Dear RA families,

Going into the new year we have many student accomplishments to celebrate:

- Girls and boys soccer teams officially recognized for exemplary conduct on the field
- The hilarious fall theatre production of *Deceiving Granny* raised over $3000
- A generous donation from the Byrne Foundation to support Rivendell Abroad
- Mr. Reiss and the journalism class for producing many cutting edge editions of the *Raptor Connection*
- Excellent tech support by Mr. Ackerman, our new Digital Project Leader
- A new digital production lab that was put to good use by Ms. Barsamian and her digital photography students
- Thirteen new National Honor Society inductees
- A second ping-pong table brought to us through a grant which Ms. Moffatt applied for
- Our first CCV early college student, Aquene Sausville
- New ideas for advisory from our student trip to South Burlington High School
- The library research trip to Plymouth State organized by Mr. Reichert, Mr. Reiss, and Ms. Sobetzer
- The first Rivendell Robotics tournament organized by Bea Green with the support of Doc Browne and the team
- The new Choose Your Own Adventure opportunity

We are working hard to publicize RA events and achievements through our Facebook page and videos posted to the link on the Academy Facebook page.

At the end of the first trimester we have had some good academic news; the junior class produced some of the strongest overall PSAT scores that we’ve seen in years; also, the percentage of student making the honor roll hit 44.5%, and the percentage of classes failed out of all possible classes was at its lowest level in four years. See the statistics in this newsletter for exact numbers.

These accomplishments are testimony to the hard work of the Rivendell staff, parents and community members. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to a very productive and fun first trimester.

**New Developments**

**Advisory work and thinking**

We continue to improve our advisory program. The goal is to make advisory a more integral part of students’ experience to develop:

1. Character skills necessary for success—persistence, confidence, decency, leadership, etc.
2. Thinking skills—reflection, organization, communication, perspective taking, questioning, imagination, etc.

3. Community—service, community events and speakers in the school, learning outside the school though internships, early college and Choose Your Own Adventure days.

**CCS Awards**

For the past three years we have debated whether or not to hold the Character Community Scholarship awards ceremony in the spring. Selection was a difficult issue. Determining community was easy (determined by service hours), as was scholarship (determined by GPA).

Character was another matter: *What if a student had shown growth but we were divided on whether there was enough? What level of character was enough? Could one misstep in behavior eliminate a student; a misstep at what level of indiscretion? Don't we all make mistakes? What were we doing as a school to explicitly develop character among our students?*

This last question was the one that tipped the scales in making the decision not to continue the CCS awards. We decided to hold ourselves responsible for taking explicit measures to develop character in all students and not wring our hands over whether or not a high performing student does or does not have character; or wring our hands over not giving awards to students who might demonstrate character, yet not have adequate grades. This is what led to more thinking about character as an explicit focus in advisory. To further our work on this issue, Advisory Leaders Mary Rizos and Jen Ellis are in the final stages of completing an application for a Rowland Fellowship that would provide planning time to lift our advisory program to the next level in terms of supporting Character, Community and Scholarship.

**Students “in the middle”**

I believe that the most overlooked group in any high school is the group “in the middle.” I am talking about students who tend to be quiet in class but do their work, don’t get deeply involved in extracurricular activities, or are a bit hesitant to stand out or do things outside their normal comfort zone. They might have a lot going on outside of school but tend to keep their out-of-school lives separate from their more public lives in school. Maybe there is a level of comfort in keeping the separation. The question that I posed to myself recently was whether or not we are doing a disservice to the “middle kids” by allowing them to stay in their comfort zones. I do not have a clear answer to this question, which pushes me to want to test out ideas that might draw (or even push) these students (and sometimes their parents) into experiences that take them slightly outside their comfort zone. To be continued; all ideas and opinions are welcome.

**Middle School Next Year**

In 2010, when we were planning the restructuring of the school schedule, teaching assignments, curriculum and graduation requirements, I proposed that the Academy do away with grade level distinctions between 7th and 8th grades and between 9th and 10th grades. In the school that I helped design in California, we blended 9th and 10th grades, except in math classes, and it worked beautifully. I met with resistance with the idea at the Academy at the time, and as we were already making a large number of changes at once, I let it drop.

Next year, we have only nineteen 7th grade students entering RA. Rather than break the group into travel groups of nine and ten, the middle school staff and I have discussed blending the next year’s 7th grade with next year’s 8th grade.

There are a number of benefits of blending:

- We have solid evidence that age classification of students relates more to the bureaucratic structure of schools than it does the abilities and needs of kids. Some younger kids in some subjects are just as competent as most of the kids in the next grade, and some are better in every subject.

- When the curriculum is looped and key activities are done at both grade levels, younger students learn from working beside more experienced students. For example, if students learn how to engage in a formal debate in 7th grade, the following year the incoming 7th grade takes less time to learn the process because they can follow the lead of the older students.
Other types of institutional knowledge are passed on more efficiently by older peers rather than adults.

The idea of looping also means that teachers have fewer preparations and can devote more time to focusing on the students in front of them and the curriculum for those kids compared to having to prepare lessons for two levels.

The same curriculum is covered; it’s just organized differently. For example, this year’s 7th grade is taking biology. Next year, Mr. Steckler would teach everyone physical science and flip back to biology the next year. The same would happen in humanities.

Math is different because concepts and skills build in a sequence, so it will still follow a sequence, but students can be placed in different math classes more strategically based on a careful assessment of their skills. This would also break up the monotony of kids being with the same peers all day.

The classes for the next two years would be very small, approximately 15 students.

Our special education teachers, Cheryl St. Pierre and Jennifer Bottum, and special education assistants would work as a team to modify curriculum and co-teach, so in many classes we would have greater flexibility in providing appropriate instruction and strategies to students within the same classroom.

We are still in the planning stages. There are scheduling details to work out, and we need to gather information about the incoming students much earlier and with more depth than we have in the past. We will also be holding a parent night to discuss the idea and plans in February or March.

The three Ps

As a school we are focusing our attention this trimester in three areas:

1) Parents—providing more frequent and in-depth information from teachers to parents, especially in cases of students who are struggling.
2) Planning—walking across the hall during common planning time to work collaboratively with another teacher; two heads are better than one.
3) Projects—developing at least two projects in every class this trimester and replacing traditional testing with projects.

Projects

From its conception, has Rivendell espoused a project or problem-based approach to curriculum and instruction. It values using skills and ideas, not simply acquiring knowledge for its own sake.

Recently I asked several students if they thought it made sense to put a typical classroom test in a personal learning portfolio. They thought it was ridiculous, and they were right. It would be like asking a licensed carpenter to show a potential client a copy of her licensing examination instead of a portfolio or photographs of actual construction projects.

If projects matter in life, then projects should matter in school. This is not to say that all students will jump up and down joyfully when a project is assigned. Several years ago, Doc Browne gave students a choice of completing a project at the end of the wave unit or taking a test. All but one student opted for the test! I have the completed project of that one student. I doubt that any students kept a copy of that exam.

Furthermore, we created a new position at the Academy last year. Here is the job description that brought us Dr. Gary Ackerman:

Rivendell Academy is seeking an exceptional educator to lead the Academy in developing a dynamic digital culture.

Duties

Work collaboratively with teachers and students in and outside the classroom to develop digital projects that target one or more of these areas: analysis, problem solving, communication, intercultural understanding, mathematical modeling, global issues, collaboration and individual responsibility.
Coordinate the evolution of a digital culture at the Academy including digital tools for curriculum development, storage of curriculum and media, assessment, and recommendations for hardware and software purchases.

Communicate the evolution of the Academy’s digital culture to multiple stakeholders.

Support school-wide staff development (project design, web design, Google Applications, mobile devices, social media, and the development of student’s electronic portfolios).

Qualifications

Candidates must have 1) Demonstrated experience and expertise in project-based learning 2) The skills and personality necessary to teach adolescents and adults 3) substantial experience in web development, video, programming, and digital photography as well as an understanding of media and culture, 4) Patience and creativity

We have made a commitment to educating students who know how to use knowledge. If knowledge is indeed powerful, it is mostly through our capacity to use it.

Have a great holiday.

Keri Gelenian

From the Food Service Director

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<th>January 2015 Lunch</th>
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Please note: Meal prices for lunch will be increasing to $2.75 at the beginning of
IMPORTANT HEALTH INFO AND DEADLINES!

- **DEADLINE** – February 2, 2015: All Students must be fully immunized by this date. [All children attending child care facilities, students entering kindergarten, seventh grade and post-secondary school and all newly enrolled students are required to have received immunizations in accordance with the Vermont Recommended Immunization Schedule. http://healthvermont.gov/regs/documents/imm_regulations]

Most Academy student families (98%) have provided documentation of full immunization. When students reach 7th grade, a Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, or whooping cough) booster is required for entry. Some students have missed their 2nd Varicella (chicken pox) vaccination. Some students are in need of a second or 3rd Hepatitis B. **After February 2, we are required to place students who do not have documentation of full immunization or a state form for exemption under provisional admission to the school.**

- **Molar Express, a fully mobile dental care clinic** will be at the Academy in mid-January. Forms were sent home with students on the first day of school. Thank you for the high rate of return. If you did not receive a form and/or have any questions, please contact the health office.

- **Please let the school office know of any reason for absence due to health:** head cold, or just bouts of severe coughing, stomach bug, either or both of those accompanied by aches and pains, sore throats, headaches, etc., or any information that might alert us to a trend for contagious illness. Also, please contact me about any illness or injury that your student may have so that we can provide the best environment possible at school while they recuperate.

- **A reminder:** hand washing (20 seconds of good, sudsy hand washing followed by a thorough rinse; and coughing and/or sneezing into one’s own inner elbow) is the best protection against catching or spreading illnesses, including flu, pertussis and other airborne illnesses.

- **Please contact Creigh Moffatt in the health office with questions any time** at cmoffatt@rivendellschool.org or 603-353-4321, x5 during school hours, or x2142 after school.

The Christmas Revels: A Celebration of the Winter Solstice

Three Rivendell Academy students (Karina Ricker, Moriah Ludwig, and Trillium Cserr) are performing in this year’s Christmas Revels.

The Christmas Revels, a beloved Upper Valley tradition for the whole family, is presented by Revels North at the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH. Celebrate the holiday season with glorious carols, festive dance, and traditions that span seven centuries as we transform the Hop into Haddon Hall, an historic English manor house with a wealth of interest and intrigue. Experience drama and processionals, participate in festive dance and glorious carols, and take delight in music from the middle ages to the early twentieth century. Classic Revels traditions will include The Lord of the Dance, The Boar’s Head, Abbots Bromley and Dona Nobis Pacem. Join our children’s, teen and adult choruses, musicians, actors and dancers for a holiday extravaganza worthy of our 40th Anniversary!

Thursday, December 18th, 7 pm - Opening Night Family discounts!
Friday, December 19th, 7 pm
Saturday, December 20th, 2 pm and 7 pm
Sunday, December 21st, 1 pm and 5 pm
All performances are handicap accessible
Rivendell Recreation Association
Winter Sports Program

- This year’s Winter Program will run on Thursday afternoons: January 8, 15, 22, 29 and February 5 & 12 (with a makeup day of February 19 if necessary).
- Rivendell Academy will continue a regular Thursday schedule, with a 1:45 p.m. dismissal. The buses will be running their regular routes at that time.
- All participants will be picked up at the Academy at 12:00 p.m. Skiers and snowboarders will return to Samuel Morey Elementary at 4:30 p.m. Skaters will return to Westshire Elementary at 2:40 p.m. and to Samuel Morey Elementary at 2:55 p.m. Parents are responsible for student pickup at SME or WES; students will not return to the Academy.
- Dismissal for the Winter Sports Program will be treated as a regular sports dismissal. Participants in the program will be responsible for any work they miss.
- Sports equipment should be dropped off in front of the greenhouse to be picked up by volunteers.
- For more information, please contact rivendellrec@gmail.com

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<th>Sun</th>
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<td>HOLIDAY BREAK</td>
<td>HOLIDAY BREAK</td>
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<td>School board meeting 6:30 p.m., District Office</td>
<td>NHASFAA Financial Aid Night, 5:30 p.m., RA Library</td>
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<td>Semi-formal dance (Gr. 7-9) 6:30 p.m. WW Multi</td>
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<td>FAFSA Forms Night 3:30 p.m. RA Library</td>
<td>Honor Roll reception 6:00 p.m., RA Café</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday NO SCHOOL</td>
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<td>FAFSA Forms Night 4 p.m. RA Library</td>
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<td>Special Olympics Regional Winter Games, Dartmouth Skiway</td>
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<td>NAEP Testing, Gr. 8 Special Olympics Mitten Drive Night, 5:30 p.m. RA Multi</td>
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Trimester 1 Honor Roll

**Grade 7:**
Ariana Baumann
Thessalie Butler *
Isabelle Formica *
Zachary Gould
Moria Haehnel *
Hannah Hayes
Caitlin Kilmer
Grace Lister *
Sean Maddock
Eadie Molesworth
Elizabeth Noyes
Rachel O’Hearn
Meghan Olney
Kelsey Peebles
Dylan Ricker
Luke Senn
Mikayla Stever
Henry Tse *

**Grade 8:**
Kenneth Beaupre
Charles Bradley
Allison Collins
Chelsey Dexter
Madelyn Eastburn
Taiyo Galli
Casey Ghio *
Jenna Gilbert
Wyatt Guillette
J. Max Haehnel *
Caleb Haley
Isaac Martel
Alexia Nunn
Maia Perry *
Leah Rutherford
Lucas Streeter
Samuel Surprenant
Lilia Tse
Thomas Wilkin
Meadow Yvon

**Grade 9:**
Caleb Day
Mikayla DeBois
Shannon Fleming
Beatrice Green *
Daniel Guadagni
Jacob Kamel
Sierra Longto
Noah Martel
Sarah Parenti *
Karina Ricker *
Riley Thomson
William Ussler
Jebediah Welch

**Grade 10:**
James Burke
Trillium Cserr *
Michael Delaney
Morgan Dexter *
Collin Gould
Abigail Hinsley *
Simone Juch
Gabriella Miles *
Amanda Otis *
Dametres Perry
Wiatt Suich

**Grade 11:**
Maija Bradley
Jonathan Burke
Makayla Coffin
Cameron Day
Jennifer DeBois *
Nathaniel Dimick *
Maxwell Green *
Quenla Haehnel *
Weston Knowlton
Megan Landgraf *
Ryan Landgraf
Shay Lapine
Corinne Lyndes *
Kimberlie Sobeck
Cameron Surprenant

**Grade 12:**
Tao Ameden
Onna Baker
Joshua Burke
Rachel Fauci
Miranda Garrow
Emily Ghio
Kayla Gould *
Samuel Ivey
Moriah Ludwig
Christian Parenti
Andrew Paton
Stacy Pregent
Seanna Rivera-Perry
Lukas Thurston
Kaileigh White *
Jenna Whitehill

* Indicates High Honor Roll

The Faculty & Administration of Rivendell Academy are pleased to invite you and your family to a Potluck Dinner as you are recognized for your Outstanding Achievement in Scholarship at an Honors Reception Wednesday, January 14, 2015 (rescheduled from December 10th cancellation) Rivendell Academy Café Dinner at 6:00 p.m. Recognition program to follow

Please bring a dish serving 6 – 8 to share:
Last Name begins with A-I: Beverages
Last Name begins with J – R: Salad, Bread/Rolls
Last Name begins with S – Z: Entrée
Dessert will be provided by National Honor Society
Trimester 1 by the Numbers

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<th>2014-15 Tri 1</th>
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<td># of students</td>
<td>% of students</td>
<td># of students</td>
<td>% of students</td>
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<td>100 - 95</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13.86%</td>
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Failing Grades

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<th>13/14 T1</th>
<th>14/15 T1</th>
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<td>1120</td>
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<td>Number of Classes failed</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% classes failed out of possible classes</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
<td>10.49%</td>
<td>8.13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Students enrolled</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>209</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of students failing 1 or more classes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>% of students failing 1 or more classes</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
<td>21.62%</td>
<td>26.47%</td>
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Honor Roll

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<td>High Honors</td>
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<td>Honors</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of students on Honor Roll</td>
<td>44.64%</td>
<td>41.89%</td>
<td>40.69%</td>
<td>44.50%</td>
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13/14 Trimester 1 Classes Failed by YOG
Financial Aid Night
Presenting Kim Prestridge from Dartmouth College
sponsored by NHASFAA
When: Wed. Jan. 7th
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Where: RA Library
Who: All are welcome

Governor’s Institutes Winter Weekends
Open to grades 9-12
Weekend I: Feb. 6th-8th
Programs: Comedy Theater, Current Issues, Entrepreneurship, AstroPhotography
Weekend II: Feb. 13th-15th
Programs: Song/Writing (for Writers & Musicians), Advanced Math for Girls.

Register at www.giv.org
Deadline is January 13th

SENIORS and PARENTS
FAFSA (Financial Aid) Forms Nights — two sessions each evening

NHHEAF
Tuesday, January 13th
4:00 PM and 6:00 PM
RA Library

What to bring:
2013 Federal Tax Forms (or 2014 if complete)
Last pay stub(s) from 2014 for parent & student
Balance of cash, savings and checking accounts
List of colleges/universities

VSAC
Wednesday, January 21st
4:00 PM and 6:00 PM
RA Library

Social security numbers
Birth dates
Balance of other assets
FAFSA PIN

PSAT and Practice ACT results are in and were passed out to Juniors and Sophomores in Advisory.

VSAC Scholarship Books
Scholarship books have arrived. Seniors will receive in Advisory upon return from break. For link to electronic version visit RA Guidance Web site under Financial Aid/Scholarships.
Rivendell Academy grades 7-12 will be participating in the Vermont Youth Risk Survey (YRBS) on February 10, 2015. More information regarding this survey will be sent home closer to the time. If you have any question please feel free to contact Cindy McLaren, Middle School Counselor.

Job Shadow Day

This spring the 8th grade students will be participating in a Job Shadow Day, coordinated by the Upper Valley Business and Education Partnership (UVBEP). In January the 8th grade will be filling out surveys and receiving information about job shadow placement.

NAEP Assessment

Rivendell Academy’s 8th grade students have been selected to represent schools across the nation by participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Our 8th grade students will be given the assessment on 1-28-15. The assessment should take about 90 minutes. This is not a mandatory assessment. Your child may be excused from participation for any reason. Please see the letter that follows.

Additional information on the RA web site under Guidance! Visit http://www.rivendellschool.org/schools/rivendell-academy/
NAEP 2015 PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTIFICATION LETTER
Grade 8: Mathematics, reading, and science assessments
Rivendell Academy
January 28, 2015

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We are pleased to notify you that Rivendell Interstate School District has been selected to represent schools across the nation by participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). First administered in 1969, NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what students know and can do in various subject areas. It is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, within the U.S. Department of Education. NAEP is different from state assessments because it provides a common measure of student achievement across the country. The results of NAEP are released as The Nation's Report Card, which provides information about student achievement to educators, parents, policymakers, and the public.

In our school, the NAEP assessment will be given on 1/28/15. Your child may be selected to take a mathematics, reading, or science assessment. In addition to answering questions in one of these subjects, students will be asked questions about themselves and their educational experiences, such as the amount of reading they do and the types of classes they take. These questions provide contextual information for the assessment, as well as information that may be related to students’ learning. If you would like to view sample subject area and contextual questions, please visit http://nationsreportcard.gov/parents.asp.

It will take about 90 minutes for most students to participate in the assessment. The results are completely confidential (in accordance with the Confidential Information Protection provisions of Title V, Subtitle A, Public Law 107-347), and the information provided will be used for statistical purposes only. Your child’s grades will not be affected. Your child may be excused from participation for any reason, is not required to complete the assessment, and may skip any question. While NAEP is voluntary, we depend on student participation to provide an accurate measure of student achievement that will inform improvements in education. Your child will represent many other students, so participation is very important. However, if you do not want your child to participate, please notify me in writing by January 16, 2015.

There is no need to study in preparation for NAEP. We do ask, however, that you encourage your child to do their best and get plenty of rest the night before the assessment. A brochure that explains what participation in NAEP means for you and your child is available at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/parents/2012469.pdf. Should you have questions, or if you would like a copy of the brochure, please contact me at 603-353-4321 ext. 1204 or at cmclaren@rivendellschool.org.

Sincerely,

Cindy McLaren