

Four Rivers Currents

January 2017

From the Principal's Desk...

CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION THIS SPRING: WHAT'S AHEAD?

As 2017 launches, Four Rivers looks ahead to the process of applying this spring to renew the school's charter. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education grants charters in 5-year increments, so it's time for Four Rivers -- in this our 14th year of operation -- to show the state that the school is an academic success, organizationally viable, and faithful to its charter. I want to share a bit about the process and highlight one of the more interesting questions that our board will consider.

Charter renewal involves several steps. The school will submit an application for renewal in March. The application asks questions similar to the Annual Reports which we submit to the Charter School Office each year -- and which you'll find on our website under LINKS + DOCUMENTS, [REPORTS AND POLICIES](#). How well have our students been learning? How well do we implement our educational program? How are the school's finances? Enrollment? Does our recruitment and retention of students reflect the composition of our sending districts? What are the key design elements laid out by our charter? The application proceeds section by section, asking the school to present our results for this past charter term and holding the school accountable for those results.

With the application in hand, the Charter School Office -- an arm of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education -- conducts a site visit of the school to see for themselves if the evidence on the ground supports the assertions and evidence presented on paper. Some time in May, a team organized by the department will spend a day at Four Rivers interviewing focus groups -- including a group of parents -- and visiting classrooms to gather that evidence. A similar visit took place in April, 2015, so the team assesses what they see this time compared to that last visit.

From the application, site visit report, and a full analysis of the school's MCAS/PARCC results, the Charter School Office prepares a summary of review that will go to the Commissioner of Education, who will then make a recommendation to the Board. Ultimately, it is the Board's decision whether to renew the school's charter, and that votes takes place sometime next winter.

The Four Rivers Board of Trustees will consider an interesting and important question over the next couple months before it approves the renewal application: What are the school's plans for the next 5 year charter? Here are the priorities we set out the last time the school applied for renewal, with results in parentheses:

1. Improve student progress and performance to achieve Level 1 status. Our results have been mixed this last term, with two years of test-driving PARCC. (Last year's results would have put us at Level 1, except we had too many students not take the tests.)
2. Advance the school's teaching and learning practices. (Made significant progress.)
3. Determine what it means to educate for sustainability. (Made significant progress.)



Peter Garbus, Principal

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Grade 7 News

TELLING TALES

The 7th grade completed their children's stories after working with children's book illustrator and author, Micha Archer. The final products are a beautiful representation of the enduring understandings from social studies research. In 7th grade Spanish, students have been working on the art of telling stories in the present in the form of polished family trees and in the future by telling horoscopes!



Photos clockwise from above left: Gillis cuts student made papers for his collage; illustrator and author, Micha Archer, works alongside Julian to make paper for student collages; Nayana's illustration for **Toast, the Greedy Chicken**; Liv's illustration for her story, **The Second Grade Secret Project**.

FUN TIMES in 7th GRADE CREW

Snowwwwww and secret snowflake cookie decoration before vacation!

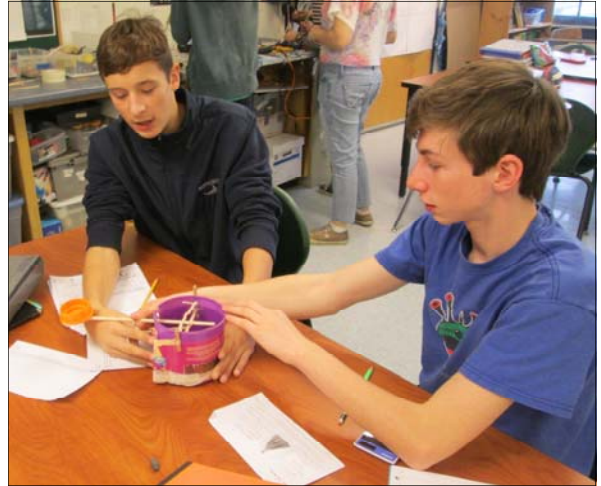
Photos clockwise from right: Ms. Hobbs' crew with their secret snowflake cookie decoration project; Ms. Locke and Ms. Hobbs make a T-Rex in honor of **A Sound of Thunder**, the short story that inspires the Postcards From the Past project; Snowy day snow sculptures during crew time.



Grade 8 News

SCIENCE & MATH

In 8th grade math and science we recently constructed catapults inspired by medieval designs as we prepared for a feudal simulation in humanities class. Students used the Engineering Design Process to identify some key features of catapults, did some brainstorming and research to design, build, test and evaluate a prototype, and then refine and redesign their catapults until they had their best possible design. Students collected a variety of data about their catapult, including launch angle, height of projectile, distance launched, mass of their projectile, and their overall accuracy and precision.



SERVICE WITH A SMILE

The 8th grade participated in a Service Immersion just before winter break. Groups of 8th graders provided energy, enthusiasm, and service for the Survival Center, baked and donated pies, played with kids and helped teachers at two local schools as well as the Girls' Club, and cooked food for Community Meals. Reflecting on the service project, one 8th grader wrote: "This week showed me that small children look up to you A LOT, then copy the things we do and want to be like us. The service changed me by showing me to be a better role-model." Another 8th grader wrote: "This week really showed me that some kids don't have as many opportunities as other kids... Service this week has made me realize that I have had really good education my whole life and I hope to help other kids have a better education." Lastly: "I learned that I can work with kids. Yes, service changed me. I feel better about myself because I helped someone else today." The photos below are from the Community Meals group, preparing a whole meal to be served to the community on January 4th, 2017.



DIVISION 2 NEWS

ENGLISH

In English, students have been busy writing! Ninth graders just finished writing short stories. Next up, they'll view and critique the film adaptations of the books they have been reading with their lit circles over the past few weeks. These books with movie adaptations include *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *I Am Legend*, *Ender's Game*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Into the Wild*, and *The Great Gatsby*. Tenth graders just finished writing research papers on different injustice topics that they want to do something about. Research questions tackled corporate greed, racial and gender inequality, environmental pollution, freedom of speech, and gun control. They are now preparing workshops on what can be done about these issues. The workshops will be presented to the Four Rivers community on Friday, February 3, from 8:30-11 am. All are welcome and encouraged to attend!

SOCIAL STUDIES

U.S. History 1 - Ninth graders are busy discovering current events and issues that in some way challenge the Constitution, laws, rights: essentially an issue or event that challenges civil liberties. They are researching case studies that exemplify the controversy and consequently formulating their own opinions. The project is titled "Democracy Dialogue." They will have a chance to bounce ideas off of Buz Eisenberg, an amazing civil liberties expert and lawyer who will be visiting Four Rivers on Friday, January 13th. After they have a good handle on the different perspectives, students will be contacting two different sources to get others' opinions on the issue; they will email a Four Rivers senior as well as an expert on their specific topic. Their end product will be a well researched and cited position paper.

U.S. History 2 - Tenth graders are in the middle of their DO SOMETHING expedition. In English class, they are busily preparing workshops to present to the Four Rivers community. In history class they are transferring those ideas and advocacy work to outside the walls of our community. They have researched what makes a successful media campaign and are embarking on a media campaign of their own. The topics are chosen by students and the campaigns are created with SMART goals in mind: goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. Be on the lookout for some tenth grade advocates.

MATHEMATICS

Ninth graders are finishing off the semester by exploring the properties of exponents. Students first investigated the patterns between numbers with positive exponents. They used these patterns to extend their understanding to zero exponents, negative exponents and rational exponents (fractions as exponents). Students are using their new found knowledge to simplify expressions and will soon extend their repertoire of functions to include exponential functions. To do so they will combine the skills they learned in the linear function standard with the new information they have gained about the properties of exponents.

Tenth graders are finishing the semester by combining all of their work this semester in a unit covering the relationships of triangles. Students first were asked to determine what information they needed to determine if two triangles are congruent. To do so, typically we would need to know that all the sides and all the angles of the two triangles are the same. However, the students used their deductive reasoning to determine that there are shortcuts that we can use. After finding the rules for triangle congruence, the students explored triangle similarity and discovered the shortcuts to determining when triangles are similar. From here, students will begin to explore special triangles and develop an understanding of trigonometric ratios.

DIVISION 3 NEWS

SENIORS

The seniors are moving into the next phase of their senior expeditions: making their products! They have done research, written papers on their topics, and presented proposals for what they plan to do. Now it's time to get busy! In the next three months, we'll see the creation of a slew of amazing products: a horror film; a sign language club; original music composed for a movie soundtrack; printmaking; a table-top role-play game and an outdoor game our kids can play in their Wellness class; a philosophy intensive; an 8x12 tiny house; crops from a winter garden; a children's book on jelly fish and another on mermaids; a hand-drawn animated film; short documentary videos on the role of faith in our lives and on the issue of violence by and against police; hip hop music, exercise and training programs for rock-climbing and circus arts; blogs; building drones and creating theatrical special-effects using make-up; sculpture made from blown sugar; a mini-cookbook; and one student is going to be taking a shot at journalism. Some of our students will do internships in the medical and mental health fields. This is an amazing time of year to be working with seniors!

Seniors are also deep into the process of making a documentary about Fossil Fuel Divestment. Days of fieldwork in Boston and at UMass-Amherst yielded footage of protests, interviews with student activists, and conversations with university leaders and thinkers in the investment industry. Students are currently working hard to carefully transcribe and organize footage.

JUNIORS

To close out their semester, Juniors are at work on creative non-fiction projects in Humanities, rooted in the perspective of a soldier in WWI or a rescuer during WWII. They are taking final, college-style, exams for the first time in math and chemistry which require brushing up on topics ranging from polynomial multiplication to parabolic functions, and periodic table trends to molar conversions.

DIVISION WIDE

All students participated in activities, service, and conversations with alumni on our last school day before vacation. Juniors lent a hand at Just Roots Community Farm, cooked a meal for hungry families with Community Meals, and sang holiday songs for elderly residents at Charlene Manor. Both classes heard stories and advice from alumni, and had a chance to ask their burning questions about life after Four Rivers! *Below – Juniors working at Just Roots!*



Continued from page 1 - From the Principal

- 4. Enhance the school's facilities. (Completed a significant addition to the school.)
- 5. Achieve greater diversity on the board. (Not yet accomplished.)

So what might we identify and prioritize for the next term? Our Trustees will generate a list of possibilities, which will be presented for discussion at the February Coffee with the Principal (8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, February 8th) and by survey to all families. One specific idea on my mind is to put focus on our responsibility to disseminate our best practices. Another likely priority will be to become a credentialed Expeditionary Learning school. Are there additional facilities priorities? Are there significant program improvements or changes to be made?

Peter Garbus, Principal

ATHLETICS

Intramural ultimate in the Indoor Action dome this winter is going great with a record number of players signed up and going at it hard.

Spring is coming. We will have 6 ultimate teams again this year: three girls' and three boys' teams, all with experienced coaches. It is going to be a fun and active spring. Anyone who wants to play is welcome to sign up; sign up begins in early March. All the teams will be playing in our home tournament on the weekend of May 6 and 7.

Summer is coming. Four Rivers will again be running our Summer Ultimate Intensive the week of June 26 - 30. Sign ups have already started. Information is on the school web site under Our Programs or can be found at <http://fourriverssummerultimate.weebly.com/>

Contact Terry Plotkin at tplotkin@fourriverscharter.org if you have any questions.

ADMISSIONS SEASON IS NOW!
For Fall 2017 Enrollment

SIBLINGS OF CURRENT STUDENTS:

Siblings receive preference in our lottery BUT they still must submit an application by the Deadline — Monday, February 27th at 5 pm !!

See our web site for Applications and dates of 4 upcoming Admissions Information Sessions.

Questions? Call Leslie Taylor at the school at 413-775-4577 x202

MIDDLE SCHOOL BASKETBALL TEAM PICKS UP SOME BIG WINS

After suffering a big loss to a very good Eaglebrook JV team, the Four Rivers team has won 4 in a row against some tough opponents. After beating Mohawk at home 37-26, we went on the road to grab victories against Pioneer (47-38) and Mohawk (39-36). Coming off of winter break, the team eked out a road win against Hartsbrook 32-31. Henry Zwart has been leading the way at the offensive end, attacking the basket, drawing fouls, and getting rebounds. Joe Goldstein and Muiris Lonergan have been relentless on the defensive end racking up steals.

The entire team has worked incredibly well together on defense, creating turnovers and shutting down our opponents. Near the end of a very close game against Mohawk, Andrew Shaw came off the bench to grab a key steal that he turned into a score with a beautiful leading pass to Muiris Lonergan for a fast break. Then Anthony Rodriguez dropped a deep 2-point shot to put Four Rivers up 3 with seconds left. When the game gets close, this team takes the gloves off and works together to get the job done. Our schedule is posted on the school events calendar. Come out and cheer on your team.

Kids who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents are significantly less likely to use drugs, yet 20 percent report not getting that benefit. Make a difference in your child's life, they listen to you!



Brought to you by the Safe Schools Safe Streets Coalition

COLLEGE ADVISING

COLLEGES SAY YES!

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.

****** FINANCIAL AID ****IMPORTANT***** FINANCIAL AID ****IMPORTANT*******

FINANCIAL AID — IMPORTANT DEADLINES FOR SENIORS

Families of college bound seniors are reminded that deadlines for financial aid applications are fast approaching. Deadlines for financial aid forms are often the same as application deadlines, but this is not always the case. Check the websites for specific schools.

There are two forms that need to be considered. The FAFSA should be completed by everyone who wants to be considered for financial aid. This is completed online at the following location: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>

There are a number of locally hosted FAFSA Sundays that provide an opportunity to get help with completing and filing the FAFSA. Information is available here:

<http://www.fafsaday.org/> Also, the financial aid office will also assist any family with completion of the FAFSA.

The second form, required by many private schools, is the CSS Profile and information is available here:

<http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>

Families should also check the websites of individual colleges to determine the specific financial aid requirements. Some schools have additional requirements for select scholarship opportunities.

Questions ? Email astenson@frcps.org.

ARTWORK ON DISPLAY

Art teacher Sara Acton is proud to announce that art work by Jemma Dickson, Marina Mota, Kin Wildman-Hanlon, and Eolann McMillan will be exhibited in the 2017 Annual Franklin County Teen Show at Artspace Community Arts Center on Mill Street in Greenfield. The show opens January 23rd and runs through February 17th with an artists reception on January 27th from 5-7 pm.

Also, if you're on Instagram follow Four Rivers arts action at @4riversfineart!



CHANGE OF ADDRESS? YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS TO KNOW!

While we mostly communicate with students and families by email, it is nevertheless very important that you notify us right away if you change your residence or mailing address.

Several times a year the school reports to the state the residence address and town of every student. This information is used to calculate tuition payments to Four Rivers. A report is going out soon to local school districts and we want it be accurate.

If you move, please make it a priority to notify the school of your new address and the date of your move. **THANK YOU!**

SPANISH

In Spanish 2B students are practicing the two pasts, preterit and imperfect by exploring their childhood memories as well as more recent memories of big events in their own lives and in our current society. We are reading a book by Mexican-American artist Carmen Lomas Garza entitled *Mi Familia* which highlights various memories and stories from a Mexican-American family told through the perspective of a child. Each story is told with the help of a snapshot illustration. As a product, students will model the book, creating their own snapshot memories and illustrations.



14TH ANNUAL VARIETY SHOW

FRIDAY, FEB. 3 AT 7:00 PM

SHEA THEATER, TURNERS FALLS

TICKET PRICES AND AVAILABILITY COMING SOON IN AN EMAIL



"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.