

Four Rivers Currents

February 2017

From the Principal's Desk...

DRAFT PLAN FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

At its February 13 retreat, the Four Rivers Board of Trustees considered and prioritized possible focus areas for an important part of the upcoming Application for Charter Renewal: plans for the next five years. The board reviewed pages of data on academics and school culture from the past 4 years or more and went through a process of sorting and ranking different possible priorities. They also reviewed survey input that some of you offered. The March 1 Coffee with the Principal will discuss this draft and there may be an evening meeting as well with the same focus. I would like to give everyone the chance to consider these priorities and offer suggestions you might have before the board votes on the renewal application at its March 13 meeting. Click [HERE](https://docs.google.com/a/fourriverscharter.org/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeqBl-IXcSGgE2DVxTSFxxnskoXGEWJwMMW2jrNQU87lfhV2hg/viewform?c=0&w=1&pli=1) (<https://docs.google.com/a/fourriverscharter.org/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeqBl-IXcSGgE2DVxTSFxxnskoXGEWJwMMW2jrNQU87lfhV2hg/viewform?c=0&w=1&pli=1>) or get in touch for a paper version) to offer feedback on the draft below.

"As the Four Rivers board and school community reviews achievements and needs after fourteen years in operation, a number of priorities emerge for the next five year charter. EL (Expeditionary Learning) Education encourages schools to consider 3 dimensions of achievement: mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high quality work. Four Rivers embraces these categories and seeks to move students further and further to achieving these important outcomes by focusing on the following areas of our program:

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING: Four Rivers aims to teach all students as whole people, with motivations, social skills, learning strategies, mindsets, and behaviors that affect nearly every aspect of how they learn and function. This focus area will continue efforts the school has made on habits of work and learning, non-cognitive factors, and character development for all students, with a particular focus on those students who struggle with school or learning individually or at particular stages of their movement through the school (i.e. grades 8-10).

EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING: The principles, practices, and priorities of expeditionary learning lie at the heart of the Four Rivers program. The school's success — and whatever models it has to share with district public schools — have mostly to do with structures such as learning expeditions, connecting to real world settings, creating real products for real audiences, sharp focus on literacy and numeracy, creating learning experiences that engage, active pedagogy, and more. The school will continue and increase opportunities and supports for expeditions, fieldwork, intensives, and the active learning experiences that make the school what it is.

MATH: The school has made specific improvements over the past 3 years in the Math Program, including a comprehensive program study, a review of textbooks and materials, curriculum revision, focus on standards for mathematical practice, and two years of work with a math coach on instruction and assessment. While there appears to be improvement in middle school math achievement, the school will continue to work on practices and structures of its math program.

ARTS: Engaged, active, inspired, skilled young people who are prepared for college and citizenship requires broad learning in many academic disciplines, including the Arts. It can be challenging for a small school with limited facilities to offer rich and varied opportunities for visual arts, music, and performing arts. The school will work to expand arts opportunities through clubs, intensives, expeditions, and specials.



Peter Garbus, Principal

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Grade 7 News

POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST:

7th grade scientists communicate science facts through science fiction

On February 10th, as the rest of the student body headed home Friday afternoon, the 7th graders boarded busses and vans to install their Postcards from the Past exhibit at the Bedneski Museum of Natural History on the Amherst College Campus. After several years of working together on annual exhibits, Museum Director Alfred Venne suggested the idea of an official opening event to give the project the attention and celebration the students deserve after all their hard work. Despite the snow days and delays which limited our preparation time, the culminating event was a success!



Post Cards will be on display at the Bedneski Museum of Natural History at Amherst College until the end of February vacation.



Grade 8 News

The 8th grade celebrated the decline of feudalism with a medieval feast and performances of ballads! Seated at a long table, students did not get to enjoy authentic pottage (medieval definition: boiled anything), but instead enjoyed each other's company, apple cider, bread, cheese, fig spread, and enjoyed watching and listening to their peers bring their medieval ballads to life.

Below are photos featuring the Medieval Feast, as well as Lily singing "The Ballad of Questionable Eyesight" while playing ukulele, and Joe B performing as a metal smith in his own ballad titled "The Ballad of John Smith."



DIVISION 2 NEWS

THEY DID SOMETHING

The tenth graders just wrapped up their “Do Something!” expedition with a series of workshops and media campaigns. Students began the expedition by brainstorming issues of injustice that they felt compelled to “do something” about, such as environmental pollution, corruption, racial injustice, and food deserts. They then chose one issue to research in depth and write about. After completing their research papers, they joined forces with students who chose similar topics, and these groups developed a 60-minute workshop on that topic. They presented these workshops to Four Rivers students and teachers on Friday, February 10. Some of the workshop titles include *Body Image and the Media*, *See Color*, *Corruption in America*, *New England in the Modern Day*, *Students’ Free Speech*, the *Gun Control Debate*, *Herstory Happens*, *What does it mean to be white?* and *Poisoning Poseidon*. These students also completed a media campaign in which they “did something” about their topic beyond Four Rivers. Some students presented at elementary or middle schools; others visited college campuses to raise awareness about their issues; some created social media campaigns. In the final step of the expedition, the students learned how to use Adobe InDesign software to create pages for next year’s school planner. Each of the pages raises awareness about one of these important issues.



Photos, clockwise from above left: Olivia presents “Herstory Happens”; Eolann facilitates a game to help students understand why people make the financial decisions they do; Mac, Charles and Jayden present “New England in the Modern Day.”

DIVISION 3 NEWS

CHEMISTRY ROAD TRIP

On Friday February 3, 11th graders visited Real Pickles in Greenfield to learn about a local business based on one of the types of reactions that we are studying in Chemistry. Real Pickles makes lacto-fermented



foods using old-fashioned methods. Before the visit, students learned about lactic acid and the anaerobic processes that our bodies and bacteria create. Once at the factory, they got to see those reactions happening and were able to enjoy some of the products. The folks at Real Pickles gave us a great first-hand look at what they do and also explained how worker-owned cooperatives like theirs work.

SENIORS PREMIERE DOCUMENTARY "Yes to Divest" AT GARDEN CINEMA

On Thursday February 16th the Four Rivers senior class debuted their documentary "Yes to Divest: The Fight for a Fossil Free Future." The film focuses on the effort on college campuses around the country, and in our state in particular, to stop investing their endowments in fossil fuels. The movie attracted plenty of viewers who packed theater number two at Greenfield's Garden Cinema. Here's a description of the film written by the students:



College divestment has been the fastest spreading movement of its type in recent history. As students struggle to make their voices heard, both within the administration of their colleges and within the greater picture of climate change, they demonstrate the younger generation's drive to secure the environmental future of their planet.

The event also included a gallery walk of the work and products that students created along the way, a making-of mini featurette, and a question and answer session with the seniors.





The new marijuana landscape

Marijuana is often one of the first drugs a teen is offered. In fact, 41 percent of teen smokers say they began before the age of 15.

National debates on the legalization of marijuana have helped normalize the behavior for many teens. In fact, 78 percent of teens say that they have close friends who use marijuana. That's why it's important that your child inherently understands that you don't approve of his use of marijuana, in the same way that you don't want him to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or use other drugs.

The new marijuana landscape doesn't change the fact that all mind-altering substances — including marijuana — are harmful for the still-developing teen brain.

**DEADLINE for FALL ENROLLMENT
~ APPLICATIONS DUE ~**

SIBLINGS OF CURRENT STUDENTS:

**Siblings receive preference in our lottery
BUT they still must submit an application.**

Appl. Deadline — Monday, Feb 27th, 5 pm

Lottery — Tuesday, February 28th

See our web site or drop by the school for an Application. Questions? Call Leslie Taylor at
413-775-4577 x202

www.fourriverscharter.org

PARENT SURVEY

Do You Have Children Between the Ages of 9-18?

The Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition needs your help! We are trying to learn more about parents' and other caregivers' concerns and what you need to assist you in the toughest job.....parenting! Weigh in by completing this online survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/JWCJgH5. It should take about 10 minutes.

We really want to hear from as many families as possible, so please help spread the word about this survey by sharing the link! We can give you a paper copy if you'd prefer to respond that way. Contact Suzie Hale, Coalition Parent Liaison, 413-772-1350 or suzhal1@gpsk12.org to get a paper copy or if you have other questions.

NURSE'S NOTES

I will be conducting state mandated health screenings the week of March 20th. Please complete the opt out form if you do NOT want your child screened.

Students who sustain a mild concussion require 3 to 5 days rest at home without screen time &/or homework. A delay in cognitive rest will delay healing. I have included a link to the Cape Cod Times summarizing a recent forum on concussions. Do NOT allow your child to return to regular activity too early if he/she sustains this type of injury.

<http://www.capecodonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20140212/NEWS/402120329&emailAFriend=1>

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Jeanne Milton, RN

COLLEGE ADVISING

COLLEGES SAYING YES! to OUR SENIORS

Seniors have started to hear back from Colleges! Schools that have said YES! to our students to date:

Colby, Unity, Becker, Fitchburg State, Cardiff University, Wales, Bournemouth University, U.K., Case Western Reserve, Clark, Green Mountain, Stirling, Juniata, Johnson State, Humboldt State, Sierra Nevada College, MCLA, Colorado College, UVM, UNH, Bridgewater State, Suffolk, Roger Williams, Quinnipiac, Endicott, UMaine, New College Florida, Eckerd, Saint Michael's, Western New England College, University of New England, Keene State, Champlain.

JUNIORS AND THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

SAT TESTING

Our plan is for all Juniors to take the SAT's for the first time in either May or June of this year. The majority of students will retake the SAT's early in their senior year. Juniors are encouraged to take advantage of the free SAT test prep that is available through Kahn Academy, and that can be individualized based on PSAT scores and scheduling preferences. Information regarding the SAT, including full practice tests and other resources, are available on the College Board website.

COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION

Four Rivers will be hosting a college information evening with Karen Kristof from Smith College and Andy Stenson, Four Rivers' college counselor. Details below:

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS INFORMATION EVENING

Wednesday, April 5th, 6:30—8:00 p.m.

Four Rivers ~ Common Room

We will share details about the college application process, including

- Development of a "Good Fit" list.
- What do College Admissions Officers look for?
- Essay Writing Suggestions and Interview Tips
- The Importance of College Visits
- Academic Preparation
- Standardized Testing
- Financial Aid Resources

The evening is open to parents and students of all Four Rivers Families. Juniors and their families are strongly encouraged to attend!

Questions ? Email astenson@frcps.org.

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PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATION: Four Rivers embraces its purpose as a charter school to contribute to important outcomes for all students, not only those attending Four Rivers. The school will increase resources and staff time to support partnerships and collaboration with district public schools, towards the purpose of defining and sharing best practices that all schools might implement and from which all students might benefit.”

Here’s what we said the last time we applied for charter renewal about our plans for the next 5 years:

- Improve student achievement to get to Level 1 in the state accountability system. Our 2016 MCAS results would have put us there, except our participation rate was too low.
- Advance the school’s teaching and learning practices. Our scores on an annual EL Implementation Review went up over the past four years.
- Determine what it means to educate for sustainability. We’re still working on this, though we see important experiences and projects in this area throughout the school.
- Enhance the school’s facilities. You might not remember this (or have known it) but the north end of the high school was built as an addition this past charter term and significantly improved that building.
- Achieve greater diversity on the board. We don’t feel this goal was accomplished and continue to consider it each year as we recruit new members to our board.

The plans we propose make a difference as we work to become the school we hope to be. Thanks for thinking about all this with us.

Peter Garbus ~ Principal

“This institution is an equal opportunity provider. To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20254.”

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.