

Four Rivers Currents

January 2015

From the Principal's Desk...

GRAPPLING: THE BENEFITS OF PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

We've reached the halfway point to the year, amazing to say. There's nothing magical or sacred about the length of a semester -- I don't know of research that says 90 days is an optimal period to measure student learning. Yet it seems a good amount of time to allow students to learn important and challenging skills while not letting too much time pass without an assessment of progress. Which is exactly what's happening, as students have finished up semester 1 work and teachers prepare semester grades and reports.

In that context, I want to introduce the latest "GR" term to go along with GROWTH MINDSET and GRIT. The word is GRAPPLE and it is a key concept underlying the Common Core State Standards which have been adopted by Massachusetts and other states. Defined as struggling or wrestling, grappling in the process of learning has to do with taking on a challenge and working through it to some kind of resolution. You can see its connection to the idea of growth mindset: we have to believe we can grow skills or capabilities through effort if we're going to be willing to grapple. You can also see the connection to grit: grappling requires that we persevere and stick with the challenge even when it's hard.

The Common Core State Standards are challenging, which is by design. They are intended to prepare students better for college and career by emphasizing skills of analysis, problem-solving, and using evidence to form interpretations and conclusions. Students are supposed to be able to read fiction and nonfiction texts well. They are supposed to be able to understand which math skills to apply to a complicated problem. And they are supposed to be able to communicate their thinking and how they got there. This spring, Four Rivers students in grades 7, 8, 9, and 11 will try out the new PARCC tests, which have been created to try to measure performance of these new standards (Grade 10 has a couple more years of MCAS before it, too, is replaced by the new tests).

Our school is preparing for these new tests and standards in several ways. In a couple weeks, the faculty will try out practice Math and English Language Arts tests and get familiar with the tools students will use when they take the tests on computer. Then we'll give students a chance to experience what the tests are like. However, the real preparation is teaching students skills connected to the standards, which brings us back to grappling. If students need to learn how to use their brains well, we need to design learning experiences that call on them to use their brains. That means we can't just give them information. That means we can't be the ones who always connect the dots. That means we have to put students in spots where they might have to struggle a bit, because it's through the struggling that they learn.

Struggling a bit is different from being overwhelmed; we have to try to create conditions for productive struggle. In a book titled, *"How to Support Struggling Students"*, the authors Jackson and Lambert describe the difference between productive and unproductive struggle: "In a productive struggle, on the other hand, students grapple with the issues and are able to come up with a solution themselves, developing persistence and resilience in pursuing and attaining the learning goal or understanding," says Jackson. "In productive struggles, kids have developed the necessary strategies for working through something difficult. They can also take a teacher's suggestions for help and run with them." Our teachers this year have been working together to learn a format for lesson design that Expeditionary Learning calls Workshop 2.0. And grapple -- in its verb or its noun form -- lies at the heart of such a lesson.



Peter Garbus, Principal

Heading into semester 2, we'll continue such efforts. Now the question becomes whether our students are learning what they need to grapple well.

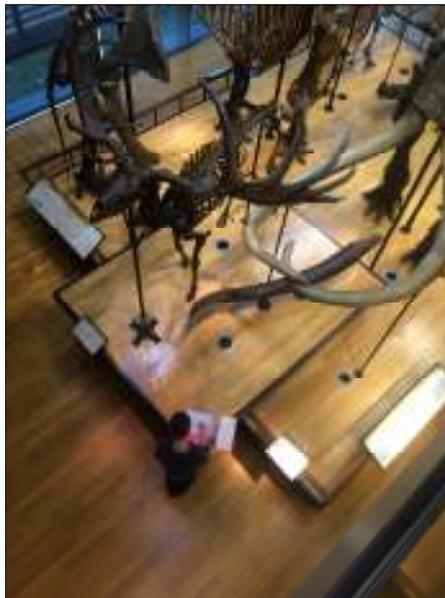
Grade 7 News

MUSEUM FIELDWORK

Museum visits extend beyond "field trip" at Four Rivers. In fact, the role of museums in answering real-world questions and helping our students create authentic work is precisely why we go to museums on fieldwork. In December, 7th graders went to The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and The Beneski Museum of Natural History. These visits helped students complete necessary research for projects in English, social studies, and science.



Clockwise from top left: Gina uses her fieldwork journal to examine the qualities of illustrations on the walls of the galleries and in books; Devin attempts his own illustrations in the studio at the Eric Carle Museum; Lexy works with water color to create an illustrated self portrait; Maddie, Anna and Nikkie read through books in the Eric Carle Museum library, comparing the styles and techniques of illustrators and authors; Sam studies the fossils of mammals from previous geologic time periods; Maia and Xihu answer research questions by searching through drawers filled with fossils.



Grade 8 News

Eighth Grade Service Immersion

The Four Rivers mission statement reads: *Four Rivers Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service.* For the week of December 15 - 19, 8th graders spent each morning providing service somewhere in the community. Students unloaded boxes and sorted donated items at Amherst Survival Center and the Turners Falls Survival Center; they weeded greenhouse beds and moved rocks out of fields at Just Roots Farm; they decorated cookies with elders at Charlene Manor, created winter-break activity booklets for low-income children, baked pies for the Center For Self-Reliance, and made lasagne, chili, and apple crisp for Community Meals. Several groups of eighth graders also worked with children at the Four Corners School, the Greenfield Girls' Club, and at several Head Start preschool locations.

Each day, students journaled about the day's experience and responded to different quotes that connected to our guiding questions, which were:

What is service, in your opinion?

What service-based activities have you participated in?

What do you think you have to offer others?

Can service change who you are?

Though each student took away something different from our week of service, our common purpose was to explore what it means to be of service, and how service can benefit others as well as ourselves.



River Gregoire, Mica Van Iderstine, Max Schnorr, Wilson Lewis and Raine Leue (not pictured) prepared meals--including dessert--for the Community Meals program during the 8th Grade Service Intensive Week.

DIV 2 NEWS

ENGLISH — *Ms. Ritchie*

The ninth graders have just kicked off their I-Search project. This long-term research project asks students to choose a topic they are truly interested in and learn more about it through research, real experience, and talking to experts in the field. Some of the topics students have chosen include hunting safety and education, blacksmithing, trick riding, sugar's effect on the brain, teaching martial arts, adoption, and a history of explosives. The students are psyched about their topics--ask them to tell you about their research!

As part of the English/Social Studies "Do Something!" Expedition, the tenth graders just completed research papers on topics connected to civil and human rights issues. Research questions tackled a range of topics from "Who can see my emails and texts?" to "How can I stop sexism in the video game community?" They are now working in small groups to prepare workshops for Four Rivers students on their topics.

MATH — *Mr. Schatz*

In Algebra 1 class, 9th grade students are wrapping up their study of linear equations, functions, and systems. While most of their work entails working with graphs and solving equations, students are also being introduced to the applications of this material to economics through linear programming. As high school math moves further and further away from mental math, students are spending time working on thoroughly and clearly communicating their thought-process in class and on paper.

In Geometry, 10th graders have spent the last month or so focused on understanding more about properties of circles. As they finish out the semester, students are grappling with puzzle problems, getting introduced to 10th grade MCAS questions, and taking an opportunity to review the topics of triangles, quadrilaterals, and circles through constructions, ALEKS work, and solving challenging problems in class. As we transition to the second semester, the worlds of algebra and geometry continue to merge in interesting ways.

U.S. HISTORY — *Ms. Tabachnick*

U.S. History 1 - Ninth grade social studies students recently wrapped up the REVOLUTION standard. They taught their peers about the causes of the American Revolution and researched the modern Tea Party Movement. Afterwards, they made two minute YouTube commentaries that stated their opinion on whether or not they believe the current movement is the embodiment or the antithesis of the 1700's Tea Party and American Revolution and shared them with their peers. We culminated the standard with a lively Socratic Seminar that debated the same question.

U.S. History 2 - Tenth grade social studies students have delved deeply into the RACE AND RIGHTS standard by way of three case studies. The first study explored the causes of the Civil War with the essential dilemma being whether or not states have a rights to secede from the union. The second case study required students to determine what it really means to be a U.S. citizen. The third study asked students to reflect upon whether or not they believe that we, as a nation, have secured civil rights.

DIV 3 NEWS

On the last day of school before the New Year's holiday, Juniors spent a morning doing service projects in their community. The photo at right shows a group of juniors who spent the morning making brownies for Stone Soup Café. Other groups caroled at the Charlene Manor (nursing home) near the school, and others worked at Just Roots Farm.



Juniors have finished their first semester with a Humanities project wrapping up their study of the Holocaust. The *Rescuers Monologue Project* combined content from History with presentation skills honed in English. In Social studies students read the graphic novel, *Maus*, and studied the unique identities of perpetrators, victims, and bystanders during this important time period. To do so, students had to first work to better understand themselves and their peers. In English, students practiced composing and delivering speeches. As the semester drew to a close, juniors delivered monologues telling the stories of rescuers from the Holocaust.

Senior Energy Expedition

In mid-December, the senior class traveled to Falmouth to interview stakeholders and residents about Cape Wind. Teams of students met with Audra Parker, President of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound; Patrick Cassidy of the Cape Cod Times; and Sarah Cote of Cape Cod Self-Reliance. Other students boarded a ferry to Nantucket to get scenic shots and interviewed people on the streets of Falmouth and Yarmouth and at a local high school. Another team used the Quadcopter and Go-Pro camera to film aerial shots of the beaches of Cape Cod.



The project has now entered a new phase with students script-writing, searching for archival footage and sound effects, and composing and editing the film.

Our film premiere is going to be held at the Greenfield Garden Cinemas on Thursday, February 12th, at 7:30 pm. We'd like to invite everyone to attend and celebrate our students' hard work at the culmination of this expedition.



ART SPACE TEEN SHOW 2015

The following students will have art work in the upcoming Artspace Teen Show 2015 at **Artspace Community Arts Center**, 15 Mill Street, Greenfield, MA.

Heather Jablonksi ~ Dan Hamilton ~ Ceridwyn Carlton ~ Neva Newcombe

The show will open on Monday, January 19th and Artspace will host an artists' reception on Friday, January 30th from 5 to 7 pm. *Drawing below is by senior Dan Hamilton.*



ADMISSIONS OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, Jan. 31, 10:00-11:30 am

Wednesday, Feb. 11, 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!

SIBLINGS of Four Rivers students who wish to enroll for Fall 2014 must submit an application by the deadline of 5:00 pm on Feb.25, 2015!

CALL NOW!

NURSE'S NOTES

Happy 2015! May this year be filled with health and laughter. Recent TV ads have discussed the benefits of children receiving the HPV vaccine. **Human papillomavirus (HPV)** is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States. More than half of sexually active men and women are infected with HPV at some time in their lives. HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer in women ages 20 to 30. Please speak with your child's physician about this important vaccine. For more information go to <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/vaccines/hpv.html>. Stay safe!

Jeanne Milton, RN

COLLEGE ADVISING

Seniors are “in the thick” of college application season. Ever wonder where our students apply? To date just over half of our seniors have applied, and the schools they have applied to include:

American University, Alfred University, Bard, Becker, Bennington College, Boston University, Champlain, Clark University, Columbia College, Drexel, Duke, Emmanuel, Emerson, Evergreen State, Fitchburg State, Framingham State, Goucher College, Guilford, Hampshire, Haverford, Hartwick, Johns Hopkins, Kalamazoo, Lesley University, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health, University of Maine, UMass (Amherst, Lowell & Boston), University of New Hampshire, Oberlin, Oberlin Conservatory, University of Rhode Island, Roger Williams, Sarah Lawrence, Simmons, Smith, University of Southern New Hampshire, Stanford, SUNY Purchase, SUNY Stony Brook, Suffolk, University of Tampa, Towson, Tufts, Vanderbilt, University of Vermont, Wheelock, Wheaton

While it's still early in the admissions season, the following colleges have said YES! to our students:

Emanuel College, Champlain College, University of Tampa, Hampshire College (2), Becker College, Fitchburg State University, Wheelock College (2), Framingham State University, Southern New Hampshire University, Evergreen State College, Towson, Lesley (2), University of Tampa, Hartwick and University of New Hampshire.

FAFSA Support

Need help filing the FAFSA? Free information and support is available at FAFSA Sundays. Information available here: <http://www.fafsaday.org/locations.php>

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

BASKETBALL

The JV Basketball team is off to a great start this winter. With only a couple practices under their belt in early December, they took on Hartsbrook School for their first game, showing a great deal of perseverance as they fought back from 17 points down to narrowly lose in the final minutes. The team was proud of their comeback and took that momentum into their next game against Bement. A full team effort led to their first victory of the season in that game!

Mr. Schatz ~ Coach

DRAMA CLUB

PRESENTS

Kill Me, Deadly

The Four Rivers Drama Club is proud to present *Kill Me, Deadly*, a noir comedy.

The show starts at 7:30 on Friday, February 27th and Saturday, February 28th at the Shea Theater in Turner's Falls.

Tickets will be on sale starting February 2nd and will cost \$7 in advance and \$9 at the door.

BUY A YEARBOOK AD

Celebrate your child's accomplishments this year with a parent ad in the yearbook! Ads are full-color and can be any combination of photos and text. Pricing is as follows:

1/8 pg (business card size) - \$20

1/4 page - \$25

1/2 page - \$50

Full page - \$100

Ads are due to Leah Plath, yearbook advisor, by Friday, February 13th.

DIVISION 2 CREW

Division 2 crews have been working on monthly service projects. For the month of November, each crew cut up apples, made pie crusts, and assembled apple pies for baking at home. Twelve pies were delivered to the Center for Self-Reliance before Thanksgiving and they were all snapped up by the end of the day. Many thanks to parent Meg Baker who helped out through soliciting donations from local businesses and helping crews make their pie crusts. Also, thanks to parents who loaned supplies to their students' crews. In December, crews made holiday cards which were delivered to the Center for Aging in Greenfield and to the Soldiers Home in Holyoke. Both groups greatly appreciated the cards. In January, we are considering ways in which to work with the GCC Food Pantry. If any parent would like to help out, contact your student's advisor.



Left: the men of Mr. Schatz's crew make pie dough.

Above: crimping crusts in Ms. Haxo's crew....then add apple filling and another crust on top.

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

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



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.