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LITTLE RIVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Little River News

Keeping it Real—Finances & Fundraising

Three parents and three board members have come together to form a committee working toward the long-term financial stability of the school, ensuring sustainable staff salaries and supporting tuition assistance. Fundraising has always been a part of the school's budget, but now we are looking to raise it to a new level to sustain the school's future.

Last fall, we made a funding appeal on our Facebook and Instagram sites, resulting in \$20,000 in donor gifts. Despite low engagement, we were blown away by the generosity of those who did give.

In October, we hosted an intimate dinner at the school with farm-to-table food, music, and a social evening for people from the local medical community. It was an opportunity to make connections, give a tour of the school, and share ideas. The food was good and the evening a success, raising \$12,500.

In another initiative, we compiled an alumni list of all students and families from the past 26 years (273 students and their families).

We reached out to them to ask for stories from their time at Little River. Alumni Ana Williams-Bergen headed up the project.

Cloudsplitter Foundation Director Chenelle Palyswiat visited the school to meet the staff, tour the building, and present us with a \$2,500 check. We are grateful and especially hopeful about making this connection to tap into their experience and wisdom.

Although the committee is still learning, we have met with some success. We were able to raise staff salaries this year, bring on several new major donors, connect with Cloudsplitter, and reach out to alumni.

Little River serves a unique niche in our community, giving students a voice in their education and providing a strong academic program in a small classroom setting. The school walks a fine line to offer an affordable education for families while also providing a sustainable wage for its staff. Donations and grants supplement tuition, allowing us to strike that balance.

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Diving into the Past with Local History

Who are our neighbors? Little River Olders are studying local history this year and discovered 52 neighbors at the cemetery next to our school. Some of the graves date back to 1816. We discovered children as young as one year old, and four people who served in the Civil War.

The Olders went through archives at the Town Historian and Historical Association offices, seeking more information on various families. Noah found that the name of the cemetery, King Cemetery, was connected to the King family who owned the land on which the school sits back in the early 1800s. Several of the tombstones were for King family members. The Olders each wrote a fictional story about the cemetery, filling in where the historical record came up short.

Working off old maps and guides of Canton, the Olders set up a walking tour of Canton, specifically seeking houses, churches, and buildings built in the 1800s. We walked through Heritage Park on Fall Island to learn about the intense industrial setup based on logging in the late 1800s. We passed by Stillman Foote's house, the first house built in Canton, which was constructed in 1801. We marveled at how he built this house before hardware and building supply stores were established in the area.

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The Olders researching with a local historian.

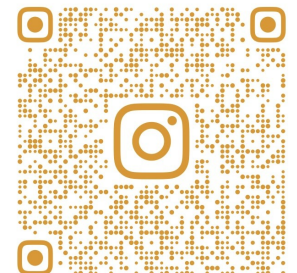
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Have your child come home happy

- Democratic School, K-12
- 8:1 Student/Teacher Ratio
- Individualized Curriculum
- Hands-on Learning

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Young Farmers



Walks over to Birdsfoot Farm are a highlight of our fall and spring in the Youngers room. With so many fresh faces in our classroom, heading to the farm to help with harvesting has been a new experience for the majority of our classroom.

This year's first trip next door involved the entire school gathering, cleaning, chopping, grinding and pressing apples to make cider! The apple harvest was bountiful and the Youngers spent their next few trips gathering "grounders" or apples that had fallen from Birdsfoot's apple trees along with pulling loads of carrots. After the carrot patch was emptied, the Youngers tackled the beet patch finding beets ranging from as big as their heads to as small as their toes. Finally, the Youngers harvested beans.

The students are eager for each trip, often asking when our next farm day is. They are motivated to help Dulli and are not afraid of getting their hands dirty. Arguably their favorite part of our trips include bringing a treat over to the cows!



Feeding the cows.



Beau and River's beets.

Nuala Woods

40 Book Reading Challenge



Early in my teaching career, I was influenced by the *Book Whisperer*, by Donalyn Miller. Miller advocates for free-choice reading as the

main way to encourage a love of reading. One thing I borrowed from her was the 40-book reading challenge, which tasks every Middle (and me too) with reading 40 books of their choosing across 10 (or so) genres. The format changes slightly from year to year, but the main idea remains the same: set some structure to challenge students while still protecting their freedom to choose what they want to read.

This year, each student made a poster to display their book titles as they finish. When they complete a book, they share the main plot of the book with their classmates (no spoilers!), rate the book from 1 to 4 gold stars, and then head to the hallway to proudly paste their book cover to their posters. Beyond that though, there are no book reports or other 'schooly' assignments associated with the reading challenge. I also don't limit books in terms of book length or reading level, although graphic novels can only count toward one book in each genre.

Students are free to choose what they want to read, and every book is celebrated. As we read, we change our book tally in our classroom, which currently stands at 150 books read in total. Books tend to catch like wildfire, and once someone recommends something, others jump on board.

Modeling reading for children and having them see that adults read for pleasure is another important component of growing life-long readers, and the Little River community is helping out with this objective. Several parents and all of the staff have joined our challenge, adding to their own student-made posters.

Having these posters on display is a constant reminder that we are a school of readers. It has been delightful to see books go up on the adults' posters and see what they are reading. Just as the kids check in with each other about what they've been reading, parents have been hanging around at pickup and finding out what others are reading. Maya's mother Lia mentions, "I enjoy talking about books with others and the reading challenge is a way to start conversations! I don't typically read in some of the categories, so the challenge will expose me to ideas and stories I wouldn't otherwise experience."

That is one sentiment that I hear over and over from adults and kids: the challenge pushes readers to choose books that they would not normally read. Middles are often surprised to find favorites within categories that they might not have picked up on their own such as poetry or autobiography. We adults feel the same pressure of being encouraged to branch out of our favorite genres and find something unexpected. Leon was not sure if he wanted to commit to reading four books in the 'dystopian, mystery or horror' category, but has found some that he enjoys. I myself am currently reading a memoir which –although it is by one of my favorite authors—I would not normally

have picked up to read. Susanne notes that the reading challenge is reaffirming her love of certain genres and that it is a real struggle to branch out and find things that appeal to her in certain categories.

This structure of free choice within genres has worked well for the Middles. Tied to this idea of providing space for free reading is the notion that readers should have the right to pick their own books, abandon books when they want, and read books that may be 'below their level' or purely for entertainment.

This was actually underscored in one of the books I read, *Travels with Charley*, in which famed author John Steinbeck describes the portable library that he is packing for his trip across the country. He brings "pounds" of serious books he has been meaning to read, but also mentions having cheap paperback thrillers with him. And this is exactly Donalynn Miller's point. Most people who love to read do not constrict themselves to only excellent literature, and we should not expect the same from our children if we want them to truly embrace reading.

So the next time you're on the stairwell, take some time to appreciate the diversity of tastes of the readers in the Little River community. You might find your next great read there! And when you do, it isn't too late to ask the Middles to start a poster for you.

Elena Andriolo

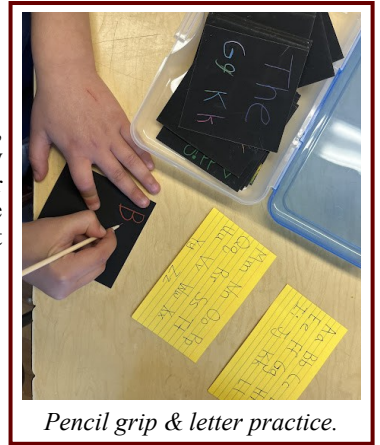
Staying Busy with Busy Boxes

There are many ways to learn and the Youngers take every opportunity to use their hands, get messy and have fun with learning. With the help of Desiree Greenwood, a parent and volunteer, the students have been introduced to 'busy boxes'. Each month, Desiree creates and brings in new boxes to practice specific skills. With a larger group of kindergarten students this year, dexterity, fine motor skills, and number and letter awareness has been an overarching theme of the boxes so far.

Using different tools like tongs and tweezers the students have sorted, counted, and matched quantities of foam balls and puff balls to different written numbers or into labelled cups. They have worked with rainbow paper and a small wooden stick to practice letter formation and pencil grip drawing specific shapes, letters or sight words. With colorful stickers students have created color patterns following a line and practiced using scissors to cut along their sticker path. The most recent favorite was using keys with a certain number of dots to unlock locks labelled with numbers. Another popular activity involved playdough and letter cards. The students rolled the playdough out and shaped it into specific letters.

All of the busy boxes are independent, fun, engaging and reinforce the student's skills. They allow the teacher to work with small groups or individual students while the other students are focused on their busy boxes. It has been a great activity to incorporate into our classroom.

Nuala Woods



Pencil grip & letter practice.



Fine motor & number practice.



Practicing numbers and dexterity.

Fundraising continued..

Although we have just begun this school year, we are already looking to prepare for the years ahead. Did you know that 25% of our students receive tuition assistance? Please consider contributing to our year-end fundraising appeal. Our goal is to raise \$22,000 to help fund our tuition assistance program. Whether you can give \$10 or \$10,000, it all helps make this possible. We welcome your support!

Contributions can be sent to Little River Community School, 1227 CR 25, Canton, NY 13617, or made online by scanning the QR code below.

Thank you!

Steve Molnar



Morgan Doyle teaching the Youngers yoga.



The Olders annual Adirondack camping trip.

Go Donkeys! Cheerleading!

At Little River Community School, about half of the Middles have formed a cheerleading team, and we call ourselves The Donkeys.

It started when a couple of us were flipping each other in the air, and then one of the parents and classroom aide told us she used to be a professional cheerleader, and started teaching us. We decided to call ourselves The Donkeys because we have two donkeys that live here at Little River. We even made a chant to say while we are up in the air.

The way it works is there are two people called the base, and a person called the flyer. The base puts out their hands in a cup and the flyer steps on them, and the base lifts them up until they are in a standing position. Then we say our chant, and the base lowers us down and catches us.

Cheerleading has been fun because we can learn new things and challenge ourselves, while also being high in the air and supporting our friends. We hope to continue cheerleading and learn more, like how to raise our hands higher. But most of all, we hope to have lots of fun.

Lauren Dixon



Photo by Leo Becht

Local History continued...

The Olders photographed and wrote descriptions about each building. We toured and did a scavenger hunt at Governor Silas Wright's home. The Olders are putting together a PowerPoint to show their walking tour, pictures, dates, and information.

Bryan Thompson, a historian and author, is coming in to share his findings on the abolition movement in the mid-1800s in St. Lawrence County and the workings of the Underground Railroad that passed through Canton on its way to Canada. Several of the Olders read Bryan's book, *African Americans of St. Lawrence County*, which details the lives of black people in the county dating back to the settling of the North Country.

The students are beginning independent research projects on historical Canton in areas of interest including major crimes, trains, hauntings, the role of horses, and notable women. They will be looking for primary source material in the archives at the Town Historian and Historical Association's offices, as well as seeking out old periodicals and books on their topics. We are comparing the timeline of local history to the events of our national history to gain a better understanding of what happened in our community and what has brought us to this day.

Steve Molnar

Thank You

Andrew Tharrett and Pete Pettengill for weed whacking and building maintenance; Morgan Doyle for volunteering and offering yoga; Desiree Greenwood for volunteering; Emily, Lauren and Brianna Dixon for painting the community room; Dulli for hosting the Youngers farm visits; Ben Dixon and Lia Vella for driving olders field trips; Emily Hastings for donating collage materials; Tiffany Fuse for book donations; Brian Thompson for sharing a local history presentation; our laundry volunteers; and our youngers parent chaperones on field trips.

Have your child come home happy!