their classmates where to "invest." Will it be Schlumberger, Codexis, Chesapeake Energy, Ascent Solar Technologies, Suntech, U.S. Geothermal, Cameron, or FutureFuel?

SOCIAL STUDIES

Mr. Wilson

Seniors are engaged in an expedition on The Future of Energy. In Civics they are learning economic concepts like scarcity, supply and demand, and market principles. This will prepare them to select an energy stock to invest in, which they will defend in a persuasive paper for English. In Chemistry they are looking at combustion, energy generation, and renewable energy resources. The 12th graders have traveled to Holyoke Gas and Electric and Vermont Yankee. In the coming semester they will plan and execute a student action project on the issue.

ALEBRA 2 — *Mr. Hornick*

Students are finishing up their function tool kits. The gist of this unit has been learning how to identify real world data patterns as mathematical functions (find a function that fits the data). The power of algebraic functions can then be used to analyze past and predict future events.

ADVANCED MATH — *Mr. Hornick*

Students completed their Mathematica slideshows presenting broad data regarding energy as part of the Energy Expedition. Now, they are writing their first "script" to communicate an interesting or beautiful mathematical phenomenon to the uninitiated (that is, anyone who is not an Advanced Math student).

LAW — *Mr. Hornick*

Students have almost finished their second complete mock trial. They will finish the term with intense structured arguments about the murder case that they have just argued and on how to make and answer proper objections in court. Several members of the class will be part of the Mock Trial Club that will be competing against other schools, starting at the end of January.

Spanish 3 - *Ms. Beardslee*

Spanish 3 students finished their creation and presentation of LAS ARPILLERAS as an investigation into a piece of art that shows resilience of Chilean women through the Pinochet dictatorship. These pieces that the students created come from analysis they did alone and in pairs of authentic tapestries from Chile. They used phrases and narration either from the chronology of Chile or from poems or songs that we analyzed to form the meaning of their art and their texts. They then turned their attention to Argentina's Dirty War and, using LA HISTORIA OFICIAL as a beginning text, explored the DESAPARECIDOS in Argentina as they learned about this through one family's story. They followed the chronology of this as well and used these events to begin to use the subjunctive to explain solutions to a problem or to present a hypothetical situation. The remainder of the semester will be spent with further analysis of art as resistance from Argentina, practice with the present subjunctive to broaden their ability to state their opinions and alternatives and by presenting a short dialogue.

**VARIETY
SHOW
COMING UP!
CALLING ALL
PERFORMERS**

The 10th Annual Variety Show is on
Friday, March 13th.

Applications to perform in the Va-
riety Show will be available in early
January.

Please start thinking about what kind
of act you would like to do.

NURSE'S NOTES

This month I will be sending home forms for the yearly state mandated health screenings. These will occur over several weeks during the months of March and April for grades 7, 8, 9 & 10. Please return the form only if you wish your child(ren) to **NOT** be screened. Please contact me if you have any questions.

REMINDERS:

- Breakfast is important, include protein
- Stay hydrated, bring a water bottle
- Dress properly for the weather
- Practice good hand washing (to prevent spread of infections)

Jeanne Milton, RN

**VARSITY ULTIMATE FRISBEE
TOURNAMENT DATES**

**Varsity Ultimate Frisbee families and players:
please note the following tournament dates!**

Boys NMH Tournament—Sat., April 27

Girls and Boys Amherst Tournament—Sat., May 4 and Sun, May 5

Greenfield Tournament—Sun., May 11

RVAL Tournament—Wedn., May 15

State Tournament (at GCC) - Sat., May 25 (both teams) and
Sun., May 26 (boys only)

Playing in tournaments is an expected part of being on the varsity teams.
Please make sure players are available to play.

Thanks,

Coach Plotkin & Coach Griffith

****SATs can be taken in June, too!**

**VARSITY
BASKETBALL**

The boys varsity basket-
ball team is 3 and 0 with
victories over White
Oak, Buxton, and Harts-
brook. The team is led
by captains Ben Garbus,
Ricky King, and Jackson
Reeves-Henning.



COLLEGE COUNSELING NEWS

Seniors are in the thick of college applications. Over half of the senior class have submitted at least one application to a four year school. Schools that they have applied to include:

Alfred University, Barnard College, Bates College, Beloit, Bennington, Boston Conservatory, Boston University, Brown University, Clark University, Colby College, Columbia University, Cooper Union, Cornell University, Curtis Institute of Music, Dartmouth, Drexel, Earlham, Emerson, Emmanuel, Fairfield, Framingham State, Hamilton, Hampshire College, Hartwick College, Hofstra University, Ithaca College, Johnson State, Julliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Lasell College, Manhattan College, Marlboro College, McDaniel, New England Conservatory of Music, Northeastern, Oberlin, Ohio Wesleyan, Pratt Institute, Principia College, Reed College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, Simmons College, Skidmore College, Southern California Institute of Architecture, Springfield College, Suffolk University, Swarthmore College, Syracuse University, Temple University, The College of Wooster, University of Maine, UMass Amherst, UMass Boston, UMass Lowell, University of North Carolina Asheville, University of Southern California, University of Vermont, Vassar College, Wesleyan University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Westfield State, Wheaton (MA).

And, acceptances to date have been received from:

Clark, Emerson, Hartwick, Hofstra, Lasell College, Principia, McDaniel, Ohio Wesleyan, Suffolk, UMass Amherst and UMass Lowell. Congratulations to all.

Question? Email astenson@fourriverscharter.org or call (413) 775 4577

POSITIVE RENEWAL SITE VISIT REPORT — *Continued from page 1*

16. The Four Rivers Board of Trustees has fulfilled its governance obligations through careful planning and oversight. It has governed the school through annual plans and careful oversight. The board has provided effective feedback to the school leader and has analyzed its own performance.
17. The school has reached its maximum enrollment and strives to maintain a cohort of 36 students per grade level.
18. The school leader, with the Farmhouse team, has established clear processes for staff members to communicate and address concerns, as well as protocols for decision-making.
19. The school has a thorough annual planning cycle, gathering input from multiple sources and stakeholders, resulting in an annual School Improvement Plan that guides the work of school leadership.
20. Families are highly satisfied and have substantial opportunities for involvement in their children's learning and within the school community.
21. The school has created and maintains a safe environment for students by instilling a strong sense of community and implementing a developmentally appropriate, balanced approach to discipline.
22. The school facility suits the needs of the school; buildings are well maintained and safe.
23. Although evidence of formal dissemination is currently limited, the school has made efforts on various levels to engage and share practices with other schools.
24. Four Rivers Charter Public School has met 11 out of its 13 measures included in the organizational viability section of its Accountability Plan.

~ Peter Garbus, Principal ~

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

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

ADMISSIONS INFORMATION SESSIONS

Saturday, Jan. 12, 10:00-11:30 am

Wednesday, Jan. 23, 7:00-8:30 pm

Saturday, Feb. 2, 10:00-11:30 am

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 7:00-8:30 pm

The school's best advertising is *Word of Mouth*, so we urge you to let your friends and neighbors know we are accepting applications. Tell two friends about the school. If you would like some brochures to hand out, contact Leslie Taylor at the school at 775-4577, x202.

TELL TWO!

Application Deadline

Priority Deadline for Fall 2013 Lottery

February 26, 2013 at 5:00 pm

SIBLINGS
of Four Rivers
students who
wish to enroll
for Fall 2013
must submit an
application by
the deadline -
5:00 pm on
February 26,
2013!