



Four Rivers Currents

December 2019



From the Principal's Desk

Four Rivers Fundraising: The What and the Why

As the year (and decade) winds down, I'm using my column to describe a part of our school that I don't think I've explained before. You've likely seen the pitches: please donate to the Sustainability Fund, our annual appeal. Bring your old electronics and donate \$5 per item. Donate items and purchase tickets for the Variety Show Raffle. Buy your Four Rivers Apparel. Pies! Some of you might even remember coffee sales or a book drive or wrapping paper, etc. We have done our best over the years to minimize school fundraising, but we still do it.

The question came up at the last Coffee with the Principal: What exactly does Four Rivers raise money for? We're a public school, after all, and we are supposed to operate from dollars that come to the school from local and state taxes. In fact, our board and school leadership has believed that it is vitally important that the school live within its means, budget conservatively, avoid funding cliffs (grant-funded projects that need to be paid for after the grant ends), and pay for what's important to us.

The Sustainability Fund annual appeal is to help fund our Intensives and Expeditions. These two programs allow us to create learning experiences beyond the classroom walls, with fieldwork, outside experts, physical adventure, and real-world connections. The programs cost money and are offered to our

students without additional costs. The money that comes in through the annual appeal--between \$10,000 and \$14,000 each year--goes to the non-profit Four Rivers Education Foundation (FREF), whose sole function is to support the school through development and maintenance of our property and facilities and support of the school program.

The most important purpose to Four Rivers fundraising is PARTICIPATION -- and we want to find ways to increase that. Donating to a school is an opportunity to show support for what that school does; the more people that participate, the greater the demonstration of support. While we welcome donations of \$25 or \$100 or more, giving \$10 is no small matter to a number of our families. If we could get 50% or 75% or more of our families, our alumni, the families of alums to contribute something, that would send a clear message of community support. And why does that message matter? Grant funders ask what the school itself has done to raise money and with what success. Additionally, they value the number of donors, as much as or more than the size of the donation. Giving a donation, however small, is a concrete way of showing support. If we ever run a capital campaign for significant changes to our facilities, we are going to need as many people to contribute as possible. And we want to be able to prove we have a large percentage of our community supporting us.

The bottom line? We want as many people as possible to donate \$10 each year. That will get us close to the modest dollar amount we hope to raise to support programs. But more importantly, it would show how strong a community Four Rivers has built.

You may have ideas about how to increase fundraising participation or strengthen our pitch; I welcome your ideas. If perhaps you're already convinced, you can click the donate button right now or send a check to FREF to kick in your contribution. Here's to a happy and healthy new year. Bring on the 20s!

[Donate to Four Rivers](#)

Announcements

- Holiday Break starts at 12:30 dismissal on December 20, 2019. We'll return to school on Thursday, January 2, 2020.
- The last day of semester 1 is Thursday, January 23rd.

- **Sibling Enrollment for Fall 2020:** Siblings of current students who wish to enroll next fall must complete an enrollment application and submit it by the due date of Tuesday, February 25, 2020, no later than 5 pm. Siblings are given priority in the lottery, which will be held on Thursday February 28th. Applications are available on the school website under the admissions tab, from Ms. Taylor at the school, or at our Admissions Information Sessions.
- **Admissions Information Sessions for 2020 Enrollment** are being held at the school on: Saturday January 11th at 10 am, Wednesday January 29th at 7 pm, and Saturday February 8th at 10 am.
- **Special Education Announcement:** Four Rivers Charter Public School is required to adhere to the federal requirement: **Child Find**. We are required to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. The obligation to identify all children who may need special education services includes all children who are suspected of having a disability, including children who receive passing grades. If you are concerned that your child may have a disability or if you have questions about any special education process, please contact Kate Conant, Director of Academic Support.

Alumni Updates

- **Alexis (Huston) Lambert** ('10) and **Ryan Lambert** ('10) married in 2016 and have two children, Addison and Everleigh. Alexis is seeking a new path for employment, but is currently enjoying being a stay at home mom!
- **Jeffrey Kernan-Dufrense** ('10) started working for Dunkin' Donuts where, in bagel baking and equipment cleaning, he has put to use some of the food chemistry and water chemistry knowledge that he absorbed at Four Rivers.
- **Noah Hellmund** ('13) is in the last year of his Master's program in Environmental Management at Western Colorado University. His thesis research is investigating new ways to manage forested landscapes for increased resilience to wildfires without compromising biotic health or the aesthetic value of the larger landscape. He is looking forward to returning to full time wildland firefighting once he graduates in May, to chase the fires a bit longer!
- **Sara DiPaolo** ('16) is in her senior year at Columbia College in Chicago, planning to graduate in May 2020 with a degree in Comedy Writing and

Performance, with minors in Writing for Television and Creative Advertising. Last spring she did a semester at The Second City in Chicago; the culmination of that semester was two nights performing on a main stage at Second City. When she graduates this spring, she hopes to move to Los Angeles and work in the television industry.

- **Catherine Thacker** ('17) is currently in her third year at Lesley University pursuing a dual major in animation and illustration. She and her family now live in a small town outside of Augusta, Maine. She wants everyone to know she misses them so much! For one of her classes this year, she is working on an animation that she hopes to share at the end of the school year.
- **Tanner Ames** ('18) is playing amateur hockey in Colorado and has started his own business in film production and editing.



Sara DiPaolo ('16) performing on stage at Second City in Chicago



Tanner Ames ('18) playing hockey in Colorado

Intensive Highlights

This Year's Fall Intensives

- Art of the Figure (Figure Drawing)
- College Bound
- Disc Golf
- E-sports
- Hoop It Up (Basketball)

- JAM on it! (Local Hiking)
- LARP (Live-Action Role Play)
- Pie Baking
- Winter in the Whites

Figure Drawing

Students spent 4 days focusing on seeing space and lines in different ways. They used studio time at Woolly Mammoth Studio in Greenfield, and studios at Greenfield Community College to try out both short and longer gesture poses. A day at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA, allowed them to draw from sculpture and master works. The focus of the intensive for student artists was to draw what they see, not what they know.



Winter in the Whites

This was year nine for our Winter in the White (Mountains) intensive. After delaying the start of our trip due to a snowstorm, we drove to the Appalachian Mountain Club's Highland Center in Crawford Notch, New Hampshire. They had just received a foot of fresh snow, and we got to enjoy the beautiful landscape

for some winter hiking and playing in the snow. Students summited Mt. Willard or Mt. Avalon. It was a great trip!



From the Classroom

7th and 8th grade

Division 1

7th Grade

How do we know what happened before we were here?

Expedition Update

From Ancient Humans to Early Earth

What happens when 7th graders get their hands on a time machine? What happened when Eckels got in a time machine in the Ray Bradbury short story "A Sound of Thunder"? History can be exciting, but also dangerous.

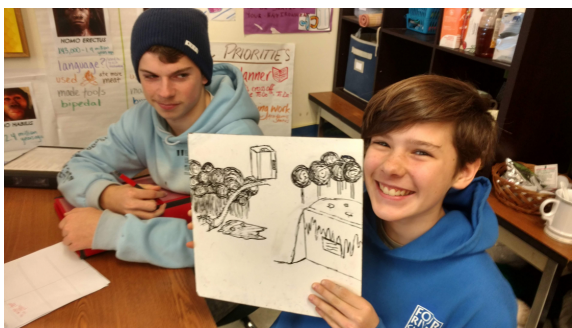
In social studies, groups of students researched different aspects of a Bronze Age civilization, then taught the rest of the class about it by designing and implementing a role play, assessment, and discussion. Although many parts of this project were challenging (How do you get people to listen to you? How do I

find credible information that helps me answer a research question?), the takeaways were huge. Skylar Guillaume reflected, "I really liked this project because there was a lot of room for creating, so that each role-play is very different. I like it when we get to use our imaginations to create something."

In English class, students have been thinking about the elements of narrative: plot, setting, character, theme, and other literary devices. What clues or evidence does an author give us to help us find them? How are these elements connected in a story? We will finish our study of "A Sound of Thunder" with analytical paragraphs that support claims using textual evidence.

In Math class we've started studying negative numbers just at the right moment to consider what it would mean to travel backwards in time billions, millions or hundreds of thousands of years!

In science class we've been training ourselves to be time travelers We've prepared paleogeographic maps to learn what Earth looked like in each of our assigned geologic time periods. We've begun "biology bootcamp" to be sure we can discern the difference between the living and non-living things we may encounter, and to be able to report accurate classifications of the creatures we meet when we finally get to "travel in time." We'll take a deep dive into the history of earth through research, visits to two museums, and a film-festival before creating "Postcards from the Past". If we manage to make our work museum quality, we hope to be opening a temporary exhibit at the **Bedneski Museum, at Amherst College, on the afternoon of February 6, 2020**, so save the date!



English: Illustrating the setting of Sound of Thunder



Social Studies: The crowning of a new emperor in the Qin Dynasty, China

8th Grade

English and Social Studies

We've been busy in 8th grade humanities! Last month in English language arts, we wrapped up our study of "The Crucible". And this month, we began our choice book independent reading project. This project also kicked off our thinking about service: what it is, how we give and receive it, and it helped to prepare us for our 8th grade service immersion. The photo is of students sharing their main ideas behind the choice book independent reading project and service immersion workshop.



For the service immersion, December 16-20, we headed off campus in small groups to provide service for elders at The Arbors, to cook for Community Meals, to assist teachers at Greenfield's Academy of Early Learning and Four Corners schools, and bake pies for and help organize at the Survival Center. Look for photos in next months' Currents!

In social studies, we started our research into the foundations of the United States government by building background knowledge, and then prepared for the "Philosopher's Salon". Students drank tea and ate "bickies" while they shared what they had learned about the formation and foundations of the United States government. Photos below feature (left to right) Quinn peeking out, Liam and Isaiah sipping tea, and Anthony preparing to speak (along with me, Ms. MacNeish:)



Science

Why are there tropics lines on the globe? Exactly where does the north pole point? These and other questions were the topic of 8th grade science as our students worked to share their knowledge of the seasons with 11th graders.

On December 10th students, mostly working in pairs, sat down with 11th graders from Ms. Katz's math class to teach about the science of seasons. The 11th graders are working on understanding sine functions and using the fluctuation of the length of day throughout the year as their case study. Eighth graders, acting as local experts, helped the 11th graders build background knowledge on exactly why we experience seasons.

During our debrief after the teaching, several 8th grade students said, "I was really nervous before the lesson but it really wasn't that bad," and "It was kinda' hard to figure out what we were going to do but once we got going, it was actually pretty easy."

Working toward their goal of becoming good communicators in science, students will be presenting 5-7 minute science talks to their classes in early January. Each student is researching their own topic and creating an interesting and informative talk. You can ask them about what they've learned; students have all finished their research and are now refining their presentations.



9th and 10th grade

Division 2

9th grade Fieldwork with the Nolumbeka Project

As a kick-off to the Human Impact Standard, 9th graders made and dispersed seed balls at the Wissitinnewag garden site in Greenfield, MA. Here are some take-aways from 9th graders following that work:



- I learned that there are a lot of native bee species in Massachusetts.
- Humans have destroyed so much that there are no flowers.
- One take-away I have from the work is the story about the boy from the north.
- I learned about the different types of bees. A couple of examples are the sweet bee and the mining bee. They can range from 1/8 inch to 1 inch long. The connection to the human impact standard is that we have learned about how our use of pesticides and cutting down trees hurts the bee population. We need to take responsibility and help to bring the bee population back.
- Making seed balls is fun and makes an impact.
- We are planting seeds so it helps the environment.
- One way to plant seeds is in clay balls.
- Humans can help the planet if they try.
- One take-away is how fruit trees and plants are good for the earth!
- The seed balls we made will help to restore an area's natural habitat.
- Planting flowers helps native pollinators and reduces our impact on the world.
- People are trying to help the earth but people are killing it too fast. Kids can do a lot to help.

11th and 12th grade

Division 3

Juniors

Modern World History

Back in November, juniors deepened their understanding of power and freedom by studying ongoing unrest worldwide. From Hong Kong to Chile to the Middle East, students created a newscast representing the ever-changing situations in a host of countries. After Thanksgiving, students began a study of the World Wars. They took part in a "peace conference" role-play aimed at keeping the world out of World War I. They have been reading the graphic novel, *Maus*, and studying the Holocaust. Students have been looking closely at their own identities, membership in groups, and how these things influence decision-making in any given historical time period.

English

After a semester studying literary theory and applying critical lenses to texts, juniors are now analyzing media of their choice using these same critical lenses. They'll be presenting on everything from music videos to vintage advertisements, all analyzed through a variety of lenses including postcolonial criticism, archetypal criticism, semiotics, and deconstruction (to name a few). After we return to school in January, we'll collaborate with history to have students write and deliver original monologues based on the experiences of soldiers from the world wars and rescuers during the Holocaust.

Math

Juniors are applying their understanding of trigonometric functions to create models of how daylight hours change through the year, in a location of their choice. In this project, they are connecting the amplitude, frequency, period, phase, and midline to what each parameter represents in the context of daylight hours. They are using their function to find the solstice and equinox dates as well as make predictions about the future. Finally, they are expanding their idea of "line of best fit" by using technology to perform regression, finding the curve of best fit.

Chemistry

As temperatures drop, the content is heating up in the junior Chemistry course. We have been heating metals to examine the structures created by different tempering and quenching processes, and also boiling liquids to separate their components using distillation. Our study of molecules has concluded with the water drops lab and soon we'll look at the effects that famous molecules have had on world history as part of our "Napoleon's Buttons" project.

Seniors

Senior Energy Expedition: Documentary

Seniors just finished the production stage of their documentary, which involved going on fieldwork and filming interviews and b-roll (background) footage. Groups went to Boston, MA; Burlington, VT; New York City and Albany, NY. They interviewed scientists, economists, legislators, engineers, lawyers, and more in order to understand the process of electrification and the future of our energy infrastructure. Now, we move into pre-production, which involves sorting all this footage and editing it into a documentary.

American Civics

Students continued their work on the foundations of American democracy by engaging in another critical case study from the early republic. They looked closely at the struggle for the ratification of the constitution, including specifically the debate about including the Bill of Rights as well as Alexander Hamilton's proposal for a national bank. Through the case study discussion students considered important implications for the potential and limits of federal power. Next up in our case study series, we move to the 1830's and the political fight for free public education.

Students have also been studying a current issue of their choice from a "systems thinking" perspective. Systems thinking challenges students to build systems maps where they examine a given issue from an ever-expanding number of perspectives and find "leverage points" where someone could enter into the system and have an impact on the system as a whole.

Math

Seniors have worked on the energy documentary in math class for most of the month. Prior to that, calculus students built on their understanding of functions and operations by learning how to perform operations on functions. When we return from break, they will apply this to calculus by learning the rules of differentiation.

Physics

To prepare for the documentary process, seniors studied sound and light waves in Physics class. They put these ideas into practice as they filmed and edited minute-long videos explaining energy data relevant to our documentary about the electrical grid. There was instruction on using professional-level editing software for sound and video, and time to practice with some of the same

equipment we'll be working with while making the documentary. From script writing to mastering sound levels, seniors got to see a quick example of the film making process. You'll get to see some of their work as an opening to the documentary at the premiere on **February 13 at the Garden Cinema.**



Seniors filming on location in New York at the Ravenswood Generation Station and Brookhaven National Laboratory.

Do you like the newsletter? Share it!



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.

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