

# Four Rivers Currents

December 2009

## From the Principal's Desk...

I have a couple of items to share with you this month.

### FOCUS ROLLOUT - ACCESS TO GRADES, ATTENDANCE, AND MORE

Parents, you requested it and now you've got it. Yes, starting December 1, you have electronic access to information about your child, including assignments they've been given and how they did on them, as well as attendance information, discipline referrals, and general announcements. Of course you should continue to contact us whenever you have questions or concerns, but we hope this step will provide additional ways for us to communicate with you and your student. Teachers will update assignments and grades in FOCUS at least by 5:00 pm on the final Monday of every month. Please read the enclosed instructions (see the salmon colored insert) to find out how to log in, how to navigate, and how to understand what you're seeing.

### EDUCATION LEGISLATION PROTECTS CHARTERS, WITH OTHER CHANGES TOO

You may have read in the papers about proposed and pending legislation that may affect charter schools. Your voice on these issues is very important and I implore all of you to sign up on the advocacy page of the MA Charter Schools Association at [masscharterschools.org](http://masscharterschools.org). Messages you send to your legislators make a huge difference when these bills come up. I want to share with you a November 17<sup>th</sup> update from Marc Kenen, the Executive Director of the MA Charter Schools Association:

*Late this afternoon the MCPSA reached an agreement with Senate leadership on a compromise that will protect the charter school funding formula. . . . Early this evening the Senate approved the full Ed Reform bill by a vote of 28-11. The bill now goes to the House where its fate is uncertain. . . . We would never have been able to protect the funding without an unprecedented grassroots uprising from charter parents, trustees and supporters. At least 2350 emails were sent through our system and hundreds of phone calls were made. . . . So, the exciting news is that the statewide charter caps have been lifted and our funding protected for now.*

*HOWEVER, there are a number of new restrictions and mandates on the cap raise and on existing charter schools included in the Senate bill that we hope to address in the House budget. These include:*

- 1. New rules on filling charter vacancies (backfilling). Under the Senate bill charters have to fill vacancies in the grade in which they occur except in the highest grade in your school and 11th and 12th grade.*
- 2. New rules preventing charters from accepting students outside their declared sending districts without an amendment of their charter from the BESE.*
- 3. While the bill lifts all statewide caps on charters and doubles the district cap to 18% in the lowest 10% performing districts, new rules require all new charter applicants in lowest performing districts to be "proven providers" thus severely limiting charter growth in these districts.*
- 4. New demographic recruitment and retention mandates and accountability requirements*
- 5. New reporting requirements and limits charter reserve accounts to 20% of operating budget excluding facilities savings accounts, bank reserve requirement and 4th quarter payments*

And there's probably more. There were a host of amendments and amendments to amendments that were passed but language wasn't made public so we'll have to wait until the new version of the bill is published.

Stay tuned, and do check out the Association web site.

~ Peter Garbus, Principal ~

## 7th Grade News

### **A November Overview** by Jake Bednarski, Asia Littell, and Heather Jablonski

For the month of November, seventh grade has done many fun things. One of them was celebrating *Dia de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead, which is like a Mexican version of Halloween. It is full of food, drink, and festivities that celebrate our ancestors; it is a way to look at death in a joyful kind of way. We got to make traditional food in the shape of skeletons, play games, and do arts and crafts like *papel picado*.

Other things we have done this month include writing short stories in English, and learning about the early humans in social studies. In math we have done graphing calculations, and in science we examined rocks and fossils and journeyed to the center of the earth. In Spanish we had an awesome fashion show! We started cave paintings in art, and the Blanco group finally made fire in Nature class!

### **They Were on Fire** by Kate Averill, Ryan Roberts, and Tyler Campbell

Ever struck a match or a lighter? Pretty easy, right? Well, using a bow drill is completely different. It is a primitive way of making fire by rubbing sticks together.

For three classes, students had been working hard at making fire, early humans-style. To do this, they used only four tools: the bow, the handhold, the spindle, and the fireboard. To make fire, you have to pull the bow drill back and forth while pressing down the handhold. It is not easy. After 20 seconds, we were all egotistical, thinking it would be easy. But then, our arms turned into noodles that had been in water for four days. We tried again. No fire. Mr. Bovaird called out, "Five more minutes!" With our last bit of energy, we started again. A crowd gathered. We looked for an ember. We found one! We placed it in the milkweed. We gave it three long breaths, and Mr. B. added some more milkweed, and it exploded into flames! Fire!



**Journey to the Center of the Earth:** The seventh grade students are planning a journey to the center of the earth. How will this happen? Above, Lily Margola is holding a 3d model of the layers of the earth's interior.



### **The Fashion Show** by Emily Boynton

In Spanish we have been working on learning verbs and names for clothing, so on Tuesday, November 17, we had a fashion show. We were assigned partners and then wrote a paragraph that described what they were going to wear for the show. We said what they enjoyed doing and what kind of things they liked. On the day of the show we all wore our clothes and had our scripts in hand. Once a group went up, one person would read the script while they other person would strut their stuff.

*Finn Tierney models his Hawaiian camisa, and goggle gafas for the Spanish fashion show. ¡Qué Guapo!*

## 8th Grade News

As a hands-on introduction to *The Lord of the Flies*, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade went to Mrs. Conant's back woods for an experience in survival. The students were instructed with the following:

"Your plane has just crashed in the jungle. There are no adults. There is a huge storm coming in 25 minutes. You must do the following before the storm comes.

1. Elect a leader (president) and a co-leader (vice president). Write down who these two people are.
2. Create a shelter of some sort that will cover your entire team.
3. Build a sign at least 3 feet tall that says "HELP"



*Views of a Shelter*  
*From outside*  
*And in*



### Linear Relationship Rap

*from H-Dawg and TP Izzle*

*(a.k.a. Helen Perham and Taylor Chapin)*

Yo! How you do!? I  
gotz some knowledge in meh head for you.  
Lines, dots, and integers man.  
They're all for learnin', and I got a plan.  
We don't need no graphs, no tables  
We just need numbers and labels.

Coordinate one, is two and three  
This is how it's suppose to be  
Coordinate two, is four and six  
Don't you worry there ain't no trix

Subtract three from dah six, and two from  
dah four.

There aint no need for a war.  
Three over two is one and a half  
This is why we don't need a graph.

Using the fence to keep them aligned  
one point five and four are combined  
Six kicks six, not once but twice  
We freeze zero just like ice.

B equals zero, it's just about time  
To take all our numbers and puttin' 'em in  
a line

Our final equation is right down below  
Now that you know it, let the knowledge  
flow.

$$y = 1.5x$$

Show yo' respects!



*Li*  
*ne*  
*ar*  
*Re*  
*lat*  
*io*  
*ns*  
*hi*  
*ps*

## DIV II NEWS

### ENGLISH

Ninth grade English is in the middle of a unit on Shakespeare. As a class, we acted out *Twelfth Night* and students then had to use both *Twelfth Night* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* as the supporting examples in their most recent essay on perception and truth. Now students are working in small groups reading either *Othello* or *Taming of the Shrew*. After they finish the plays, students will translate a key scene into modern English, which is no easy feat! When we return from winter break, we will be reading *The Secret Life of Bees* and beginning a unit on narrative writing.

Tenth grade English is in the midst of an expedition about beliefs and action. We have finished the Transcendentalist unit and our book groups, and are almost done with our “I Believe” essays. These essays will be published in a 10th grade anthology and available for purchase before winter break — more information will be provided in early December.

Currently, students are at work on two major assignments. The first is a research paper that will help students build their academic writing skills and give them tools to help structure longer writing assignments. The second is a service project where students have been challenged to put one of their beliefs into action; this will serve as the culmination to the belief and action expedition.

~ Maura Ambuter ~

### SCIENCE

#### Environmental Studies—Grade 9

The students ended their Agriculture Expedition with a fabulous culminating event at the school. It was great to see the quality of the photographs and the narratives that the students spent so much time working with on display. We will soon be launching a new study of global climate change and renewable resources. The students will be conducting more experiments and refining their techniques in experimental design.

#### Biology — Grade 10

The students have just started an investigation on the adolescent brain and the human nervous system. They will be reading about studies on the development of the frontal cortex and learning about how it affects decision making and problem solving. The students will each be researching questions related to the nervous system.

~ Ms. Stamas ~

### MATH

~ Cheryl Howard ~

In 9th grade we finished our first unit of the year, which focused on basic math skills and looking for patterns in in/out tables. Students became skilled at figuring out whether an in/out table was expressing a linear equation, a quadratic equation or a cubic equation. Embedded in the basic skills were scientific notation, scale factors, and order of operations. Order of operations will be assessed throughout the year as this is a HUGE building block in mathematics.

Scale factors will be revisited in the spring when students study the “Shadows” unit of IMP I. At that time they will take the scale factor knowledge they have and combine it with algebra, which they will learn between now and then.

Now that we are done with Patterns, we begin “The Game of Pig” unit of IMP 1, which explores probability.

In 10th grade math we have finished up a study of solving systems of equations. Systems of equations just means that you have more than one equation and solving them just means that you figure out where the graphs intersect. Students now know how to solve systems using a graphing calculator and two algebraic tools: elimination and substitution.

At the beginning of the month students learned to solve linear inequalities. Now, as December descends upon us, we will combine the two skills, learning to solve systems of inequalities.

## DIV III NEWS

### Social Studies ~ Mr. Neal

In **Public Policy** we have been practicing using the lens of anthropology to study educational practice from a social science perspective. Students learned how to take and code field notes, and then visited an Elementary school, Elias Brookings Museum School, an Expeditionary Learning school in Springfield, for a combination of fieldwork, observations and service work. Students reorganized an art room at the school bringing it into usable order, where it had been unusable for years. They observed and wrote about dimensions of school life such as teacher-student dynamics and school culture. Students have also been using civics simulations as a way of tackling controversial topics in contemporary education such as desegregation, busing and charter school caps.

In **History of Community** class students conducted two investigations this month. Earlier in the month they looked at the economic underpinnings of community, including simulations of the free market and analysis of primary sources of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. Later in the month they looked at case studies of intentional communities of the 19th century in connection with the Modernization class. Case studies included the Shakers, the Oneida Perfectionists, and the Fourierist movement. Students visited and conducted an on-site role play of a 19th century town hall meeting examining community decision making at the Shaker village in Hancock MA last week.

### ENGLISH ~ Ms. Plath

**Response to Modernization: Literature** students have been reading dystopian literature as a way to understand fears of technology's possible negative influences on our community. They've finished *Brave New World* and written found poems illustrating a theme from the text, and now they're reading either *1984* or *Oryx and Crake* as an additional case study. They have begun learning perspective drawing and will use these skills for the final product that encompasses this class and their social studies class, a product which will involve redesigning a space in Greenfield.

**Great Books** students have continued to learn about the various historical literary periods, analyzing poetry and playing jeopardy among other student-designed learning activities. They practiced writing in the style of Charles Dickens and composed some unique descriptive pieces about locations from the school porch to the boys' bathroom. These skills will be used for their next writing activity, wherein they will write a "missing page" for their Dickens text (either *Great Expectations* or *Bleak House*). After returning from Thanksgiving break, they will begin studying the role of English in a high school and college curriculum in preparation for their final product, a symposium about this very topic that will solicit input from various educational resources in our surrounding community.

### MATH

Mr. Hornick wants all to know that his students in Calculus and Advanced Algebra are alive and well and having fun with math. The work at right was recently left on a white board.

It is a representation, using  $e$  and imaginary numbers, of Fourier Series (used for describing any periodic complex wave).

The whiteboard shows the following work:

$$f(t) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \cos n\omega t + b_n \sin n\omega t \quad a_0 = \frac{1}{T} \int_0^T f(t) dt$$

$$f(t) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \left( \frac{e^{-in\omega t} + e^{in\omega t}}{2} \right) + b_n \left( \frac{e^{in\omega t} - e^{-in\omega t}}{2i} \right) \quad a_n = \frac{2}{T} \int_0^T f(t) \cos n\omega t dt$$

Below this, the student has written:

$$\left( \frac{A+B}{2} \right) \left[ \frac{a_n}{2} e^{-in\omega t} + \frac{a_n}{2} e^{in\omega t} + \frac{b_n i}{-2} e^{-in\omega t} - \frac{b_n i}{-2} e^{in\omega t} \right]$$

$$\frac{a_n}{2} e^{-in\omega t} - \frac{b_n i}{-2} e^{-in\omega t} + \frac{a_n}{2} e^{in\omega t} + \frac{b_n i}{-2} e^{in\omega t}$$

$$\frac{1}{2} \left[ (a_n + b_n i) e^{-in\omega t} + (a_n - b_n i) e^{in\omega t} \right]$$

On the right side of the board, there are two boxed equations:

$$\boxed{AB + CB = (A+C)B}$$

$$\frac{b_n}{2i} \frac{i}{1} = \frac{b_n i}{-2}$$

$$i^2 = -1$$

$$i = \sqrt{-1}$$

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NURSE'S NOTES

H1N1 flu is predicted to occur in waves, and, in general, persons will not be tested unless admitted to the hospital.

H1N1 vaccine will be administered at Four Rivers on Monday, Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> to all students for whom I have permission slips. Make-up day is Wednesday, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>. If you wish to have your child receive the vaccine, please contact Carolyn Wood or me for a permission form. We are in need of volunteers to complete a brief questionnaire prior to vaccination and to monitor students after receiving the vaccine. Please let Ms. Wood know if you are available, even for a 1-2 hour block.

Jeanne Milton, RN

### HOMEMADE HOLIDAY CRAFT EVENT

**Saturday, December 12**

**10:00 am to 3:00 pm**

**Common Room**

Visit several craft stations to make your own holiday gifts. Supplies and instruction at each station. Cost ranges \$1 to \$5 per gift.

Come and make **one or several** items, eat homemade food, bring your friends and have some fun while raising money for the school.

*Sponsored by Family Council*

### YEARBOOKS

To Order a Yearbook fill out an order form in the office.

**Cost: \$30.00 until January 31st  
\$35 thereafter**

### YEARBOOK ADS

**Prices:** Range from \$20.00 for a business card size to \$100 for a full page. More in formation in the school office. **Deadline for ads is Friday, January 22.**

### Holiday Special!

Coffee & Tea Orders

Get a FRCPS logo mug and a 4oz. bag of our Community Blend Coffee for \$10, or the mug and a 6oz container of tea bags for \$12. A great way to support the school and make your loved ones happy!

### Coffee and Performances for All

*by Abby Levesque*

Whether it was singing, strumming, acting out comedy sketches, or just coming to watch, there was something for everyone at this year's first Four Rivers Coffee House! Students provided enjoyable entertainment and shared their talents while guests, teachers, parents, and other students sat and enjoyed coffee, cocoa, and other treats that

were available. The money that was raised went to the school's Arts Enrichment Fund. Thanks to the Coffee House Club for putting it together. We hope all of the visitors that came to support our school enjoyed the event. This was our first Coffee House of the year, but certainly not the last. We're all looking forward to the next one!

## COLLEGE AND CAREER COUNSELING

### DECEMBER DATES –Take Note:

- Tuesday, Dec. 1      Marlboro College Rep at Four Rivers 1:30 pm
- Saturday, Dec.5      SAT —if you are registered to take the SAT today, remember to arrive by 7:45 am. Bring acceptable photo I.D. and your SAT Admission Ticket, and two #2 pencils with erasers.  
*(If you do not have a photo ID, see Ms. Taylor as soon as possible).*
- Saturday, Dec. 12      ACT — Same as SAT above
- Wednesday, Dec. 16      College Financial Aid Presentation 7:00—9:00 pm

### ***Don't forget DEADLINES for SAT and ACT registration:***

- Dec. 15/Dec. 30**      Regular/Late Registration deadline for January 23rd SAT Test date

### **Important Note to Seniors:**

Turn in your *College Application Release Permission and Checklist* to Ms. Taylor **as soon as possible** so she can prepare for mailing transcripts and other materials to support your college applications. This form must be turned in at least two weeks before the first deadline, and earlier if possible. Please fill in the entire form!

### **SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION:**

Seniors, be sure to check out the Scholarship Resource Files in the Gardner Room of the Farm house. We are working on getting a list online, but in the meantime you should check out the opportunities on file. Ask Ms. Taylor for a quick orientation.

## COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID NIGHT

*for Students and Families at Four Rivers*

Wednesday, December 16

7:00-9:00 pm - Common Room

This workshop is designed to help families navigate the financial aid process, including the accurate and timely filing of the FAFSA and CSS Profile Forms. Our presenter will be Michael Ireland, Associate Director of Student Financial Aid at Smith College. There will be ample time for questions and discussion following the presentation.



*A group of 2009 graduates returned to campus last weekend to personally install their class gift. A stone bench now graces the Four Rivers rock garden and is dedicated to Ed Blatchford, founder and now retired executive director. From L to R: Jon Carow, Amasa Fiske-White, Andrew DeMello, Simon Eaton, Jake Grant, Jacob Neilson-Phillips, Nichola LaCoy, and Christin Sluter. Not shown, John Zarcone.*

**CALENDAR  
CORRECTIONS  
TAKE NOTE!**

**Tuesday, Dec. 1**

This is a regular school day

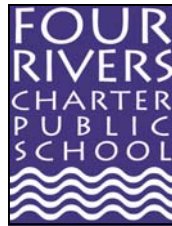
**Wednesday, Dec. 23**

This is being changed to an early release day so that families may prepare for travel and holidays.

**School will end at 12:00 Noon.**

**Lunch will NOT be served.**

*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



## Sr. McDonnell's Classes

### NEWS from the SPANISH CLASSES

#### Middle School Spanish

This past month the 7th and 8th grade Spanish classes celebrated Day of the Dead with an afternoon of fun and interactive workshops. Students made both food and crafts including mole, Bread of the Dead, calacas (dancing skeletons), and papel picado (cut tissue paper). The afternoon also included a Wellness lesson in Spanish with Coach Griffith teaching body parts in Spanish through relay races and song.



#### Spanish 2

The class has learned vocabulary used in discussing travel plans, fine art, and the Mexican holiday Day of the Dead. Students made altars and dedicated them to friends and family. They have learned how to describe events in the past using the preterit and imperfect tenses in anticipation of an upcoming short story project.



#### Advanced Spanish and Conversation

Students just finished reading *Lazarillo de Tormes*, a picaresque novel from early Spanish literature. They have discussed important themes of the text and how they relate to the Four Rivers character virtues. In a recent unit on sports, students took on roles of famous Hispanic athletes and conducted mock interviews. The class is now embarking on an investigation of the Spanish Comedia, and they will begin working on their own play after Thanksgiving break.

### NICARAGUA TRIP

In case you missed it, there was an informational meeting last week about an exciting opportunity proposed for April 2010. If your son/daughter is in Spanish 2, 3 or Advanced Spanish, they are eligible to participate in a language immersion trip to Nicaragua. Please call Ms. Beardslee or Mr. McDonnell for more information.

## SPANISH I, Division II with Ms. Beardslee

*Parents, get your Spanish I student to translate this story for you. The text is taken from work by Sam Sol, Emi Gregory, Isaac Marsh and Laura Averill.*

Nosotros jugamos el béisbol el martes en la clase de Español y Wellness. Primero, nosotros preparamos. Después, nosotros jugamos. Preparamos los nombres de los cuatro equipos primero: Los Nachos Caros, El Mejor Equipo que Todos los Otros Equipos, El Bate Grande y La Grama Artificial. El equipo de Los Nachos Caros ganó el campeonato! Nosotros hablamos en español y jugamos al campeonato. Coachie y Señorita Beardslee tiraron las pelotas. Las pelotas fueron verde y amarillo, uno grande, uno pequeño.

Los jugadores en los equipos jugaron de receptor y nosotros corrimos mucho. No jugamos en la grama artificial, nosotros jugamos en el campo de fútbol. Tuvimos que correr y atrapar muy bien y fuerte. Fue muy divertido. Béisbol fue muy cómico!



*Students measured the time it took to run between bases, made their own baseball cards including some likes and dislikes, positions they like to play and highlighted a favorite player and why they like them. The final culminating activity was tournament where students could use the vocabulary and cheer each other on in Spanish. In addition, students watched SUGAR, a story of a player from the Dominican Republic and his journey to the US to play on a team in Iowa.*