

Four Rivers Currents

JUNIOR INTERNSHIPS

April 2008

Eleventh graders recently completed their Junior internships. They were released from regular classes for the week of March 10-14, to work with mentors in their fields of interest. Throughout the week, they sent e-mails and stopped by school to share news of their experiences, which were overwhelmingly positive. For the first time, I had mentors calling and e-mailing, praising the conduct and engagement of our students and thanking me for sending them. Two 11th graders were offered summer jobs as a result of their work! One student reported having a close encounter with a camel during her work at a zoo; another wrote to me after day two in the field to say: "My internship is AMAZING! I can't wait to tell you what I'm doing!"

People they worked with: WHAI radio DJs; Greenfield Firefighters.; Greenfield Animal Control officer; biologists at the US Fish and Wildlife Service; soccer coaches and referees in Northampton; a Hallmark School photographer; a mediator from Mediation Services; physical therapists ; architects; bakers at Green Fields Market; community educators at Class Action; sound engineers; About Music and Got Chops—music businesses in Greenfield; the staff at Red Gate Farm; The Forest Park Zookeepers; a tattoo shop; Charlene Manor; nurses at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital; Evergreen Motors; our Nature teacher, Neill Bovaird; and contractors at



Seventh graders explore a vernal pool—see page 2

Quality Builders. Students were placed at UMass in the Tech Support Department, Fine Arts Center and the Campus Hotel. State Representative Denis Guyer welcomed a student to shadow him and his assistant at the State House in Boston. Our students saw a lot, learned a lot and had a great time! Look for an announcement soon of their presentations in May. ~ ~ Susan Durkee



During a week of Intensive short courses at the end of Trimester II, this group of students tried cross-country skiing



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From the Executive Director's Desk...

Each winter over the past several years, the 7th graders have conducted surveys of all the students at Four Rivers as part of their Math studies. These surveys have measured student views on a range of questions the 7th graders generated, and the results have always been intriguing to students, teachers, and perhaps especially, visitors to the school. This year, our 7th grade math and science teacher Mandy Locke decided to have her students ask questions that matched the questions we send to parents and guardians at the end of each school year. In addition to strengthening their basic math skills in fractions, decimals and percents, the students learn effective use of pie graphs. Still further, in posters displaying their findings now hung in the 7th grade hall, they produce what we call "a real product for a real audience." And their data reaches audiences beyond the school as it will be incorporated with other data in our Annual Report to the Department of Education. As their teacher reminds them, their calculations count! A sample of their findings, based on responses from 176 Four Rivers students:

"I am satisfied with the amount of academic challenge" -- 78% agree or strongly agree

"I am satisfied with the amount of academic support and extra help available to me" -- 85% agree or strongly agree

"Expectations for behavior at Four Rivers are clear" -- 81% agree or strongly agree

"At least one of my teachers knows and understands me well" -- 77% agree or strongly agree

"I feel I fit in and have friends at Four Rivers" -- 90% agree or strongly agree

As we swing into April, two exciting trips are coming up for high school students. From April 17th to 28th, spanning the April vacation, sixteen students from our level 3 and 4 high school Spanish classes are journeying to central Mexico to immerse themselves in Spanish and do service work in a small, rural village, under the auspices of a non-profit group called Tools for Development. Craig McDonnell, Four Rivers Spanish teacher, and Mandy Locke will be leading the trip. Participating students have done extensive—and ingenious—fund-raising to defray the trip costs, and anticipation is high for another Four Rivers "first".

Soon after the vacation, the 9th and 10th graders are traveling to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, as part of their study of the Civil War, repeating the fieldwork that was so successfully done by Four Rivers students last year. We wish both of these groups success in their adventures. ~ ~ Ed Blatchford

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
248 Colrain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301

7th Grade News

MATH & SCIENCE



In March, the 7th grade launched (or should we say splashed?) into an expedition exploring vernal pool ecosystems. The whole 7th grade put on their boots and hiked out to a “wicked big puddle” in Highland Park, with one question in mind, “How can we prove this is a vernal pool?” Clipboards in hand, their mission was to measure the depth and temperature of the water, estimate the amount of canopy cover over the pool, and search for signs of life.



As they were hunting for fairy shrimp and trying to estimate the amount of ice-free water in the pool, they were also busy enjoying the sunshine and testing the strength of the remaining ice. A few of them even came back with wet feet as evidence of the rate at which the ice is melting. As they wait for the snow and ice to melt enough for another visit, they have each been assigned to research and become an expert on a particular animal associated with vernal pools. On our next trip out we hope to be able to identify species that will prove that our puddle is in fact a vernal pool.

HUMANITIES

Gradually rising temperatures and increased hours of daylight can only mean two things in 7th grade humanities: Wildlife Expeditions and Ancient Greece!

The seventh graders are in midst of an intensive writing project for their expedition centered on vernal pools. In science class each student was assigned an animal that interacts with a vernal pool in some capacity. Some require vernal pools to survive, while others simply enjoy having them appear each year as a supply of water and food. Intense research was used to have the students immerse themselves fully in the lives of their assigned critter and they now are in the process of writing sections of what will be a field guide to vernal pools for elementary school students. A brief study of field guide writing revealed that most of these books, while factual, are pretty dull. In addition to making sure that their writing is informative, the students have also been challenged to make sure it is interesting. The writing traits of sentence fluency and voice are the tools they have at their disposal for this exercise.

After concluding our study of Egypt, we now turn our eyes northward over the Mediterranean Sea to the land of the Greeks. Already we have recreated the unique geography of this land in the class room and completed a simulation of how and why different kinds of communities and colonies developed throughout and around Greece and how trade was conducted in this area. Our attention now is on the different forms of government that existed in ancient Greece as we simulate decision making under systems monarchy, oligarchy, tyranny and direct democracy. Up next, an investigation into the rivalry between Athens and Sparta and a look at the Persian War.

COLLEGE GUIDANCE NEWS

SENIORS File Your FAFSA

Regardless of where you are attending school or training next year, file the FAFSA. This is the only mechanism for institutions to distribute state and federal monies.

2008 Post-Secondary Education and Training Acceptances

Newly added colleges in italics ~~~~~ Families, please notify Ms. Childress about all acceptances

American International College	<i>Keene State College</i>	<i>Smith College (2)</i>
California College of Art	<i>Massachusetts College of Art and Design</i>	St. Andrews Presbyterian College
<i>Clark University</i>	<i>Marlboro College</i>	Universal Technical Institute
Earlham College	Motorcycle Mechanics Inst.	<i>University of Findlay</i>
Elms College	<i>Mount Holyoke College</i>	<i>Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst</i>
<i>Fitchburg State College (3)</i>	<i>New England College</i>	<i>Univ. of Massachusetts, Dartmouth</i>
<i>Greenfield Community College</i>	<i>Pratt Institute</i>	<i>Univ. of Massachusetts, Lowell (2)</i>
<i>Ithaca College</i>	<i>Rochester Institute of Technology</i>	<i>University of Vermont</i>
Kalamazoo College	<i>Salem State College</i>	<i>Westfield State College</i>

ACT Calendar & Fees

2007-08 Test Dates and Registration Deadlines

Test Dates	Registration Deadline	Registration Deadline
April 12, 2008	March 7, 2008	March 8-21, 2008
June 14, 2008	May 9, 2008	May 10-23, 2008

Visit act.org for registration or pick up a registration packet in the college counseling area of the library. In addition, there will be information about preparing for the ACT also available.

SAT/SAT Subject Calendar & Fees

2007-08 Test Dates and Registration Deadlines

Test Dates	Tests	REGULAR	LATE
March 1, 2008	SAT	January 29, 2008	February 7, 2008
May 3, 2008	SAT & Subject	April 1, 2008	April 10, 2008
June 7, 2008	SAT & Subject	May 6, 2008	May 15, 2008

Visit collegeboard.com for registration or pick up a registration packet in the college counseling area of the library. In addition, there will be information about preparing for the SAT Reasoning and Subject also available.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RMV Workshop for Parents and Students

How to Obtain a License

How to Register a Car

What is Safe Driving

The Registry of Motor Vehicles is offering a free workshop on these topics and more.

WHEN: Tuesday, April 8, 2008

WHERE: Four Rivers Charter Public School

TIME: 7:00—8:00 pm

To reserve your space, contact Cathy Mitchell (Parent of 12th grader) at 772-6014 Or cpm2you@yahoo.com

COME ONE, COME ALL!

“Spaghetti-sburg” Supper

A Lively fundraiser for the 9th & 10th Grade Trip to Gettysburg later this month! Pssst!!!: Parents, take the night off from cooking, join us AND support a great adventure for the kids!

When: Friday Night, April 11th, 2008, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Where: at the Common Room @ Four Rivers

Cost: Tickets are \$6.00 per meal, and will be available at the door the night of the dinner

OR Buy in advance and save money!

Advance ticket prices:

Good Meal Deal advance purchase individual tickets are only \$5.00

Family Feed advance purchase ticket for up to 4 people in a family for \$18.00 (Save \$6.00!)

Advance tickets can be purchased from 9 & 10th grade students, or by sending your request and advance payment (checks only) to school in an envelope for Mr. Wallace. Along with your check made payable to “Four Rivers Public Charter School”, be sure to include your name, phone number, your child’s grade and the # of individual or family tickets you want to purchase in advance.

Important Mexico Trip Information

April 5th and April 9th (after school) ~ Scrap Metal Drive continues... If you think you might have some scrap metal to donate please contact Mr. McDonnell as soon as possible.

April 7th (Monday) at 6:30 pm in Common Room ~ Required Meeting for families with students traveling to Mexico.

April 17th-28th ~ Mexico Trip to Agua Puerca, Mexico

TIME TO SCHEDULE PHYSICALS

Summer will be here before we know it! Now is the time to arrange a physical for your son/daughter. ALL students entering 10th grade for the 2008-2009 school year are mandated by the state to have a physical exam. If there is even the slightest chance that a student will participate in any sport, a physical is necessary. The majority of medical practices are unable to arrange "last minute" appointments for this purpose. Forms will be mailed in May for this purpose.

All students with bee sting allergies need to have an Epi-Pen readily available. Check the expiration dates on this and all medications to insure adequate dosing. If your child has required 2 doses of Epinephrine for a bee sting, they must carry the 2 dose Epi-Pen. We have a few doses of epinephrine at school for emergency use only.

With spring comes allergy season. If your child's asthma is triggered during the spring, inhalers need to be current. I hesitate to give students Benadryl during school hours for allergy symptoms. Parents may consider medicating with a non-drowsy antihistamine before school. Check with the child's physician before administering.

Last but not least, students must be adequately hydrated with water. Dehydration can cause rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, headache, increased body temperature, and weakness. Plain water is the best choice to maintain fluid balance. Please read labels on popular energy, vitamin beverages. Most of them show calories from sugar.

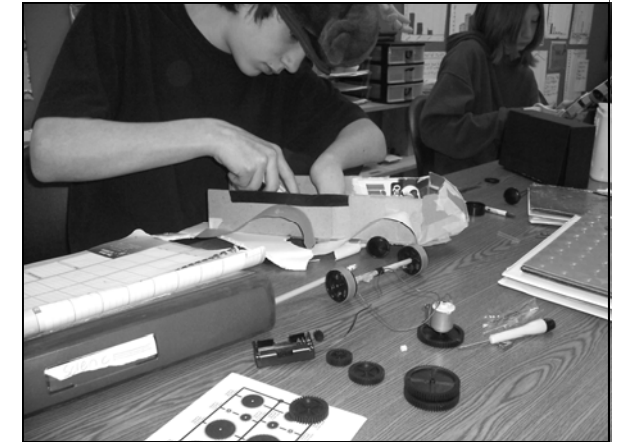
Have a great vacation. **Jeanne Milton, R.N.**

8th Grade News

SCIENCE & MATH

Eighth grade students are designing and building solar cars! This project is one part of our 3rd trimester exploration of clean, green, sustainable energy and is our culminating design project for the year. Each student is in the process of designing and building an experimental car to figure out how the parts--the chassis, wheel system, motor, transmission and solar panel--all work together in a car that travels straight, fast and far (while carrying some cargo, too!). Next, students will form teams to apply what they've learned to design cars for racing in the Junior Solar Sprint. To find out more about designs in the making and the upcoming races, talk with an 8th grader and visit <http://nesea.org/education/jss/>.

Additional information about the races, to be held in late May and early June, will be in the next issue of Currents.



Top:

Colman Lee and Zach Wallenius-Duda designing and installing transmissions for their solar cars.

Middle:

Gabby Talbot and Corey Atkins discuss the wheel system that Gabby has designed for her car.

Bottom:

Matt Whiteman and Bryan Kernan-Dufresne test the wheels on their car

DIV II NEWS

ENGLISH

The 9th grade is reading *Siddhartha*, a novel based on the life of the Buddha that focuses on a young Brahmin's search for wisdom and self-knowledge. The 10th grade has just begun *The Killer Angels*, an account of Gettysburg told from the perspective of the military leaders on both sides of the Civil War battle.

All students in Division II are currently working on an I-Search project. The I-Search is an extensive, inquiry-driven project that combines research, interviews and reflection, culminating in a substantial essay. Below is a partial list of I-Search topics chosen by students. If you have or know of anyone with expertise or experience in any of these areas, I would love to hear from you! You can e-mail me at mam-buter@fourriverscharter.org. Please include contact information if possible.

The list: life-changing sports injuries; computer-generated imagery; infertility; robotic engineering; hair-dressing; stem cell research; homophobia; love; puppy mills; Air Force pilots; parent/teenager relationships; the meaning of life (philosophy); police officers; environmental science; animal shelters; guitar-playing; culinary arts; teen pregnancy; neuroscience; school mediation; animal rescue; soldiery; trial law; nanotechnology; blacksmithing; multiple sclerosis; tattoo artistry; fashion design; bulimia; psychology—fears and phobias; show business; primatology; sex education.

MATH

In 10th grade math this month, we studied many attributes of right triangles, including trigonometry, Pythagorean Theorem, and special right triangles. We took this knowledge outside, measured distances with tape measures and angles with home-made hypsometers, and we were able to calculate the heights of trees, buildings, lamp posts, and the flag pole. In addition to these topics in geometry, we reviewed similar polygons, which led into the algebra of solving proportions. Our geometric studies will continue in the next month by looking at surface area, lateral area, and volume of three-dimensional figures, as well as the many properties of circles.

In 9th grade math, we explored shadow properties, noting how an object's shadow changes depending on the object's height, the height of the light source, and the distance of the object from the light source. We collected data in these experiments and looked for patterns, which led to the concept of similar triangles. Similar polygons have sides that are proportional, so we learned to set up proportions as well as solve them. As 9th grade math skills can vary widely from student to student, we have been and will continue to learn to solve single-variable equations. During the next month we will begin a unit on Quadratic Equations.



Students from Ms. Howard's 10th grade math classes make calculations using home-made hypsometers



DIV III NEWS

MATH

In Consumer Math, we are learning about investment and compound interest, currently figuring out how long it would take to become a millionaire under different investment scenarios.

IMP-3 students have just spent a few weeks studying the derivative, the first step in most introductory calculus courses, as a way of understanding rates of change of phenomena such as falling objects and growing populations. Now they are turning to study of exponential and logarithmic functions as part of an ongoing problem about population growth.

In IMP-4 we are exploring a smorgasbord of functions, to help students discover strategies available for modeling a wide variety of real-world situations. We are more frequently touching on the types of concepts and notations that they are likely to encounter in the more traditional math and engineering courses they will take next year in college, just eight Four Rivers weeks away...! Note to parents of 11th graders -- the SAT exams are in May and June. Helping your student devote some time to preparation could really help.

SOCIAL STUDIES

US History II ~ Grade 11

Students are completing their investigation of several topics in U.S. labor history, including women in the workplace, immigration and work, labor organizing, labor violence, child labor, and homemaking. Students have begun interviewing community members on topics in labor history of their choice to create oral history pod casts on these subjects.

Social Studies Topics ~ Grade 12

Students are investigating Islam this trimester, both in history and in contemporary contexts. During the first few weeks, students have identified and challenged contemporary assumptions about Islam, using sources such as Gallup surveys, as well as discussion. They have also begun to learn the basics of the faith in a historical context. Our classes so far have encouraged students to compare Muslim texts to Judaism and Christianity, and also to reflect on the similarities and differences with their own values.

ENGLISH

In 11th grade English, we're beginning a study of Ambition, Obsession and Madness, exploring that continuum and debating where the lines are drawn between each category. We've begun reading *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey, and on April 11th we will be going to see a performance of this play at the Shea Theater. At the end of this trimester, students will be using their knowledge of the continuum of obsession to write and perform character-based monologues.

In 12th grade English, we're just finishing the planning for National Novel Writing Month, which we are celebrating during the month of April. Seniors have set word count goals between 5,000 and 50,000 words, and will be writing their hearts out to try and reach those goals. Stay tuned for results in May!