

SUSTAINABILITY FUND AT WORK

Thank you to the many donors to our Sustainability Fund this year. The first of many new projects are now underway. The students in Gardening Club constructed seven new raised beds to significantly increase the size of our school garden. The students have been learning about starting seeds, testing soil, and the nutrient requirements for vegetable crops. After the gardening club plants this spring the 9th grade environmental science students will take over with garden maintenance in the fall during their local food and farming expedition.

We will be looking for student and parent volunteers to help with summer garden maintenance. If you are interested in signing up contact LStamas@fourriverscharter.org.



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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 Cohain Rd., Greenfield, MA 01301

Four Rivers Currents

May 2010

From the Principal's Desk...

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENT

As May arrives, we look ahead to the final weeks of our school year. I've always valued the cycle of the school year because it provides moments for all of us – especially our students – to think about and mark their progress. There are three such moments I'd like to bring to the front of your mind.

On May 12 we will hold our annual *Expo Night* where students display some of the work they've created this year. One change for us is that we will have just one night instead of two. Students in grades 7, 9, and 11 will be on display from 6:30 to 7:30. Students in grades 8, 10, and 12 will be on display from 8:00 to 9:00. Between 7:30 and 8:00, there will be refreshments and brief words in the Common Room. Please note that students are expected to attend and view other student work during the time they are not presenting; this is not an evening for playing and we hope you'll help us reinforce that expectation. The purpose of these presentations is for students to show off work from this year that they value. In doing so, they are showing us knowledge, skill, and craftsmanship that they've developed. It's one thing to have them tell us what they've learned – which they do when prompted, believe it or not. It's another to have them show us.

From May 18-20, our seniors will present their *Senior Expeditions*. In an already busy year, we ask our seniors to pull together all of the inquiry, investigation, and independence skills they've developed with us to pursue an original project that culminates with a product and presentation. They set out with a question or set of questions in mind, pursuing information and learning more about a subject of interest. For their product, they create something that puts that learning into some form, such as a hiking trip, pottery, a math lesson, a guitar, a bridge and more. Some seniors will share their work at Expo Night while most will present the following week. While at times painful or frustrating for our students to go through, these projects give our graduates a challenging independent academic experience with lessons to carry them into college or whatever their next stage of learning will be.

Lastly I want to talk about portfolios and passages. At the end of each year and especially at the end of a division, we ask our students to reflect on their growth and learning. Reflection helps students become more aware of how they have taken on challenges, overcome obstacles, and moved forward into new levels of skill and knowledge. Their job in portfolios is to tell their story of the year. They select pieces of work as their artifacts and they explain what has happened for them, though the form and content differs slightly for each grade. For students completing Division 1 or 2, they will have Passage Presentations where they tell you parts of this story and show you some of their work. These students will show us what they've accomplished and why they're ready to move on to the next level. For seniors, their passage is graduation.

Maybe we haven't achieved all we set out to achieve. But think about how much change happens in the lives of our young people in just a single year. Not only do they look different, but they have gone through so much in such a short time. Their academic learning and we hope their character learning mean that they are not the same as when this year started. Come celebrate these moments with us.



Peter Garbus,
Principal

7th Grade News

Eighteen Kids and a Microphone! *by Maia Buchanan, Trent Holmes, Asia Littell, Emma Vagedes-Plavcan*

Eighteen seventh graders cluster around a single microphone, clutching papers and trying not to breath. They sing high-pitched sounds and low rumbling tones. This is what would greet you if you were to walk into Mr. D's room on a Monday afternoon around two 'o' clock. In April, our seventh grade music class started recording numerous songs, like "21 Guns" by Green Day, "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey, "Viva la Vida" by Cold Play, and "Drift Away" by Uncle Kracker. We have also been working on harmony and melody, so part of the class will sing high, part of the class will sing medium, and part will sing low. Even though we do not meet the perfect pitch of these amazing artists, we are awfully close to it. In the months to come, we will continue learning and recording new songs.



Life of the Ancient Greeks *by Glen Pasterczyk*

When you're learning about ancient times, have you ever wondered how it would actually feel to be living back then? Well, the seventh graders got to find out. We were put into four Greek city-state groups (a city-state is an independent community that has a government and can run on its own). The lesson was on trading and how city-states took certain routes for trade depending on where they lived. My group had to travel by foot because we were in the mountains. Others got to go by boat in the ocean. No matter how you traveled, there were many dangers, such as carts breaking down, pirates or bandits attacking, and boats sinking. Knowing all this, would you want to live back then? I wouldn't. Life back then seemed really hard and dangerous.

Seedfolks to the Extreme! *by Jake Bednarski, Skyler Clarke-Williams, Kyra Holmes, Amber Magin, Gabby Santucci, and Sarah Walker*

In English class we read a book called *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman. What is *Seedfolks* you might ask? Well, it is about people that are growing a garden in a vacant lot in Cleveland. They are all connected by the garden; it helps the people of the town get along with each other and show their true colors. Now we are making a second book with our own chapters. Our own chapters connect with *Seedfolks* events and also our classmates' characters. We also drew portraits of what we thought our characters looked like with the help of Ms. Durkee. She helped us with coloring, shading, how to make the structure of a face, and how to draw parts of the face like the eyes, nose, mouth, eyebrows and ears. We really enjoyed it and can't wait to see our book all together! Right now, we are voting on titles for our book. Some title examples are "Rooted: The Overlooked Growers," "People of the Dirt," "Bulb Buddies," and "Seedfolks -The Lost Chapters." Stop by Ms. Ritchie's classroom and read it sometime!



Seventh graders learn about body systems in science class.

COLLEGE AND CAREER COUNSELING

- Friday, May 7 Registration Deadline for **June 12 ACT**
- Monday, May 10 **College Information Night for Parents of Juniors**—important to understanding the college application and financial aid process. All junior parents encouraged to attend! 7:00 pm in the High School Common Room.
- SENIORS:** Work on scholarship applications (*Resource Files in the Gardener Room*).
- JUNIORS:** Sign up for the May or June SAT or ACT!! (*see above*).

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SENIORS

Bard College, Boston University, Bridgewater State College, Champlain College, College of the Atlantic, Drexel University, Eckerd College, Emmanuel College, Fitchburg State College, Framingham State College, Florida Institute of Technology, Greenfield Community College Outdoor Leadership Program, Jacksonville University, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Messiah College, Montreat (NC), Northeastern, Norwich University, Smith College, Tufts University, Union College, UMass Amherst, UMass Dartmouth, UMass Lowell—Engineering, University of Connecticut, University of Rhode Island, University of Vermont, Vassar College, Western New England College, Wentworth Institute, Westfield State, Whiteman College, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

COLLEGE INFORMATION NIGHT FOR JUNIOR PARENTS

Monday * May 10 * 7:00 pm * Common Room

Presentation by Fred Itterly, College Advisor

Now that most Juniors have met with Mr. Itterly to begin the college planning process, this presentation for their Parents is to help them understand the college application process, Early Application, Early Decision, testing, visiting colleges, and creating a plan for the fall when the application process begins in earnest. The evening is aimed at Junior parents but all parents are welcome!

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER

Tess Grogan, a senior, has been selected as a **National Merit Scholar**—a Four Rivers first. Each year approximately 8,200 scholarships are awarded through NMSC programs, from over 1.5 million qualified entrants. Tess has received a scholarship to attend Tufts University in the fall. Well done!

Max Perham, a junior, has been named an EF Educational Tours Global Citizen, 1 of 10 winners in the US to win an expense-paid trip to China this summer. Max's winning essay was about what a trip to China would mean to him in relation to his leadership goals. Max, you're going to China!

Emma Burnett, grade 7, is one of 8 finalists (out of 1100 entries statewide) in the Annual Credit Union Student Essay Contest, winning a \$250 savings bond and a trip to an awards ceremony at the State House on May 20th. Emma's winning essay was on Community Volunteerism.

ULTIMATE NEWS

HOME TOURNAMENT MAY 8

Coach Terry Plotkin invites the entire Four Rivers community to come to our annual home Ultimate Tournament on Saturday, May 8, at GCC from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm. We have four teams participating: The Varsity Boys in the A division, the JV boys in the B division, and the Girls Varsity and JV in the Girls division. There are 24 teams coming from all over Massachusetts and Vermont. I promise you lots of great action.



TEAM NEWS

VARSITY BOYS — The team has four wins and four losses so far this season. We made the semi-finals of the NMH tournament before falling to a tough Longmeadow team in overtime. The team is learning to play tough defense with solid zone play and is getting its offensive chemistry going. We are well served by our captains, Matt Tatro, Wes Johnson, and Max Perham. I am pleased with the team's progress as we only have two returning varsity players from last year's very strong team. ~ *Coach Terry Plotkin*

JV GIRLS — This team is off to a good start. We had two strong comebacks in our first two games. We had excellent team efforts with new players and veterans coming together. Co-captain Lily Bennett was awarded the first game disc for her outstanding defense against the Academy at Charlemont. Kyra Holmes was given the next game disc for her hustle and timely catches and tosses. Taylor Chapin's skillful handling helped advance the play. We look forward to playing at the Academy at Charlemont on April 29th in a re-scheduled game. ~ *Coach Bill Gural*

VARSITY GIRLS — The girls have had a strong team this year. We beat NMH in our first game. Our following games were a little rough due to the absence of 5 players. Upon being fully powered with all of our players, we will be even more of a force to be reckoned with! We are looking forward to our two upcoming tournaments at Amherst and Greenfield.

~ *Coach Amanda Griffith*

REMINDER!! BOSTON BREAKERS
Sign up for the Boston Breakers game in Cambridge by Friday, May 7th. Sign ups are in the office. Please pay in cash when you sign up. If you have any questions, contact Coach Griffith

JV BOYS — With a number of returning JV players as well as some newcomers, the JV Boys team began the year learning to play as a team. During the first few games they took their lumps against some tough competition, but the experience has proved invaluable, as they are starting their own winning streak lately. The JV Boys have used a combination of stingy team defense and quick and efficient offense to win their two most recent games. The team is hoping to continue to build on these recent successes, including an 8-0 shutout first half against the visiting Longmeadow JV team just before Spring Break.

~ *Coach Jared Olsen*

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM — This year's middle school ultimate team is like a group of high-energy particles, every one of them a passionate frisbee player. The team's never-say-die attitude (personified by now left-handed player, Tyler Campbell) is a true inspiration, and our grasp of strategy (guided by Captain Tucker Jenkins and Field Leader Seb Arruda) is constantly improving our game on the field. With ten more games and two full tournaments left, we're going to have a good season. ~ *Coach Cris Christos*

8th Grade News

The Eighth Grade Magazine Project

If you could make a magazine about anything you wanted, what would you choose? This was the question that eighth grade students answered two weeks ago when they were made editors-in-chief of their very own magazines. Their assignment was to choose a compelling topic that would be interesting to research and focused enough to write about. After some deep thinking and playful brainstorming, ideas began to flow, and a very diverse smattering of topics emerged. Here is a small sample of the wide array of topics: punk rock, maple sugaring, the Holocaust, women's health, the Yankees, criminal justice, recycled art, Broadway, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Irish dance. Wow! It has been wonderful to watch students dive in and explore a personal interest or passion while practicing critical writing skills that will prepare them for high school. By the time they are finished, eighth graders will have created a cover-to-cover magazine complete with a feature article, a biographical article, and an editorial. Their magazines will also contain a pictorial page, two advertisements, as well as several other components of their choice, including an advice column, a horoscope page, a book, CD, or movie review, or letters to the editor. You will see their good work in progress at Expo Night on May 12th!

SPANISH Grade 8— *Mr. McDonnell*

The class wrapped up a unit on food. Students baked cakes, tasted Spanish tortilla, and also performed skits depicting scenes in a restaurant. They are now tackling new grammar and learning how to describe daily routines. The class will embark on a tour of Spanish art in the coming weeks and use their knowledge to assist them in a project for art class.

SPANISH Grade 7 — *Ms. Beardslee*

Seventh graders have spent the last few weeks working on an interdisciplinary project coordinated with their Math/Science class. Each student investigated a vegetable or fruit and has made a bilingual garden card complete with information about how the plant grows, what it looks like and some of the ways that you can prepare it. An original drawing is also a part of the work. This spring, students will be preparing short stories and then using all that they know to prepare for the final oral exam at the end of the year.

MCAS Testing Calendar for May and June

- 7th Grade May 20 & 21 (Mathematics)
- 8th Grade May 11 & 12 (Math & Science/Technology/Engineering)
- 10th Grade May 17 & 18 (Mathematics); June 2 & 3 (Science)

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

DIV II NEWS

SCIENCE

Environmental Science—9th Grade

The 9th graders have launched an extensive stream study project that will culminate in a watershed symposium at the Springfield Renaissance Expeditionary Learning School in June. Students at the two schools are becoming expert water quality testers and will gather data to conduct small group research projects, many comparing streams near Four Rivers to Abbey Brook which runs through the more urban area near SRELS. Students are communicating with groups via email, critiquing research questions and enjoying working with folks who understand what a *Meeting* quality project means. Stream quality tests include velocity, dissolved oxygen, nitrate, coliform bacteria presence, and macroinvertebrate diversity.

Biology—10th grade

In biology, we are tackling evolution. We started with debating what is science and looking at myth, fact and theory. We looked at evidence for evolution and did an activity to explore environmental pressures on natural selection. Human evolution has been a particular area of focus with the excellent resources associated with the NOVA special "Becoming Human." We are also gearing up for the Biology MCAS on June 2 & 3. Each week students will take practice tests for homework to help figure out what areas they need to review.



9th grade students collect macroinvertebrates in Arms Brook. By examining the macroinvertebrate diversity students can draw conclusions about stream water quality.



SOCIAL STUDIES

US HISTORY I

Ninth grade students just finished reading *The Killer Angels* and completed a final assessment in which they analyzed aspects of the novel, including the degree to which honor and pride influenced the events of the battle of Gettysburg. Students will be beginning independent research projects into aspects of the Civil War that they wish to explore and would like to learn more about.

US HISTORY II

Students in grade ten are continuing their study of war. Most recently, they completed a debate on the Lend-Lease Bill of 1941, essentially exploring the question, "What obligations does the United States have to its allies and the rest of the world during a time of war overseas?" Next, we will be shifting into a whole-class exploration of the roots of the Vietnam War. Independently or in small groups, students will soon be choosing a project focused on telling a "war story," with options that focus on veterans' affairs/stories, military recruitment, and peace activism in the valley.

DIV III NEWS

ENGLISH

Wilderness Literature

Students have just finished writing papers on their personal environmental philosophies, and will soon be moving into some community advocacy. Now that they've articulated what they truly believe, where are the organizations and programs that are acting in accordance with those beliefs? How can we support them? Students will be playing the role of venture capitalists and searching for like-minded programs or organizations to "invest" in, leading ultimately to some larger-scale advocacy in our community and beyond.

"Dining to Donate" at Applebees

Proceeds to offset the cost of the
Junior—Senior Prom

On Expo Night , May 12th

PROM

The Third Annual Junior-Senior Prom will be held on **Friday, May 28th** at the Log Cabin in Holyoke, MA. Tickets are \$55/per person and will be on sale until Friday, May 14th. Some financial assistance may be available. For more information, please contact Leah Plath at Lplath@fourriverscharter.org.

From the Senior Advisors - Senior Expedition

Most of our seniors are nearing the end of their Senior Expedition. Designed as a culminating Four Rivers experience, Senior Expedition provides the opportunity to conduct an expedition for one, built upon an area of individual passion. It has four distinct components; a proposal which outlines your plan for the year, and which needs the Principal's approval, research and fieldwork, creation of a product and giving a presentation. This years seniors are building guitars, developing blacksmithing skills, hosting cultural celebrations, working with local potters, exploring forensic fire science, examining issues relating to cultural assimilation and more. They will be presenting their work beginning the week of May 17th.

NICARAGUA TRIP RETURNS

The Nicaragua Trip was a success! Thirteen students and their two teachers spent April break learning about Nicaraguan history and culture. They lived with families, interviewed community organizers, and even got to visit the U.S. Embassy.

Come to Expo Night on May 12th to hear a little more about this fun-filled and educational experience.

