



HERON



NEWS FALL 2026



Let's do hard things together

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Thank You

Do Hard Things This Year With Us

LET'S DO HARD THINGS TOGETHER

Dear Riverside Friends and Families,

This August we celebrated Riverside's 46th first day of school! Some members of our Advancement Committee have already started talking about a special 50th Anniversary Celebration, which I can see clearly in our future. There is something special about the contagious energy that comes with the beginning of a new school year: conversations around the kitchen table, friends and teams reconnecting and the positive energy the students bring is always fun to be a part of.

This year's theme is: Let's Do Hard Things Together. It is an endeavor that feels very Riversidey to me. Over the past few years, Riverside's excellent teaching team has been thinking intentionally about the lessons that help our children grow up to be resilient and capable. There is a lot of pressure in education to make everything look good at the end: to showcase the polished paper, the flawless performance, or the high test score. But so much of the real learning happens before we get there: in the struggle and uncertainty of the messy middle, in the mistakes, the frustration, the problem-solving and the skill building in the moment when a student realizes, "Wait...I did it. I figured that out myself."

I saw examples of this last year in the process of putting on the play, in the ways our teachers and interventionists worked alongside students rather than simply telling them what to do. And in Nathaniel Gleicher's ('95) graduation speech, when he talked about the lasting impact of being given the space to struggle and to solve problems for himself as Riverside's greatest impact for him.

As a school, this is something I think our community is ready for. We have become much better at understanding our students as individual learners and leveling the playing field by providing the targeted support they need to feel confident enough to put in the work and be willing to embrace the struggle. Our special education team and the MTSS (Multi Tiered Systems

of Supports) and UDL (Universal Design for Learning) practices are important parts of that growth. We want our students to experience the satisfaction that comes from trying something difficult, getting stuck, making a mistake, changing direction and trying again. We're encouraging them to recognize their own perseverance and resilience, not because we told them they were resilient, but because they have evidence that they can do hard things. Our job is not to make things easy and prepare them for childhood. Our job is to make sure that hard things are worth doing, that students know why they're doing them, and that they don't have to do them alone — because we're building capability for life. That's what "Let's Do Hard Things Together" means to me.

I'm excited to see where this takes us this year and even more excited to watch our students discover that they are capable of far more than they sometimes believe. In *The World According to Mr. Rogers: Important Things to Remember*, Fred Rogers reminds us that, "Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else." When a child reaches the edge of what they think they can do, they struggle, they get frustrated, and then they persist... and suddenly the thing that once felt hard becomes the starting point for their next idea.

Here's to a year of trying, pivoting, learning and discovering what we are capable of when we work together.



Caroline Thompson
Head of School



Why should we do hard things?

JUNE EARLY (4TH GRADE)

“It will make our minds and bodies stronger for the next hard thing.”

ARDEN GALINAT (5TH GRADE)

“The more you do hard things, the easier hard things become, and you grow in your perseverance. Also, if you don't do hard things now, you never will.”

KAI HARTSHORN (7TH GRADE)

“You get better by stepping out of your comfort zone and doing your best to do the task. Stepping out of your comfort zone often makes difficult tasks seem easier later on in life and builds friendships by supporting others when they do hard things.”

MABEL PERREAULT (6TH GRADE)

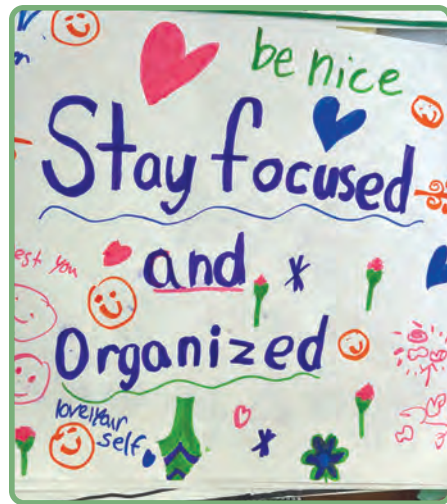
“You should do hard things because if you didn't then your life would be very boring; you would not learn anything new because everything is then easy; and you would not grow to be a better person. The ways and tips on how to do hard things are persevere and stick to it; make it fun or turn it into a game; have everyone be involved if there are more than one person; and remind yourself that even though it is hard you can do it.”

SOPHIA SMITH (8TH GRADE)

“You can grow and learn from your mistakes to be a better and smarter person. Also you will make friends along the way and be stronger when you're done.”

Student Strategies for Doing Hard Things

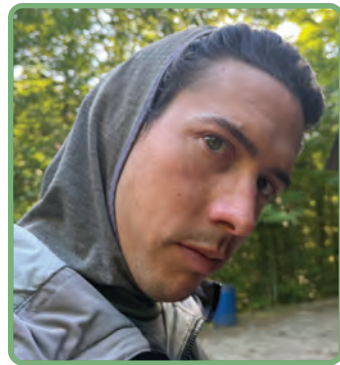
We also used this dedicated time with 4-8th graders to introduce them to this year's theme, "Let's do hard things together." When asked to consider strategies that might help them overcome challenges during the school year, they made these and other posters to hang in the barn as a reminder.



8TH GRADE CAMPING TRIP



This year, a dozen incoming 8th graders joined Riverside teachers, Sean, Marie, and Mr. G on a camping trip in Groton Forest the week before school began. They camped at Kettle Pond for two nights and hiked Little Deer, Big Deer and Owl's Head during the days. They slept in tents, lean-tos and hammocks. Taking young people out of their comfort zones – their literal homes and daily routines – is immediately challenging, because they can't depend on their usual problem-solving strategies. This group of rising leaders came together to do hard things.



Health and PE teacher Sean believes that Riverside needs 8th grade leaders who have the style of being talkers, doers and/or planners.

"Kids often think a leader is someone who is usually like the vocal leader, the one who is able to get up in front of people and be loud and get people to do," Sean said. "There are also people who do



the background planning and aren't probably going to get up in front of all people. And there are the people who just lead with their actions, by example, and show people that way."

Sean said there was a "stand-out" moment on the second day when those leadership traits were on display.

He explained that "halfway through the hike, people are out of water, people were tired. ... There was a group that wanted to go back and get water, which would have added a little bit more distance to the route, but also continuing to hike without water would've been a problem. And Marie, Mr. G and I just stepped back and let them problem solve that together, and you know it's probably 10 minutes of back-and-forth conversation, but it was a super healthy and well-done conversation."

Fortier said while there was intention behind challenging the students and working on leadership skills, it was a great opportunity for them to reconnect and bond as a class in person.

"Some of my favorite moments on the trip were just watching them laughing and having fun together during downtime, no screens in sight," he said.

FALL FIELD TRIP

This year's Fall Field Trip was at Copper Cannon Camp in Bethlehem, NH. Thanks to a record number of parent (and grandparent!) chaperones, we had a lot of fun playing games, eating well, resting peacefully in the hillside cabins, and completing projects to support their facility. We enjoyed the small waterfront, including an early morning "Polar Plunge" option and where we also learned about



A "buddy" trio that included 6th grader Mabel, brand new 6th grader Crystal, and Kindergartner Adelaide worked together to print from natural materials to decorate their Caelum house flag in silver paint.

cattails and weeded them from the pond to prevent it from slowly becoming a meadow. That property now includes a 6,000-square-foot, timber-framed covered "Sports Court" on which Riversiders played games to get to know their younger buddies, enjoyed basketball during free time, and learned to play pickleball on three parallel courts.



5th grade teacher Hanna took some students on a short optional hike through the woods and down to the river to explore on our first afternoon.

Alumni News

Cara (Metivier) Steele '11 graduated in 2019 from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in Anthropology and Spanish. She lives in Burlington and works in social media management and marketing, while also creating art and participating in local art shows. Cara and her new husband Garrett Steele like to spend a lot of free time on the shores of Lake Champlain. She says that Riverside inspired her interest in travel as well as her passion for Spanish; and "also Riverside always supported my love for art and poetry and alternative forms of learning. One of my fondest memories was learning about iambic pentameter in 6th grade as we marched around the Granary reciting Romeo and Juliet with Peter Sahlin."



Cara married Garrett Steele on August 8th at the ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain. They are taking a honeymoon this fall in Ireland and Greece.

“One of my fondest memories was learning about iambic pentameter in 6th grade as we marched around the Granary reciting Romeo and Juliet with Peter Sahlin.”
—Cara (Metivier) Steele

Charley Balcom '20 graduated from Compass School in Westminster, VT. Before graduating he learned welding as a senior project. Charley has spent the summer working on a tender boat in the Prince William Sound, porting out of Cordova, Alaska, a town that has no roads connecting it to anywhere else. Everything is either flown in by plane or comes on a barge. A fishing tender is a boat that supports fishing vessels with gas, diesel, ice and the use of a crane to haul and dump their nets with up to 105,000 pounds of salmon.



Charley Balcom shows off a 20 pound king salmon in Alaska.

James Lamontagne '18 graduated from Rhode Island School of Design last spring with a degree in illustration. While he was there he really enjoyed classes in cartooning, book making, and graphic novel design. For a senior portfolio project he wrote and illustrated a story called "The Ugliest Unicorn," about a girl who discovers that the perfect pet friend doesn't necessarily look or act like what you'd expect. James is back in the NEK this year, and has a goal of moving back to Providence and finding an agent in the spring.



Sylvan Balcom '23, Zane Faherty '23, and Leo Kantrowitz '23 embarked on a cross country road trip this summer, along with their friend (and Riverside sibling) Ripley St. Pierre, in Zane's Subaru Impreza. The trip took about three weeks and included visits to many national parks. Leo reported that their hike up Table Mountain in the Tetons was most memorable: they had planned it to coincide with a sunrise view over Grand Teton from the summit. Believing in their strength and experience, they chose a short but grueling trail up the face, and then quickly found themselves regretting that plan and having to persevere through two miles of a steep and challenging section. The foursome was rewarded with the unique experience of higher elevation clearings "filled with an array of wildflowers that splashed color in front of the wide vistas of the surrounding mountains. Being tucked in a drainage ravine within these wide fields, seeing a small patch of snow with sparkly clear water running from it, was something that spread smiles to all of us. We dunked our heads and filled our hats with the cooling ice. That moment of water dripping down my forehead, as I <Leo> looked out across a field full of more life and color than I had ever seen, with the vast and imperious Teton range beyond, summed up the magical feelings I believe we all shared on the trip."

“ Being tucked in a drainage ravine within these wide fields, seeing a small patch of snow with sparkly clear water running from it, was something that spread smiles to all of us. —Leo Kantrowitz ”



Former Board Member, Mathematics teacher and Head of School Laurie Boswell recently learned she will receive the highest honor of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, (NCTM) in October. Nominated by six colleagues, Laurie will receive the NCTM Lifetime Achievement Award recognizing distinguished service to mathematics education at the national level. NCTM has been a significant part of Laurie's career and the heart of her professional community since she was in graduate school at Plymouth State University. Laurie taught high school mathematics for 25 years in New Hampshire before transitioning to her role as a teaching-head at Riverside, 2006-2015. Laurie's passion has always been for classroom instruction and the professional development of mathematics educators. She is also a co-author of nationally recognized math textbooks, most known for the "Laurie's Notes" pages of the teachers editions, which speak directly to her peers in the classroom about best practice and facilitation ideas. Laurie has presented at conferences in all 50 states and three countries, and served on the board of directors of NCTM as well as the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics. After being asked to serve as Riverside's Head of School, she pursued her doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Laurie says that this award is particularly meaningful to her because the award has rarely been presented to a classroom teacher. "To serve on national boards, committees, and task forces is difficult for classroom teachers due to the release time needed. Without a supportive spouse and school administrator, it's not possible. I was blessed with both."

Thank You for Your Support!

We are grateful to each of the donors who made gifts to Riverside during the 2025-2026 year.

Riverside relies on gifts to our Annual Fund each year to bridge the gap between tuition income and program expenses, which includes tuition assistance for some students. Below are also the names of donors who contributed to the Founders Scholarship Fund, and those made in kind-gifts like building materials, professional skills, or time as substitutes. We are so grateful to these friends who support our mission to develop active learners, patient leaders, and engaged citizens in a supportive community..



denotes a donor who has given to Riverside for three consecutive years.

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 Dan Wheeler,
 in honor of Arden & Josiah✂
 Molly Willard

DO HARD THINGS THIS YEAR WITH US _ _ _ _ _

Doing hard things together is part of what makes Riverside, Riverside. Thank you in advance for doing something hard: taking a moment to pause. Reflect on the value of the Riverside experience for you and your family. We hope that, as you think about the relationships

and experiences that make Riverside special to you, you'll consider making a gift to support the school and the community we share. Your generosity helps Riverside continue to provide the opportunities and sense of belonging that make this community unique.



*Make your contribution
 to the 26-27 annual fund today!*
www.theriversideschool.org/donate



Upcoming Events

Grandparents Day November 30

6-8th Grade Play Week March 15-20

Elementary Biography Fair May 28

Riverside Against Cancer May 28

Graduation June 6

The complete 26–27 calendar is on our website.



This summer, Riverside added a sand volleyball court to foster teamwork, collaboration, sensory play, and outdoor fun. This space benefits the entire school community as volleyball provides a low-impact form of exercise that can be enjoyed by all. The sand adds unique value and the court serves up more than just volleyball. Playing on a sand court helps students develop balance, coordination and core strength, while providing a softer landing for students who dive for the ball or fall during play. The sand

also offers rich tactile and sensory experiences that can be calming and when games are not taking place, it provides an additional play area for students during recess or our extended-day program. The court has created opportunities for our students to practice inclusion and encouragement. Mixed grade games regularly bring out comments such as, "Great job," and "You've got this, try that again!" when older students encourage younger peers to stick with it and improve their skills. – Caroline Thompson