

Four Rivers Currents

March 2007

EXPEDITIONS UNDERWAY

It's hard to believe that we are more than halfway through the year! In the past month we completed our second round of conferences, set goals for the second half of the year and finally had a snow day! With half the year behind them, the Division One students are primed and ready for the big challenges that lay ahead. It is in the spirit of that sense of excitement that we have two expeditions starting this month.

In eighth grade, Mr. Bukowick's social studies class is poised to begin studying the different technologies of the Middle Ages. Using more modern devices they will be working in Technology class to synthesize what they learn into a website that will serve as virtual museum on Medieval Technology.

While on fieldwork just before the break, the seventh graders were commissioned by the Great Falls Discovery Center to complete an extensive project on the animals the students had been using to learn taxonomy in science class. They will be researching those animals to create a CD-based field guide for the museum. The seventh

PARENTS!
To make up for recent snow-days...
There WILL be school on Friday, March 9th!

graders will be working in English, science and art class to accomplish the goal of producing a high quality field guide. We all can't wait to see what amazing products they turn out!
~Matt Leaf~

From the Director's Desk...

Last Wednesday, February 28th, the school held its fifth annual admissions lottery. We had 129 applicants—our largest number yet—for 45 available spots. For the 36 openings in our upcoming 7th grade, 81 students applied, including 12 siblings of current students. As before, we used a computer-generated random sort for the lottery, and with the click of a mouse key by Bill Gran of the Franklin County Council of Governments, out spilled the list, and—lo!—the Class of 2013 was born. It is always an exciting moment, for us at school as well as those who are offered admission, and we are eager to welcome our next group of families and students. Thanks to all who helped with the admissions activities this year, including our Family Council volunteers and the dedicated student admissions team so ably lead by Juniors Sarah Brown-Anson and Emma Sweitzer.

As we plan for our fifth year and full enrollment of 192 in grades 7-12, the Board of Trustees has approved the creation of the new position of Principal to add to our administrative team next year. The Principal will serve as the school's instructional leader, working closely with our faculty on curriculum, teaching practices, scheduling and program development. The new position will allow Ed Blatchford to serve as Executive Director, maintaining overall leadership of the school while focusing especially on the charter renewal process next year, development, and strategic planning for our second five-year term as a charter school. Susan Durkee will continue to be responsible for discipline in the High School, the advisory program, special projects like Internships and Independent Study in Division III, and some teaching. Amanda Griffith will also continue her role as community discipline coordinator in 7th and 8th grades, as well as teaching and coaching. We have recently posted the Principal position and expect to be interviewing candidates and making an appointment in April, with the position to begin in July.

The second trimester closes on March 2nd, and progress reports will be mailed out a week later. For those students who have not yet passed one or more of the Trimester II course standards, there will a listing sent with the reports of work that needs to be made up within two weeks of mailing the reports—or else summer work will be required. Most students in this situation already know what they need to do, and in those cases we urge parents to push for that make-up work to be done within this firm deadline.

Hope to see you at the Variety Show on March 30! In the meanwhile, note on the calendar the dates for the March MCAS testing in grades 7, 8 and 10, and please support your student and the school by ensuring good rest and full attendance for these required tests.

~ ~ Ed Blatchford ~ ~

7th Grade News

HUMANITIES...

The return from February break finds the seventh graders gearing up for an expedition that draws from both English and science. "Watershed Wildlife" will find the students exploring the world of a specific animal that lives in the Connecticut River Watershed. What is especially exciting about this expedition is that we have been commissioned by the Great Falls Discovery Center to create a digital field guide to several of the animals that they have on display in their wonderful museum in Turners Falls. Research will be conducted in science class (more about that below) and the students will use the information gleaned from that research in addition to other science class work to write about their animal in English class.

MATH and SCIENCE...

After a visit to the Great Falls Discovery Center before February break, our students were challenged to create a digital display giving more information about the animals in the great falls discovery center displays. In art, the students have been putting their math skills to the test in order to enlarge a photo of their animal as a larger drawing. They will practice watercolor techniques and use their new skills to create a scientific illustration of the animal which they are researching. Students visited the Greenfield Public Library and have learned to use the card catalogue, encyclopedias and non-fiction books to find accurate information about the habitat, diet, taxonomy and natural history of their assigned animals. All of the writing work that students do will be combined with their drawings to create a wonderful, kid-friendly display about wildlife in the Connecticut River watershed. The CD that the students will create will be available for sale in the Great Falls Discovery Center gift shop. We are looking forward to a gallery display of student work at at Great Falls Discovery Center in the spring.

The seventh graders have just wrapped up their most recent math book, *Comparing and Scaling*, which is a study of ratios, proportions and percents. During this unit they created beautiful circle graph posters to display the results of a survey they designed and distributed to the student body. The posters have been on display throughout the recruiting season for prospective students and families to view as they visit. Stop by the 7h grade hallway to check out the results! Next, seventh grade students will "Accentuate the Negative" and learn about mathematical operations with integers.

AND MORE HUMANITIES...

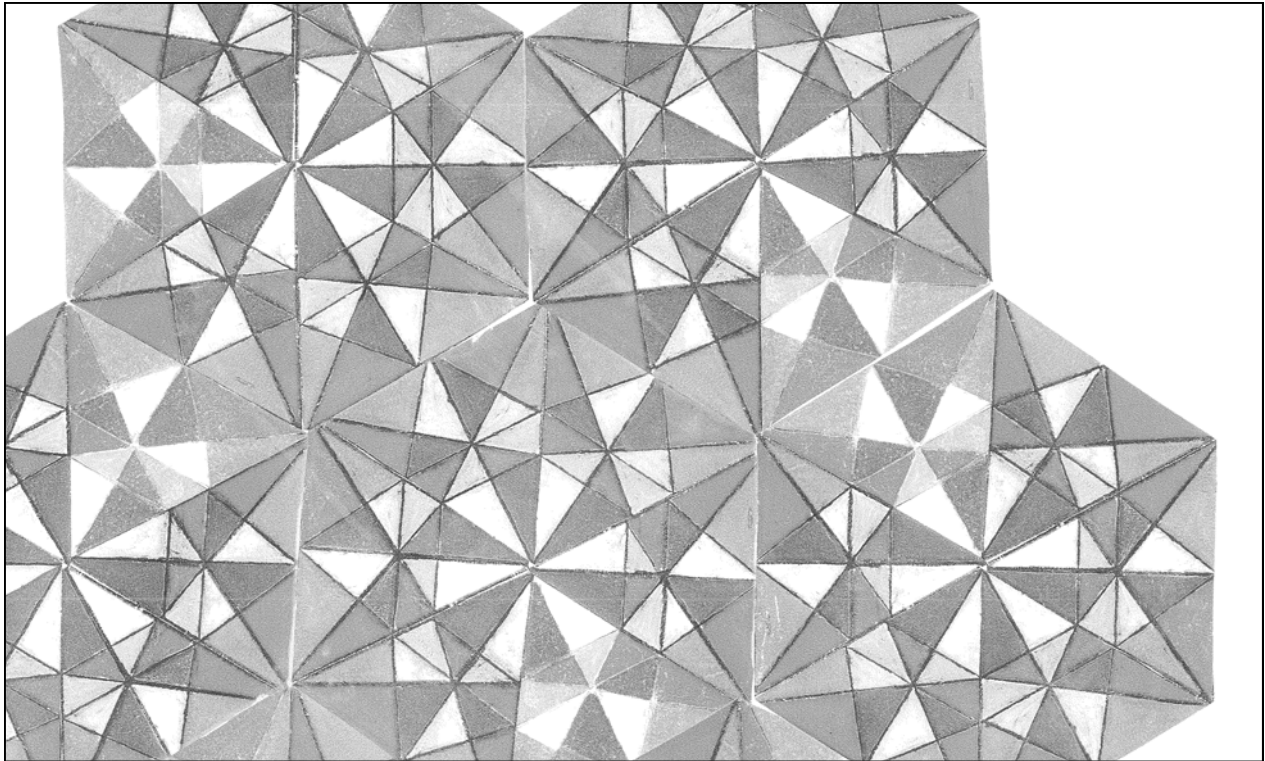
Right before leaving for break the seventh graders completed a project in social studies that used motifs of Egyptian art to tell how the different kingdoms of Egypt rose and fell. Next we are going to look at how Egypt's exploration of the neighboring kingdom of Nubia brought about change to the economics, governments and cultures of both civilizations.

8th Grade News

Eighth grade Math students have just concluded a unit on the Pythagorean Theorem. At the start of the third trimester, they'll continue to connect geometry and algebra as they explore symmetries of designs and symmetry transformations (including reflections, translations and rotations). Students created beautiful tessellations in art earlier in the year. Now, they'll look at those designs from a mathematical perspective as well.

In Science, we are just beginning to explore chemistry. Since chemical reactions are happening all around us all the time, we'll use our everyday experiences, questions and curiosities as the backdrop for our investigations. Don't be surprised if an 8th grader asks you to try her own special blend of toothpaste or if another offers his explanation, over dinner, of how saliva works.

Below is just a glimpse of one of the many colorful and creative tessellations currently hanging in the 8th grade stairwell and hall. Stop in and take a look sometime!



High School News

SPANISH

The Spanish I class finished a unit on Puerto Rico by creating travel brochures advertising things to do on the island. The class has just started a unit on Oaxaca, Mexico. Students will learn vocabulary associated with different parts of a city. They will ask for and give directions in Spanish, and create conversations depicting the bargaining that goes on at a typical marketplace in Mexico.

Spanish II students recently filmed skits depicting scenes at the doctor's office. They learned how to describe health problems using vocabulary associated with the body. Each student has also written an illustrated children's story to be presented to other classes.

The Spanish III class has begun to study the areas of the Caribbean where Spanish is spoken. They also have been listening to music in class to help them learn more about the subjunctive mood. In this particular unit, students are exposed to vocabulary associated with personal celebrations, such as graduation ceremonies, birthdays and weddings.

SCIENCE

In physics, students just turned in an impressive array of policy briefings written for their senators. Every student advocated for changes in energy policy and used quantitative data and graphs / charts / tables to make their case. We are also studying heat and heat transfer -- why some substances heat up faster or keep their heat longer than others, why it's warmer on the coast than inland, and why ice floats. As we enter the final trimester, we'll be studying electricity, magnetism, sound, and light.

SOCIAL STUDIES

In U.S. History I, tenth graders are learning about the roots of slavery in America, examining primary documents to better understand the consequences of slavery and the means by which slaves worked for their own emancipation. We will begin a local history web project soon that will highlight Greenfield's involvement in the Underground Railroad. We are fundraising for our April 23-25 trip to Gettysburg and looking forward to the journey.

In U.S. History II eleventh grade students are exploring America's involvement in the world wars of the twentieth century. We are focusing on the causes of these global conflicts, and the ways in which people tried to create and maintain peace in that century. Students are analyzing the roots of violence and the forces that perpetuate violence and war. We will be meeting with and interviewing veterans from the Vietnam War and the current war in Iraq later in the trimester to better understand the soldier's experience.

MATH

In 9th grade math, students have completed their investigation of the Edgar Allan Poe story, "The Pit and the Pendulum." Students collected data about different scale models of the pendulum in the story. After some time spent investigating different families of functions using the graphing calculator, the students plotted their data and used curve fitting to determine what type of function it represented. They then made accurate predictions about a 20 foot pendulum, which we tested outside on a very cold day in February!

In 10th grade math, students have been working to complete their own research projects which will compare two populations in some respect. They've collected their data and have analyzed it using their knowledge of statistics. They are now working on written analysis and conclusions and will be presenting their research to their classmates in the next weeks.

In 11th grade math, we are studying rates of growth, revolving around a long-term problem about population growth. In trying to model growth of populations accurately, we started with linear and quadratic functions, and are now looking into compound interest and exponential functions. Students also spent the past few weeks learning about derivatives, which is the first major topic in most calculus courses.

ENGLISH

Tenth grade English students embarked this trimester on a unit called "Adventures in Storytelling." Reading, writing, and listening to stories from a variety of genres, including ballads, newspaper articles, expository paragraphs, myths, and personal memoir, they examined the ways in which storytelling forms are interconnected. Our anchor text was N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, which recounts the story of his Kiowa tribe in a braid of three distinct voices connecting the author's mythological, cultural, and personal background. The book's structure served as a model for our culminating writing assignment, which will include a live public reading of the students' work at Café Koko on the mornings of Wednesday and Thursday, March 7 & 8. To conclude the trimester students will read excerpts from Karl Jung's essay "The Collective Unconscious" and Joseph Campbell's essay on "The Monomyth" from his work *Universal Myths*.

Eleventh grade English students embarked on a unit called "Victims of Industry." Reading from a variety of literary genres, including drama, novel, and short story, we examined the ways in which race, class, and gender have been shaped by industrial society in twentieth century America. Our primary texts were Lorraine Hansberry's play *Raisin in the Sun*, Franz Kafka's short story "The Metamorphosis," and Sherman Alexie's book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Assessment for their work involved essays, personal writing, quizzes, student-moderated discussions, and reading process journals. The themes and topics studied in this unit bore direct and indirect associations with those addressed in history class. To develop an appreciation of first-hand experiences of the twentieth century, students have been visiting nearby Charlene Manor nursing home, and the relationships they developed with the resident there were documented by interviews, journals, poetry, and character sketches. To facilitate the poetry writing, Vermont poet Verandah Porche provided an on-site writing workshop on a form called "Told Poetry."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPRING FLING DANCE

The Student Leadership Committee
is sponsoring a Spring Fling Dance
in the High School Common Room

9th, 10th, 11th Grades

Friday, March 9

7:00—10:00 pm

Meeting for Juniors and Parents Rescheduled

The meeting that was planned for
Friday, March 2nd has been re-
scheduled to Wednesday, March
14th, 6:30—8:00 pm in the
Common Room.

We will talk about the upcoming
Senior Year, and share ideas about
and wishes for:

Senior Trip, Class Gift,

Senior Dance, Graduation

Starting some Traditions

Michelle Held ~ 369-4177

9th & 10th INTENSIVES

On Thursday and Friday, March
15th and 16th, students in grades 9
and 10 will have a break from regu-
lar classes to do some 1 or 2 day
intensive courses on topics of inter-
est, including:

Ethnographic Study: Greenfield

Yoga

Bread Baking

The Secret Lives of Plants

Intro. To Violin

Comic Book Appreciation

Into the Wild

Wildlife Rehabilitation in Raptors

Modern Art

The short courses offer students a
chance to try something completely
different or learn a new skill. We'll
report on these in April's Currents!

Four Rivers Charter Public School
Presents...

The 4th Annual Variety Show!



The Shea Theater
71 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA



Friday March 30, 2007

7:00 pm

Doors open at 6:30

Tickets \$5.00 Adults

\$3.00 Students

SNAPSHOTS



The Ski & Snowboard Club poses for a group photo before heading to Berkshire East for an evening of fun in the snow! Thanks to Jim Clark and all the other parents who volunteered to drive and act as chaperones.

"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 and 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.