

Four Rivers Currents

September—October 2014

From the Principal's Desk...

MAKING THE MOST OF MY MISTAKES

I walk into a seventh grade classroom and see a poster above the board: “Are you making the most of your mistakes?” For seventh graders and school administrators, that is such a good question. With so many opportunities to make mistakes, I have one juicy one to report. I missed (as in, did not fully read) a memo from the charter school office last February saying that Commonwealth charter schools (we are one) do not have to comply with new educator evaluation regulations. Something I read last fall convinced me that we *did* have to follow those regulations, so I began preparing myself to follow them. Then I set aside time last spring for our faculty to prepare. And then this fall I read a clarification — repeating what I should have read last February. I made my amends to our faculty and I announced the same amend at a Division 3 community meeting.

We say that an amend should carry a commitment not to make the same mistake twice, so how might I make the most of this mistake? Does it mean I have to read every single word of every single email I get? Well, maybe yes, especially when it comes from the Department. Does it mean that somehow I was over-conscientious? Don't do something until you absolutely have to? That could be the story with the microwaves — I followed what I was told until I could find evidence that what I was told was not true. I think the best lesson I can draw from this mistake is to balance compliance with skepticism. As a school leader, I both have to make sure we are following the rules we're supposed to, and at the same time protect our institution and faculty from what is not absolutely required.

It is this spirit — make the most of your mistakes — that I hope our students bring to their upcoming STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES. The idea of these conferences is to have students update parents and advisor on the current state of their academics and goals for this year. Students seem to approach this task as if they are writing a college essay — how much good stuff can I present so they don't see any bad stuff? However, genuine goals are much better focused on our key struggles and challenges. That means students might need to focus on what's not exactly working the way we want it to. They might need to open up and share what's hard for them. Sometimes what's hard in these conferences is simply getting the student to speak, but maybe when they do they can think about what really needs work for them.

Which leads me to my last thought for this column. I'm becoming known to our students as the guy who talks about GROWTH MINDSET and GRIT. These are two concepts I try to introduce to all our new students, with booster shot reminders along the way. The Growth Mindset is the idea that our capabilities are not fixed and can be expanded through effort. Students who believe this — those who have this mindset — are more likely to work hard at school. That connects to the idea of grit — which in this context means the ability or tendency to stick with something over a long period of time despite obstacles or setbacks. The theory says that grit, more than any other quality, is the key to success. So the process of holding student-led conferences can work for your student the more they believe working hard and sticking with something will lead to valuable growth. I hope the conferences go well for you. Have you made your appointment?



Also, Did you place a coffee order? Have you gathered up your electronics, appliances, and metal for recycling?

Peter Garbus, Principal

Grade 7 News

SERVICE TO COMMUNITY—GREEN RIVER CLEANUP

Seventh grade students participated in the Green River Cleanup on Friday, September 26th as part of the Connecticut River Watershed Council's Source to Sea Cleanup. After the task was complete, they reflected about the trash, the river, and the 7th grade community at Four Rivers. Here's what they had to say:

"We helped by picking up trash so it doesn't poison healthy things." - Dave

"The river was flowing, swirling, fast and slow." - Xihu

"During the Green River clean up, I learned we can all be responsible for ourselves." - Esme

"The 7th grade isn't scared to get their hands down and dirty." - Cedar

"I learned that we can accomplish hard tasks with the help of each other." - Elsie



SPANISH — Ms. Beardslee

To support the work of Mini-Me in the Spanish class, students became familiar with a set of words through creating their own illustrated alphabets. They also learned to share small pieces of information about themselves to an authentic audience (their new middle school peers!). Through this exercise, they practiced the difference between masculine and feminine words and learned how to make nouns plural. The 7th graders also gave mini-presentations in Spanish at the Division 1 community meeting on September 19th, where they introduced themselves and shared one fact, memorized, entirely in Spanish to the rest of the 7th and 8th grade students and teachers.



Grade 8 News

WE ARE....

Eighth grade English kicked off the year with creating their *Who I Am* posters and composing their *Where I'm From* poems. Who am I, who are you, and who are we? These are the guiding questions for the beginning of our year together. We are currently designing Biographical Flyers about each other. And a few weeks ago, we went into the field (and forest!) to conduct fieldwork related to survival as we began to address who are we, and study group dynamics. All of this ties into our reading of *Lord of the Flies*.



L - R above: Ri finding food ; Maddy trading. Below: Making Fire - Sean, Jayden, Julia and Paige

8th GRADE SPANISH

In 8th grade Spanish, students have begun their study of Guatemala. They are currently reading about a girl their age in Guatemala and comparing their lives, customs, school, homes and traditions to hers. This month students begin learning about the Barriletes gigantes (giant kites) which are made in order to celebrate Dia de los muertos. Students will be creating their own Barriletes gigantes with messages of hope in English and Spanish as an Expedition for Math, Science, Humanities and Spanish.



DIV 2 NEWS

SPANISH, SCIENCE and ENGLISH classes collaborate on FOOD & FARMING expedition

In Spanish 2, with Ms. Beardslee and Ms. Rice, students are exploring where their food comes from as a part of the English/Science/Spanish Food and Farming expedition. As they re-acclimate to the idea of speaking Spanish in the classroom, they are learning new vocabulary based on words needed for basic conversations in the present tense. Students will soon create comic strips and odes to the fruits and vegetables that they consume which come from Latin American countries. Slowly, we are working our way through to recognize, read and write our own stories of the journey of a fruit or vegetable. Additionally, students in the 9th grade have explored reading and writing odes and have used the ode as a way to appreciate one of the foods they consume every day by describing it through its physical characteristics and using metaphors and similes whenever possible to bring the description to life. In class, they use verbal definitions to describe words; they also draw and act out new words and story parts to get the main idea. **Look for our work at the Food and Farming Presentation Night in November!**



Spanish 2 students acting out the word "HOGAR."



Above Left: Luka and Micah weed lettuce at Just Roots Farm; Right: Tim picking raspberries at Nourse

SPANISH 3 — Ms. Beardslee

These students have jumped right in with a quick & solid review of the past tense verbs, key phrases to use when indicating those events in one's own writing and how to identify what is happening when reading. From this, students read samples, looked at different narrative pieces and poems and gathered information about where they live. They then imagined an ideal place and described a hypothetical situation in the future: a place they would live and what they might do there. Classroom conversations have been based on narrating and describing situations and events in the past and looking at certain hypothetical situations in the near future.

DIV 3 NEWS

Coming Soon - A Documentary by Four Rivers Seniors

The energy expedition for this year's senior class is officially underway. Across their classes seniors have been looking at the different ways in which people generate energy and the effects that these energy sources have at a variety of spatial levels. In English class they read non-fiction to get a better sense of each energy source. In Math class they dive into the data behind energy generation and come up with effective graphics that make sense of the numbers. As part of their energy study in Civics class, students are learning how to calculate our school's carbon footprint. And in Physics class students learned about the nature of energy in its various states and the ways in which we transform it into useful forms.

Our end product of all of this learning will be a documentary film planned and produced by our senior class. One of their biggest resources for the process is Greenfield Community Television. GCTV has agreed to train seniors on filming and editing in addition to offering use of nearly all the equipment students will need to use in the process. On September 25th and October 2nd seniors spent time at GCTV on Main Street in Greenfield in order to get familiar with the plethora of cameras, microphones, and other filming equipment. Each group produced a short video as part of their introduction. Look for these videos on the Four Rivers website or on GCTV's website (www.gctv.org).

There is still a lot of work ahead for our seniors in this expedition. Updates will come in future issues of the Currents, and the premier is tentatively planned for the beginning of the second semester.

Photos from top: Finn McMillan, Asia Littell and Dan Hamilton prepare to film a scene in front of Greenfield Community Television. Ruben Perkins and Evan Janssen learn how to assemble an HD camera and tripod at GCTV.



CROSS-COUNTRY TEAM

Eliza Beardslee, Coach

Below — Cross Country team at the Dublin School, NH.



*Above with Coach Beardslee —
Maya! Great race at Putney School, VT!*

WINTER SPORTS SIGN-UPS

Sign-ups for winter sports will be happening soon. We will have varsity and middle school basketball teams, open to both boys and girls. In addition, we will have an intramural ultimate program at the Indoor Action dome after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This program is great for anyone who wants to improve their skill, work on their conditioning, get ready for the spring season, and have some fun.

Terry Plotkin,

Coach and Athletic Director

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCCER NEWS

Historically speaking, the Middle School Boys Soccer Team has started off pretty slowly, developing skill and team play, and finishing off strong. Not this year. The team reeled off six wins in a row before losing to Athol 1-0 on a successful penalty kick with seven minutes left in the game. So far, they have beaten Academy at Charlemont, Greenfield, Eaglebrook, Smith Academy, Turners Falls, and Granby. They have outscored their opponents 32-6.

The success has been as a result of solid team play and good ball transition up the field. Up front, the line of Morgan Magee, Evan Leaf, and Sam Laur has provided consistent scoring punch. Mica Van Iderstine and Adam Loubsky-Lonergan have provided excellent support on both ends of the field and continually develop scoring drives up the field. The defense of the deep back foursome of Max Schnorr, Keegan Hamilton, Marcel Pattavina, and Sean Clancy has been formidable. Riley Porter has played stellar goal-keeping, when not scoring while playing up front. Magee and newcomer Kam Canepari, who has been learning quickly to play the position well, have backed up Riley. Veteran River Gregoire and rookies Joe Monkiewicz, Cedar Noonan, Jon Freeman, Isaiah Newcombe, Luke Webb, and Nick LaCoy have all played varying positions and have done outstanding in their roles.

Come see us play in the second half of the season!

~ Charlie Olchowski, Coach

COLLEGE ADVISING

The College Application Process for Seniors

At the recent back to school night, we reviewed the college application process, the tasks that need to be completed, and ways we can offer support both at school and at home. The notes from the evening are here....

Complete any outstanding testing requirements:

- SAT's, ACT's, SAT subject tests
- Most seniors take the SAT's or ACT's for a second time early in their senior year

Check the testing requirements of individual schools to be sure that you are completing all of the required tests.

Finalize list of schools

- We recommend a list of 5 – 8 schools, and this should include reach, target, and safety schools, and should also be consistent with the family's financial resources.

We use Naviance to help manage the application process. Ask your child to share their list of prospective colleges with you on Naviance.

Complete applications

- The Common Application or school specific applications
- College essay, any school specific supplements and/or portfolio requirements

Apply for Financial Aid

- FAFSA – available after January 1, 2014
 - EFC forecasters are available to help with planning. See <https://fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm?execution=els1>
 - All schools are required to post a Net Price Calculator on their website and these can be helpful to get a sense of YOUR estimated cost of attending a particular school.
- We'll host a financial aid evening in December

At school we....

- Provide support during Senior Seminar
- Meet individually with seniors to review and monitor the status of their post Four River's plans
- Work on college essays during English

Host weekly visits from college admissions representatives.

At home you should.....

- Research the costs associated with different schools and discuss with your child the funds that are available for college
- Help kids sign up for SAT's and ACT's
- <http://sat.collegeboard.org/Act.org>
- <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/>
- Support your kid in terms of visiting schools
- Help with deadlines

Questions? Contact Andy Stenson, astenson@fourriverscharter.org 413 775-4577 ext. 222

EASY WAYS TO HELP RAISE \$\$

Free Money for Four Rivers! This is no gimmick. Every morning you pour your favorite cereal into a bowl. Check out the box. That little rectangle that states 'Box Top\$ for Education' is redeemable for school supplies and equipment. They are found on the boxes of General Mills cereals, ZipLoc plastic bags, and various food and consumer products. Save them in an envelope and from time to time turn them in to Carolyn Wood at the main office. Collectively, they can add up. You can also do the same with Campbell Soup can coupons. Every bit counts.

Also, next time you are at Stop & Shop, sign up at the Courtesy counter for A+ School Rewards and name Four Rivers as the recipient of your points. You can also do it online at www.stopandshop.com under the program's name. This is no cost to you and does not interfere with their Gas Point Program. So every time you shop at Stop & Shop, it automatically helps Four River's programs.

Thanks for helping!

VARSITY BOYS SOCCER

The Varsity Boys soccer team is 3-3-1 at the mid-point of our season. This is a young team with 7 new players on it from last year's middle school team, and is improving quickly. In our last game, we played first place Hartsbrook School to a tense, nicely played 0-0 tie. The playoffs begin the last week of October. Come out and watch some good soccer.

~ Terry Plotkin, Coach ~

SAT., OCTOBER 18th 9:00 — Noon

ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

FUNDRAISER

Plus Appliances, Metal



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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
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