

SPANISH

In Spanish 1, students became masters of their own grammar. They researched a grammar topic in pairs, created a poster to explain the topic and then led mini-lessons for the entire group. These included a short presentation and explanation of the topic based on research, a quick activity that ranged from taking notes to a worksheet or a game or another creative way for the lesson to stick in the mind of the students. Students reviewed understanding by creating a short quiz to follow their work.



Right, Alysha Boynton and Sarah Devine: ¡Qué maestras estupendas!

# Four Rivers Currents

April 2010

## From the Principal's Desk...

### THE ONGOING EVENTS THAT MAKE THIS COMMUNITY STRONG

#### A DAY OF RESPECT

For a second time this year we had a special day here at school, and I'd like to tell you about last Friday's event. Like the Social Justice Day in November, this past Friday's all school, all day event had a tone and energy that makes us feel proud about Four Rivers. The morning was a film festival focused on one of our character virtues: RESPECT. In cross-grade groups, students watched movies, some current and some classic, that revealed the virtue. Discussions in crew asked them to share what they saw and to think about what the word means. The afternoon was for team building – and the fun of doing something different from our routine – with whole school Fishy Fishy (ask your kids), a rotation of challenge activities and games in teams made up of students from every grade, and capped off with a final whole school group challenge. The best parts of this day were those moments when students of different ages who didn't really know each other before had to untangle a human knot or act out charades clues or help each other over an "electric fence" – or share a tear watching a film together. The all-school dance finished off a full day. The students who attended continued this cross-grade spirit; what a nice community to be part of. While these special days might not be strictly academic, they do a great deal to shape our school.

#### STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

At conferences last week, nearly 88% of our families attended to hear their students reflect on their learning and check in on academic and personal goals. These reflections and presentations are important steps in our educational process and we appreciate the support you show by attending. Several parents said that they still want to hear more from their children's teachers. As always, we're just a phone call or email away. Don't hesitate to contact a teacher when you want to know more.

#### SPAGHETTISBURG

Our Gettysburg trip has become a tradition and so has our spaghetti dinner fundraiser. It's this Friday night from 5:30-7:30, \$6 per person or \$20 per family. We'll give you take out containers as well. We hope to see you there.

#### VARIETY SHOW

Another Four Rivers tradition is our annual Variety Show. Whether your child is performing or not, it's a great evening to celebrate and appreciate our school community. Come on out on Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

#### INTENSIVES

Next week from Wednesday to Friday, students in grades 8-12 will participate in what we call Intensives. These are focused learning opportunities that we don't get to do during the course of our normal classes -- playing and singing the Blues, out-door rock climbing, a trip to study the ecology of Cape Cod, quilt-making, classic cinema, audio production, building (and sleeping in) primitive shelters, and dance. Like our special days, Intensives let us learn in some different ways.



Peter Garbus, Principal

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Four River Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people and lives of learning and 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 Cohain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301

## 7th Grade News

### Making Root Beer by Sabrina Westgate

“Okay, class,” Ms. Evans said. “Today we are making...root beer!” Gasps of excitement filled the room as the seventh grade class received the news. We were making soda—and we were going to be able to drink it! All throughout that rainy Friday in the middle of March, the seventh grade went about the business of mixing together sugar, water, yeast, and root beer concentrate. Over the next few days, the enthusiastic students would rush into school, inquiring immediately whether or not the root beer would be drunk in class that day. But always the answer was no.

“I hear that they have to cool for two days,” and “I think we’re going to drink it after MCAS!” were some of the rumors that frequently made the rounds. Finally, on Wednesday, March 24, the root beer bottles were pulled out in each of the crew rooms. As the cups were poured, a still silence prevailed that was broken by the sudden, “Eew! Gross!” from the drinkers. And then, from the back of the room there came one lone voice: “I like it!”

### Lighting Food on Fire! by Jack Conant and Trent Holmes

Mmmm...The smell of roasted peanuts may make your mouth water, but how do you feel about completely toasted and charred peanuts? Eh, not so good. Last Wednesday we completely torched things like peanuts, marshmallows, and crackers. I bet you are wondering, “How did this connect to anything you were learning about?” The seventh grade lit samples of food on fire to see how many calories they have. Not surprisingly, peanuts had the most while marshmallows were second and crackers third. We figured this out by filling a can with 100 milliliters of water and then took its temperature in degrees Celsius. We then took a food sample and weighed it on a scale. Finally, (drum roll!) we torched it with a match. We took the temperature of the water after the food burned, and the difference in temperature showed us how many calories were in the food.

### The Game of Life by Isaiah Lapierre and Finn Tierney

Did you ever play “house” as a kid? This month, the seventh graders took the game to the next level. Each student was given a weekly payment, high or low depending on grades (oh no!). With that, we had to figure out how to pay expenses per month, assuming we all lived in Franklin County. Electric, water, heating, mortgage, cable; there were many looks of surprise on our faces when we saw all the bills. “I can’t afford that!” “I didn’t even know that existed!” To top it off, seventh graders were assigned a family of three to six people to provide for. Also, midway through the project, students were given “fate cards” like “Your child needs braces—lose \$300!” Students are recording their expenses and calculations in an excel spreadsheet.

“It’s a bit like playing the game of life, but on paper and more serious,” one student said. The project has really put a lot of doubts in our heads about growing up. So, we are just going to stay kids for as long as possible.



Lliam Carlton and Jack Conant (above) and Glenn Pasterczyk and Trent Holmes (below) calculate calories during the **Flaming Foods** lab.



### How Does Your Garbage Grow?

by Maggie Tirrell

“Mom! Don’t throw that away!”

“Why? It’s just trash!”

“No! I can use it for science class!”

That is probably a lot like what you have been hearing or will be hearing the next few weeks. The seventh graders are starting a new expedition called “How does your garden grow?” For this expedition’s first project, we have to do a science experiment that must answer the question “How does your garbage grow?” The goal is to grow a plant out of household trash. We will have five weeks to try to get a plant to grow.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER COUNSELING

SPRING DATES for JUNIORS & SENIORS – Take Note:

Monday, Apr 26 Representative from *College of the Atlantic* visiting at 2:05 pm

Thursday, Apr 29 Registration Deadline for **June 5 SAT**

Friday, May 7 Registration Deadline for **June 12 ACT**

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**SENIORS:** Keep track of college application deadlines. Notify Ms. Taylor & Ms. Durkee of any additions to your college list, and the outcomes of your applications. Work on scholarship applications.

**JUNIORS:** Sign up for the May or June SAT or ACT!! (see above)

All Juniors who have not already done so, see Ms. Taylor to set up an initial advising appointment with Mr. Itterly on a Monday or Tuesday after school. **DON'T DELAY!**

**COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS: Seniors, Check out SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES in the resource files in the Gardner Room of the Farmhouse.**

## COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SENIORS

Our Seniors are beginning to hear from colleges. Students have been accepted at:

*Boston University, Champlain College, Drexel University, Emmanuel, Florida Institute of Technology, Jacksonville University, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Messiah, Montreat (NC), Northeastern, Union College, UMass Amherst, UMass Lowell—Engineering, University of Rhode Island, University of Vermont, Western New England College, Wentworth Institute, Westfield State, Worcester Polytechnic Institute,*

## FAMILY COUNCIL NEWS

Spring is in the air and the days are staying brighter longer! The next Family Council meeting will be Wednesday April 14 at 6:30 in the Farm House. We are always eager for new faces and fresh ideas. Please come; it's a great way to hear about what's happening at the school! Hope to see you there!

**FLOWER POWER FUND RAISER!** We've just launched our fundraising flower bulb campaign. In addition to the catalogs and order forms that will be coming home with your student on Monday (watch for it!) we have set up to take orders online. We created a special landing page for all of our friends and family to come to and support our school. For every purchase Four Rivers will receive 50% of the total sale! These are top quality, best selling flower bulbs and plants, and they're giving us a 100% satisfaction guarantee. They are all summer and fall blooming plants.

Go to [http://www.flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?campaign\\_id=2695](http://www.flowerpowerfundraising.com/campaign?campaign_id=2695)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### PARENTS WANTED for FOCUS GROUP

On Thursday, April 15th, Four Rivers is being visited by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education—Charter School Office. Site visits like this are one of the means by which the DESE documents the school's performance and progress over time. The site visit team will be observing classes, and interviewing administrators, trustees, teachers and students, and parents.

The site visit team would like to meet with a group of parents for about 1 hour. They will be asking everything from why you chose this school for your child, to what kind of information the school provides about your child's learning. We are looking for 6—10 parents whose children represent a variety of grades, years spent at the school, and academic ability.

**If you are interested in being a part of this focus group, and if you can be available on the morning of Thursday, April 15th, please contact Leslie Taylor, Administrative Coordinator, at 775-4577. Thank you!**

#### Parent Advisory Council

**April 28, 2010 at 6:30 P.M.**

*Our speaker will be*

**Dr. Robert Chalif**

**"Social Skills for Teenagers"**

#### NURSE'S NOTES

As spring approaches, I have two reminders:

1. students **MUST** wear athletic shoes for PE (NO flip flops)
2. Bring a water bottle to school every day.

~ Jeanne Milton, R.N.

#### MCAS Testing Calendar for April May and June

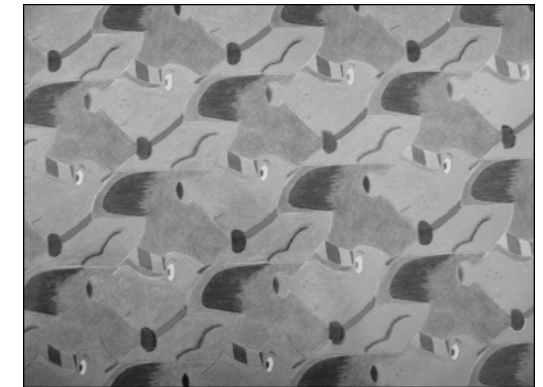
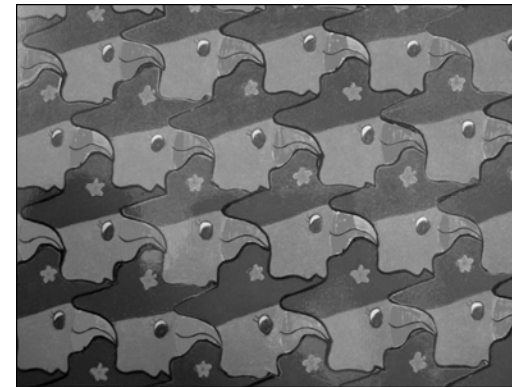
7th Grade	April 7 (ELA Make-up); April 8 & 9 (Reading Comp); May 20 & 21 (Mathematics)
8th Grade	April 5 & 6 (ELA); May 11 & 12 (Mathematics)
10th Grade	April 7 (ELA Make-up); May 17 & 18 (Mathematics); June 2 & 3 (Biology)

*On testing days, please be sure your child arrives at school promptly, eats a healthy breakfast, and gets plenty of sleep the night before.*

### 8th Grade News

#### MATH

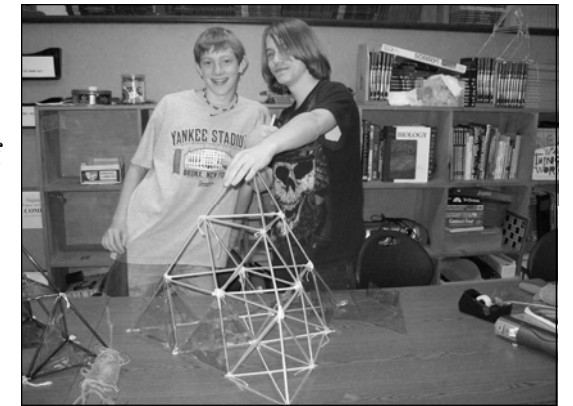
This month 8th grade students completed original tessellations as the culmination of our Symmetry and Transformations unit in math. They look amazing and will soon be on exhibit in the 8th grade wing.



*Above Left—Helen Perham crafted this fabulous tessellation by transforming a regular old hexagon into "Dory the Bird." Above right—Emi Link artfully finessed a single design element into "A Dog of a Different Color."*

#### SCIENCE

In science, 8th graders have been experiencing the engineering design process and contending with forces of flight as they design and build tetrahedral kites. After a round of building and test-flying experimental kites, we've been working on final kites with a kite-flying finale coming up on April 1st. Ask any 8th grader about the designs emerging from our class!



*Photos at right:*

*Top—Tucker Jenkins, Evan Graves and Tilyr Gannon (not shown) designed and built this experimental kite, which has turned into half of their final kite design.*

*Bottom—Frederic Rigollaud and Rachel Carow are out to test-fly their experimental, bird-inspired kite.*



#### SPANISH

The 8th grade class is finishing a unit on Mexico and learning about typical dishes found throughout the country. They are studying vocabulary and grammar structures to help them order food at a restaurant. In the coming weeks, the class will taste authentic food while acting out restaurant scenes.

## DIV II NEWS

### SCIENCE

**9<sup>th</sup> Environmental Science**—You may see 9<sup>th</sup> graders heading down to Arms Brook as they launch into their watershed investigation. They will be testing local streams for nitrate, dissolved oxygen, and pH as they learn how land use and topography affect local streams. The students will be collaborating with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at the Renaissance Expeditionary Learning School in Springfield. They will be sharing questions and data with these students as they continue to investigate water quality throughout the spring.

**10<sup>th</sup> Biology**—These students are finishing up their study of genetics. They have been investigating traits to understand co-dominance, sex linkage, incomplete dominance, and multiple alleles. They are using this knowledge to make predictions about Shanacanoe. Please feel free to ask your 10<sup>th</sup> grade student about Shanacanoe! Toward the end of March the students will start their study of evolution. We also will be reviewing concepts we studied throughout the year to prepare for the Biology MCAS in June.



Students measure the velocity of Arms Brook, to learn about the relationship between stream velocity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

**Ninth grade** students are currently reading *The Killer Angels*, a novel that depicts the events of the battle of Gettysburg. Analysis questions and discussions are focused on the logistics of the battle and also the reasons that men were fighting in the Civil War. We are also exploring the experiences of slaves in the years leading up the Civil War with an emphasis on primary sources, particularly slave narratives. Look for a letter detailing the Gettysburg Trip itinerary in the next couple of weeks.

**Tenth grade** students are continuing the expedition "War and American Society." Students recently completed an annotated timeline depicting America's shift from a somewhat isolated republic in the late 18th century to a nation actively using its military on the global stage in the early years of the 20th century. On March 29th, students are meeting with two veterans as a part of the outreach program of the Veterans Education Project; the visit will allow students to gain a better understanding of the nature of military service in the U.S.

### Spanish 2

Students are sharing their short story projects with one another. Their illustrated books, based on a variety of themes, showcase the class's creative writing skills and artistic talent. The class is wrapping up a unit on health-related vocabulary by acting out scenes in a hospital.

### ENGLISH

This spring, the 10th grade will be trying to answer the question: What is American about American literature? To do this, students will read a number of canonized American works in book groups, and then will come together as a grade to identify common themes and characteristics of the writing. To do this, students will need to obtain copies of the books they have chosen to read. I am looking for donations, loans, and people to scout used book stores for the following:

*Of Mice and Men*—20 copies; *Slaughterhouse 5*—15 copies; *Fahrenheit 451*—20 copies; *The Invisible Man*—2 copies; *A Streetcar Named Desire*—5 copies; *Call of the Wild*—10 copies; *The Bell Jar*—20 copies; *My Antonia*—2 copies

If you are willing to donate/loan any of these books, I would greatly appreciate it. Students will replace any books they damage. Please confirm as soon as you can.

## DIV II NEWS Cont...

### MATHEMATICS

During much of March, **ninth graders** have been busy exploring the world of polynomials, discovering that they've actually been using these strangely-worded things their entire math life. (Ask them to give you an example of a polynomial.) Of course, their study has become fairly in-depth as they learn about abstract polynomials that are FILLED with variables (x's and y's and a's and b's) and also exponents.

Ninth graders now can add, subtract, and multiply polynomials. Some students have begun to factor them, and eventually all will learn this skill, which we'll then tie back to the topic of quadratic equations, which we were playing with before focusing on polynomials.

**Tenth grade math** students recently finished the HIV/AIDS expedition, and a math portion of the project asked them to create and/or analyze statistics and graphs. As that topic began to wind down, students have been learning how to find the lateral area, surface area, and volume of three-dimensional solids. Specifically they've been studying cones, cylinders, prisms, pyramids and spheres. As they get used to the formulas for surface area and volume, they use many skills they've learned previously, such as special right triangles and Pythagorean Theorem.

Lately our class rhythm has been thrown off as students focus on the English MCAS, but we will once again build up the pace and begin some algebraic review, looking into many concepts further than in ninth grade.

## DIV III NEWS

### Wilderness Literature

What is your personal environmental philosophy? Division 3 English students are answering that very question, seeking to define wilderness and its value in their own lives. They're reading nonfiction and poetry to help support their arguments, looking at such wilderness literature "greats" as Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey and John Muir. Meanwhile, they're also reading literature circle texts of their choice: some of the selections include *Prodigal Summer*, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Dune*. What do these books teach about the relationship between civilization and wilderness? These and other questions will

### Advanced Spanish

The cinema class just finished a series of films depicting certain aspects of war or the aftermath of war. Students learned about military coups in Latin America through the films *Cautiva* and *The Black Pimpernel*. The film *Pan's Labyrinth* opened the door to a discussion on the role of fantasy as an escape from the harsh realities of war. Students will be debating immigration in the coming weeks with films about Cuba and Mexico.

### Four Rivers Parents!

**THANK YOU** for participating in the "Parent Power!" survey of parents of middle and high school students in Franklin County and the North Quabbin. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

### SAVE THE DATE

Four Rives Graduation is  
Saturday, June 5th at 4:00 pm