

Four Rivers Currents

June 2013

From the Principal's Desk...

LOOKING BEHIND AND LOOKING AHEAD: HIGHLIGHTS AND NOTES

With the last half day of school completed, let's catch up on a few items. First off, let me report to you what lovely ceremonies we held to mark the end of our year. Graduation was personal and meaningful, as you can get a sense of from the clips of student speeches included in this issue. Eighth and tenth grade Passages asked students to reflect honestly on their growth and their challenges, demonstrating through their presentations a readiness for the next division. Then at our Stepping Up ceremony, it was my privilege to announce 122 students earning honors in at least one of their classes or for HOWLS (*Habits of Work and Learning*). So many students have worked hard this year; their effort honors themselves, their teachers, and their parents.

We say goodbye to several staff members and we welcome the following people who will be joining our staff:

Jeff Dyer has been hired for 9th/10th Grade English, replacing Ryan Ambuter who is leaving after 6 years to be part of the founding faculty at the Paolo Freire Social Justice Charter School opening in Holyoke next fall. Jeff has been teaching for the past 3 years at Northpoint Academy in Prescott, AZ, a highly implementing Expeditionary Learning high school. Mr. Dyer holds a B.A. in Music from Hamilton College and a Master of Arts in Teaching Secondary English from Tufts University.

Jackie MacNeish has been hired for 8th Grade Humanities to fill a one-year leave of absence. She has taught English and other subjects at the Academy at Swift River for 3 years and she taught multiple subjects for 2 years at the Antrim Girls Shelter School. She has worked in outdoor and adventure programs and has worked and traveled in many parts of the world. Ms. MacNeish holds a B.A. in English Literature from Grinnell College and a Master of Arts in Environmental Leadership and Experiential Education from Naropa University.

Melinda McCall has been hired as the 7th/8th Grade Learning Specialist, replacing Sally Yazwinski who will join a graduate program at the University of New Hampshire next year. Melinda has been an assistant teacher at Four Rivers for 9 years. She did her student teaching in Ms. Locke's 7th Grade Math/Science classroom and filled in for Ms. Locke for a semester last year. Ms. McCall holds a B.A. in Environmental Design from UMass, and a Master of Science in Forestry from UMass.

Deborah Chamberlain has been hired to take over for Melinda McCall as the Division 3 Assistant Teacher. She lives in Wendell and has been teaching Wellness at the Francis Parker Charter Essential School in Devens for the past 16 years. Deborah worked for 3 years prior to that at NYC Outward Bound and 8 years at the Hurricane Island Outward Bound in Florida. Ms. Chamberlain holds a B.S. in Education and Biology from North Adams State College (now MCLA).

Lastly, our school has also been approved to have an *Americorps* volunteer at the school next year as an Academic Support Assistant. This person will work up to 35 hours a week, helping with the Title I program, Homework Club, and other related assignments.

Off to summer. May yours be rejuvenating and safe. We'll be in touch.

Peter Garbus, Principal



Grade 7 News

WHAT IS WASTE EXPEDITION



Clockwise from left: Luka and Milou take notes on how recycling is sorted on fieldwork; Jeffrey traces the path of recyclables away from the school to the Springfield Recycling Center; Students ask questions about compost at Martin's Farm.



SOCIAL STUDIES

And they're off! Seventh grade students participate in the 5th annual Greek Games, a Wellness and social studies investigation of the ancient Greek Olympics. (photo below)



ENGLISH

Below, Dylan and Rhianon in "Hecuba's Break," written by Toby! Bottom: students rehearse for their drama productions.



SPANISH—making Piñatas in the shape of fruit, below.



Grade 8 News

MAKE A BOAT. MAKE IT FLOAT.



This was our first ever cardboard boat project—amazingly cool and successful! Students applied Archimedes' Principle and the design skills that they've been honing this year to create boats that would carry three passengers. Nine of the twelve boats completed part or all of the passage" from pier to pier on the lake at the DAR State Forest. Teachers were very proud of the students' effort, attitudes and courage!



English and Social Studies

In English, eighth graders finished up their study of the Hero's Journey and Fahrenheit 451 with a Socratic Seminar, discussing the question, *How is Fahrenheit 451 a Hero's Journey?* With Passage Presentations on the horizon, students began to reflect on their own lives as a journey. Asked, *what does it mean to be thirteen or fourteen*, students responded strikingly through poetry, narrative, or a letter to themselves.

In Social Studies, they began studying Rites of Passage through multiple case studies from different cultures, and wrote essays about how rites of passage affect individuals and communities. They also formed small groups to create their own rite of passage ceremony, applying what they had learned. Last Friday, eighth graders finished up their study with a visit to the Path of Life Garden in Windsor, Vermont, a 14-acre sculpture garden that traces the circle of life. Students interviewed the creator of the garden and shared their favorite parts of the garden. There, eighth grad-

ers also learned about their final task: to design an eighth grade rite of passage ceremony that honors their middle school experiences and celebrates their new role as high school students. The ceremony was held on Wednesday, June 12th at Four Rivers and was a lovely ending to a successful school year.



DIV 2 NEWS

I-SEARCH FAIR — Ryan Ambuter



The ninth grade I-SEARCH is the first big research project for high school students—and the projects displayed at June 7th I-SEARCH FAIR illustrate the varied interests of our students. Clockwise from above: Ceridwyn Carlton (Dairy Goats), Neva Newcombe (Astronomy) and Tessa Perry (Premature Babies)



SPANISH — Seña Beardslee

Spanish 2

In Spanish 2 students have ended the year diving into the study and exploration of music. They kicked-off the investigation by seeing a model presentation about blue grass music, and then they each chose to present a music genre of their own liking explaining the origin, using new vocabulary to describe rhythm, harmonies and instruments and then incorporated the future tense to explain their opinions about what direction the music might take in the next 20 years. Then, they investigated closely the lyrics and a few exploratory genres, listening to many different kinds of music and reading about their origins in the process. Their culminating product was a short presentation of a genre of Latin music in which they played a song and analyzed 2 lines of lyrics and explained both the history and the future of that genre.

Spanish 3

After gathering vocabulary and seeing 3 different models for telenovelas they wrote their own in small groups. The work included vocabulary from the different sections of the year and needed to include several hypothetical situations and show attempts at problem solving. They filmed these with elaborate costumes and took full advantage of the FR campus as their stage!

DIV 3 NEWS

CHEMISTRY—Mr. Patari

In Chemistry class juniors are calculating how much household antacid would be needed to neutralize an industrial acid spill in the Connecticut River.



At right: Isabel and Tilyr use an indicator solution to complete a neutralization reaction.

Left: Senior Ricky King exudes chemistry confidence.



ENGLISH—Ms. Plath

With the year winding down, it's time for the junior class's annual production of *The Undercurrents*. A lot of prep work went into this year's edition. Over the past month, students met with experts: Hilary Price of *Rhymes With Orange* taught them about cartooning, and they were able to Skype with writers from *The Onion*, perhaps the best-known modern satirical newspaper. Students brainstormed headlines in groups, then chose from among those headlines for their own original articles. Students each wrote two articles and drew one cartoon. They then voted on which articles and cartoons would be included in this year's edition.



JUNIORS VISIT BOSTON COLLEGES

Juniors spent a day in Boston exploring the Colleges of the Fenway, including Mass Art, Wentworth, Simmons, and Northeastern. They navigated the subway to spend a beautiful afternoon by the Harbor. One group visited the New England Aquarium and another followed the Freedom Trail to the USS Constitution.

GOODBYE TO OUR GRADUATES

Thirty-one graduates said goodbye to Four Rivers on June 1st. Our graduation ceremony is always special because the featured speakers are the graduates themselves. We share with you here some excerpts from their speeches.

Jamila Roth:

Finally, my classmates at Four Rivers have made high school a truly special experience. We strive to create an open community and we collaborate to bring out the best in each other...I hope that we remain friends for the rest of our lives. Although it may seem like we are now splintering this great community, we will carry forward the spirit and synergy of our class and have it as a resource to draw from. I am confident that we, the Class of 2013, the charismatic community, will leave high school, and with the knowledge imparted by the Four Rivers ethos, the inspiration from our teachers, and the love and support of our families and peers, will go off into the infinite and accomplish great things.

Garrett Gamache:

Ladies and gentlemen, twelve years is a long time to be doing anything, especially education. School is a difficult bridge that can only be crossed with hard work and help. On this bridge lies a plethora of tests, quizzes, labs, short lunches, even frustrating times that make us tear our hair out. Right down to the last minute of our fight to cross the bridge do we sweat and breathe heavily regardless of how fit we are. But this was not a race to the finish, it was a journey as soldiers of a different kind and we had to encourage and occasionally carry our comrades along with us. For some people it proves to be too much of a challenge. For others this is just a leisurely walk. But for all of us that journey ends today, and a new one begins.

Noah Hellmund:

We have learned to live life as individuals as the transcendentalists did and to find leverage points in any issue to best serve others. We have learned to find properties ranging from the minute organisms to the immeasurable forces driving our lives. As we continue to learn and continue our education, we must realize the power we hold. Our generation has to take up the slack left by the world, sharing our skills, knowledge, and respect with our communities, our nation, and the world.

Sam Sol

I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to experience both doubt and hope at Four Rivers. I have built a permanent foundation here, and it is fitting that next year I will attend architecture school, where I will build my dreams upon what I have learned.

I'm grateful for the friends, family, and teachers that provided the opportunity to become someone I didn't expect to be, to experience the unrestricted pursuit of my dreams and to ground me in the reality of hesitation. It is now that the graduating class approaches the next level of its investigation, locating the hope within our doubt, and carrying everything we have acquired into the future.

Kyle Sweeney

While I learned to do well in school and managed to complete all of my required classes here and more, my grades do not define me. My flaws do not define me and I have learned to let them be flaws. I am defined by the things I love to do: play disc, build gardens, run, and teach. The nurturing from all of you guys here today is the reason that I am here with a cap on. I am so



Above: Seniors leave school on their last day of classes, down a sidewalk lined by cheering and clapping students and faculty.

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Graduation Speech Excerpts — *continued from page 6*

grateful for this experience and I hope to continue developing my place in the world as I begin life after graduation. I feel ready to move on and to use what I have learned throughout my life. As a student at Four Rivers, I have gained a remarkable sense of who I am and where I want to go. The last four years of high school have been inspirational and rewarding. I am defined by the great friends I have chosen to be part of my life, this graduating class and all of the Four Rivers Community has shown me that I am a leader, a student, a friend, and most importantly I am Kyle Sweeney and I have so much more work to do.

Levi Howard:

My teachers here always saw the best in me, never turned a cheek, and were always there to support me; so when I decided in 10th grade to turn my life around, I was able to. Now, I'm graduating from Four Rivers, and it's not by the skin of my teeth. I'm a good student now. Very good. And I think I've become a good guy, too. The staff and the faculty--they've always seen the best in me, and as a result that best has been able to come out. And my classmates--they've pretty much accepted me through everything. I don't know how I would have turned out if I had gone anywhere but here. So I just wanted to let everyone know that I'm grateful. Thank you.

Brian Wendel:

I think each individual in our class was meant to come to Four Rivers because this school advocates for and teaches its students to do what I've just said - be well rounded. Our grade has shown our willingness to adopt the Four Rivers principles, and I feel that the impact we've had because of that is significant. Those who started this school have focused on teaching creative and critical thinking, strengthening our abilities to think independently, participate well in groups, and be leaders. The school promotes taking responsibility for the health of the community, problem solving, investigating, and expressing compassion, all the while staying happy and healthy. It is clear to me that they've done their jobs with commitment and passion because the Four Rivers principles of education and work live in my thoughts and in my actions, and I can say that about my classmates, as well.

Ben Garbus:

"Self-directed experiential learning" -- this has been a very real concept for me. I've directed myself from the frisbee field to the basketball court to the bronze foundry to the library to the admitted students receptions, and every "experience" I've had has been a great opportunity to grow. Before every basketball game, Mr. Wilson, Coach Wilson, would say, "We have a great opportunity today, boys." And it always was. Every day I find myself with great opportunities. And I'm grateful for that. Henry Miller said that "every moment is a golden one for him who has the vision to recognize it as such," and I find myself floating within these golden moments all the time. I didn't think that high school was going to be a golden moment, but over the years, I've worked on my vision, and now I recognize it as such. I have such appreciations for all of you.

May this graduation be just the beginning of even greater things for you!

NURSE'S NOTES

We recently completed height and weight measurements for all 7th and 10th grade students. The results show that 22% of 10th grade boys, 38% of 10th grade girls, 41% of 7th grade boys and 33% of 7th grade girls are significantly overweight. Parents, please help your child this summer by providing fresh fruits and vegetables; more walking (fewer car rides); plenty of water. For other ideas please visit:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/index.html

Reminder: ALL students participating in sports must have a recent physical exam. May you all have a safe and restful summer; I'll see you in August.

Jeanne Milton, RN — jmilton@fourriverscharter.org

CAMPS

This summer, Joshua Hornick, our very own Division 3 math teacher (and musical accompanist) is offering three camps in Hadley. They are

Rocketry July 1-3

Comedy July 15-19

Fast Oklahoma Production August 5-16

For more information, visit the Woodshed Camps website. www.WoodshedCamps.wordpress.com or contact Mr. Hornick at 413-695-2509.



In Mr. Patari's Homemade Sports Club students have been enjoying games that they invented earlier in the semester. Left: Two "homemade athletes" face off at the net.

ADMISSIONS

FALL ENROLLMENT

Next Interim Lottery—July 10th

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

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248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301

Four Rivers Charter Public School



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.