



NOVEMBER 8TH, 2013

TURTLE TRACKS

A WEEKLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Upcoming
Events

November 8th-10th
Brown University
Model U.N.

November 9th
Volleyball State
Championship

November 13th
10th & 11th Grade
Class Dinner

November 15th
Senior Class-Sponsored
Coffee House for Big Trips

Grandparents' Day at VCS!



A Testimonial From Grandparents' Day

Excerpted from a letter from Denney Morton, grandmother of Raz Hansen:

Thank you for such an interesting day with my grandson, Raz, your teachers and the other grandparents... you are really breaking new ground.

VCS is 100% right on the TRUST issue. What kids say, and what they mean and do, must match their actions, and ditto for the teachers, the headmaster and the parents.

VCS is also lean and mean. by design I bet, as well as necessity: not a lot of doodads. I appreciate and agree that most "best learning" comes through discussion and defending clear thinking, not gear.

Is screen addiction real, or just the trendy topic of this year? How do we keep our children surrounded/integrated with living things, not in a completely mechanized universe, while we endorse computers as the TOP OF THE PILE?

We do not live in a STAR WARS lifestip. Those plants and animals actually support our life, on this planet. Clean Water, clean air, clean rich soil, bright sunshine: they are not optional. We die without them.

Congratulations on a job very lovingly done. Your school made all the grandparents feel hopeful, not a small task !



Launching the VCS Sustainability Initiative

This week, Bradley's R&S class—entitled “Launching the VCS Sustainability Initiative”—traveled to the headquarters of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) in Richmond. Our goal was to tour the facilities of this well-known and highly respected environmental education organization in order to find out what VCS can learn from the VYCC about pursuing environmental sustainability as a school. We first toured the four story East Monitor Barn, which was built in 1901 and remains standing today as one of only two remaining monitor barns in Vermont (the other also being on the VYCC property). We observed the “energy efficient technology” (early 20th century style) of the barn's gravity feed system in which hay bales were stored on the fourth floor (the “high drive”), then pitched down and unbaled on the third floor (the “hay mow”). From there, loose hay was dropped down to the second floor where about 80 cows would have been housed. And finally, you can probably guess what ended up dropping down to the lowest level...the manure, of course! Confined by the stone foundation of the barn, the manure would compost, providing heat for the barn through the winter. Finished compost would be spread on the fields in the spring. We then strolled through the VYCC's test gardens and farm stand, and up a small hill to the “solar orchard,” a cluster of solar trackers that use a GPS system and an electric motor (the same kind used in the Toyota Prius) to follow the path of the sun each day, thus maximizing the electrical output of the solar panels. The VYCC is able to produce more than 100% of the electricity they need, selling the excess back into the electrical grid. From there we walked over to the VYCC's main greenhouses and the large field where grass fed beef cattle and chickens are raised. The cattle are rotated to different areas of the field from day to day so that they will not overgraze a particular area. When the cattle have been moved from an area, the chickens are then placed on that part of the field in movable, wire mesh “chicken tractors” that are also moved from day to day. The chickens just love to pick apart the dried cow pies in search of tasty insects. In this way, many insect pests and parasites are devoured, and the manure is broken up so that it will return to the soil more quickly. Lastly, we explored the West Monitor Barn, built in 1903 and fully restored in 2003. During the restoration, many of the original timbers and slate roof tiles from the barn were able to be salvaged and reused, and a number of sustainable technologies were installed, including energy efficient windows and lighting, insulating window shades and waterless urinals. Upon exiting the West Monitor Barn, we stopped to visit a small herd of friendly sheep (being careful not to touch the electric fence!) on our way back to the bus.

During our visit, students took notes on the various environmentally sustainable techniques and technologies they observed, and these notes will be compiled into a “School Visit Report” that VCS will be able to refer to as we seek ways to improve our own school's sustainability. While we might not be able to build a “solar orchard” or graze cattle, sheep and chickens on the VCS campus, we did observe many sustainable strategies that could be copied or adapted for use here at our school. And, in the weeks to come we will be visiting a number of other schools from which we can learn! So, stay tuned for more news on the topic of SUSTAINABILITY!



VCS Coffee House!

VCS students and faculty will share their many artistic talents to entertain you as you sip gourmet coffee and nibble homebaked goodies. This is a favorite annual VCS event. Parents and relatives encouraged to attend! The Coffee House will be held at the school on Friday, November 15th from 5:00pm-8:00pm.



Math 7 Survey Results Are In!!

Math 7 students have just completed a statistics project, led by Nadine McBride, that involved surveying representative samples of students and staff/faculty on topics as diverse as favorite dessert to shoe size. The results can be seen outside Room 1. Some suggestions that students made based upon their analysis include having ice cream as a dessert should the school have a party, providing a coffee lounge for the faculty (who drink WAY more coffee than the students...except Ellis!), and offering more sports. Great job Seventh Graders!!!

From the Admissions Office

We hosted a highly successful Open House on Sunday, November 3rd, here at the school which was very well attended with prospective students and parents who came to learn more about Vermont Commons. We are especially grateful to the current students, parents, faculty, staff and administration who gave of their time to participate and meet with interested families. Our next Open House is scheduled for mid-February! In the mean time, we are excited to host our annual Sibling Shadow Day which is set for Thursday, December 5th. Brothers and sisters of current and former students, as well as graduates of our school are welcome to spend a full day at VCS attending classes. We ask that those students who participate in Sibling Shadow Day be enrolled in 5th grade (or higher). Special thanks to Anna Leffler, VCS '16 and Nick Sears, VCS '16, who came up with the idea for Sibling Shadow Day when they were in the fifth grade and asked about having a day like this so they could visit the school as prospective students!! We've had this wonderful program ever since! To register, please contact Sarah Soule, Director of Admissions, ssoule@vermontcommons.org 802-865-8084, ext. 27.



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