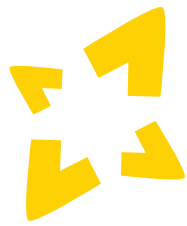


MARCH  
2012  
NEWSLETTER



# BART

a college prep charter school

## BART Students Become Fluent in College Life

As a college preparatory school, Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (BART) makes sure that students are exposed to higher education at every opportunity.

Starting in middle school, students are taken to a college campus whenever time and geography allow.

"It helps me know what to expect when I get to college," said 10th-grade student Audrey Aka. "I understand now how things are going to work."

Preparing for college is more than books and studying. Students will, for the first time, be allowed to do their homework when they want, go to class when they want, and largely be on their own.

"College is a giant leap for some of these students," said Barbara Robertson, college and internship counselor at BART. "Any time we can expose them to different colleges and help acclimate them can only help down the road."

Aka, a Pittsfield resident, has been at BART for two years now and has already visited nearly a half-dozen campuses, something her friends haven't had the opportunity to do yet.

Some of the seniors at BART - those who have been here since sixth grade - have visited over 20 colleges by their own estimates.

"If I were in another school, I'd be going to a local college and be content with that," said senior Chris Cozzaglio.

Another senior, Jakob Kelly, agreed with Cozzaglio. "I'd be going to a trade school and doing construction," said Kelly, adding that he's planning on studying psychology next year.



BART students during a recent trip to Western New England University

Robertson recalled a recent trip to Williams College with BART eighth graders, and how the students fell into a back-and-forth with their tour guide.

"You could tell how interested they were by all the questions they asked," said Robertson. "But they weren't all academic." The ques-

tions hurled at the student guide ran the gamut from food in the dining hall to what dorm rooms looked like, to class schedules.

"And that's what's so nice about getting onto a campus," said Robertson. "You have the chance to really get the nuts and bolts of college life." 🌟

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## Hoosic RiverKeepers: Connecting Water, Science and the Community: BART Science Class Heads to the Water

For an environmental science class, there is no greater classroom than what nature provides. This led Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (BART) science teacher Melissa Herliczek to bring her students to the subject instead of the other way around.

As part of the school's environmental science curriculum, The Hoosic RiverKeepers: Connecting Water, Science, and the Community program will literally put students in the water. They will don waders and wield nets to help gauge the health of one of Berkshire County's largest rivers.

The primary goal of the study is to determine the quality of the river beneath roadways and bridges, using invertebrates, temperature, the presence of suspended solids, pH levels, and dissolved oxygen as markers. The students will learn to read maps and how to operate in an active field research environment.

Despite record-breaking rains that scoured every moving waterway in the county in late summer and fall, Ms. Herliczek's 13 students recently found themselves knee-deep in North Adams' Notch Brook.

One positive byproduct of the depart-

ing of industry from Berkshire County has been the improving health of many local rivers and lakes. Herliczek's students will dive into the history of the river and the watershed. They will learn what pollutants found their way into the water, the sources of pollution, and the uses the river served in the past.

My greatest hope is that the Hoosic RiverKeepers Project will help instill the value and importance of environmental stewardship within Berkshire County.

— Melissa Herliczek, BART Science Teacher

"The authentic field research provides the perfect avenue for science to play a fundamental role in stewarding our local freshwater ecosystems," said Herlic-



BART students use a tagline to measure the width of Notch Brook

zek. "Students will be exposed to direct evidence that leads to the understanding of the interconnectedness of the natural world."

The class will also work on communicating their findings to the community, whether through newspaper articles, talks before town and city boards, Facebook, or other mediums.

"I hope this will provide an exciting opportunity for BART juniors to step into a leadership role within the local community," said Herliczek.

Partial funding for this project was provided by Toshiba America Foundation.

The students' outdoor equipment for the Hoosic RiverKeepers was provided at a deep discount by Orivs. 🌟

## Quiz Team Matches Wits Around County

With their opponents only feet away, waiting to pounce on the slightest mistake, athletes are required to summon the courage, fortitude and skill to overcome the moment.

Something similar happened on December 14th, at Pittsfield's Taconic High School, when the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (BART) Quiz Team faced off against Lee High School.

Though BART lost 17 to 14, the event was spirited, with plenty of back and forth, and tense moments as teams drilled down to the right answer.

"I get nervous," said ninth-grader Lauren Shamburger. "But once you get in [the room] it kind of goes away."

Sean Keogh, an English teacher who moved over to an instructional coach position this year, heard the call for a Quiz Team coach for this first-year team and

thought it would be a great opportunity for both himself and the students.

"I'm just not in the classroom as much," said Keogh. "This is a good way to stay connected to the students, and I love trivia and minutiae."

Keogh added that he enjoys watching the students work together and figure out problems that aren't graded or attached to schoolwork. "It's fun to see them get credit for being smart," said Keogh.



Eleventh-grade student Joe King was there from the start. "I've always been one of those people who know a lot of weird facts," said King. "This is just a good way to exercise your brain after school."

BART's team joined the county Quiz Team circuit, which rotates monthly meets through county high schools during the school year.

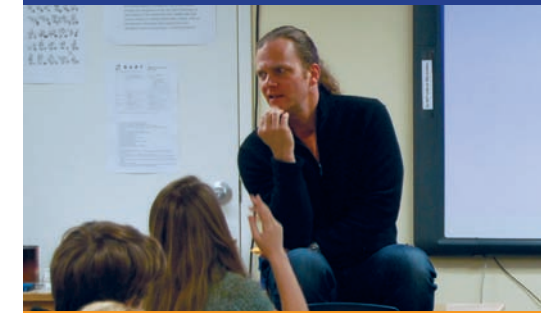
"It's interesting," said Dean Covert, an eleventh-grade student. "We get to compete with the other non-jocks at other schools, but it's always a friendly competition."

The team is quizzed on nearly a dozen topics, from literature to science and everything in between, so studying is nearly impossible. In their weekly practice sessions, keeping the mind nimble is the main function.

For instance, during the Taconic meet, Keogh, a certified English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, created the ELA questions for the meet. He took original literary reviews, and by reading portions of the review to the teams, asked them to guess the book.

In another practice session, the students were given a blank map of Europe and asked to label the countries. The chatter begins immediately; before long the "major" countries have been identified, and it's on to more obscure countries. The surprise for Keogh is the route the students take to figure things out. "They really know what they know," said Keogh. "And they feed off of each other." 🌟

## VISITING ARTIST



## Taylor Mali Hammers Message Home

Renowned slam poet and teacher advocate Taylor Mali descended on Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (BART) to inspire, heckle, lead, and educate both teachers and students about their writing, delivery and confidence this winter.

The direction was clear from the start. Write, write and re-write, and don't look back.

"The students received invaluable insight into the process of a professional writer," said Curtis Asch, a sixth-grade math and creative writing teacher at BART.

Mali worked on releasing students from a common trap among adolescent writers - the abstract - for example, writing about their angst through conceptual or transcendent ideas rather than using physical objects to communicate their feelings.

"Nouns you can feel and touch," said Mali. "If you want to talk about the alienation you feel in life, you need to do so through the rusty buckets and broken pencils. Give the reader something to grasp."

"It was really beneficial," said 11th grader Joe King. "He is one of my favorite poets. He seemed to understand where all the kids were coming from."

King added that he received feedback from Mali all through the two days, and after his public reading, Mali pulled him aside to offer a few more ideas.

"He gives you a new way to look at the way the words are written," said King.

Mali's visit was made possible by a grant with the National Endowment for the Arts. 🌟

## STUDENT VOICE: DEAN COVERT

### Sitting on the Junior Board

The first meeting of the Mountain One Junior Board was October 19; if I could choose a word that could describe what I was feeling those moments before, it would be nervous. I had no idea what I was in for, who was going to be at the meeting and what I would be accountable for. I became even more nervous as I walked into that silent conference room, seeing the other students seated around the conference table, along with the Junior Board staff members from the bank, all dressed in business attire ready to start the meeting. To my surprise, it wasn't just me who was nervous; the other Junior Board members and the staff members all shared the same feelings. But soon enough jokes were being cracked and everyone had begun to socialize. That day I had made eight new friends.

A typical meeting of the Junior Board includes: the distribution of a meeting agenda, call to-order by the president (Gary Lavarie), and then work to carry out the goals for this year's project—creating a financial literacy program for high-school students. In this literacy program, what we think of as

simple, every-day financial tasks and concepts will be taught to the soon-to-be college students. This financial knowledge is critical in order to survive that accumulated debt after college and to prepare for what to expect after college. In the program we hope to include information on balancing a check book, understanding loans and creating a budget. As a major part in creating a financial literacy program, the board needed a focus group and who better than the members on the Junior Board! We are the right age and the right type of people, with some of us going to college just next year. As the focus group, Junior Board members just let it all out: we share ideas, tell what we like or don't like with the samples that are shown, and even have discussions with what we, as students, would like to be taught through this program.

Being on the Mountain One Junior Board has been such a rewarding and educational experience. As a member of this focus group, I have been able to share my ideas, concerns, and feedback, and they are actually taken into consideration. We are given an actual job, budget, and project that will be



Back Row: (Left to Right) John Law, President & CEO, Williamstown Savings Bank; Chip Kirchner (BART); Dean Covert (BART); Tanner Bird (Hoosac); Gary Lavariere (Drury); Stephen Bolognani (Drury); Richard Bullett, Chairman, Hoosac Bank & Williamstown Savings Bank Boards of Directors. Front Row: (Left to Right) Vanessa Ramos (McCann); Brent Parmenter (Hoosac); Jordanne Wotkowicz (McCann); James Churchill (Mt. Greylock); Cady Ketcham (Mt. Greylock).

used in the future. We feel important and excited to see our hard work being used to help other students. I would highly recommend becoming a part of this board to any local high school junior or senior! 🌟



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www.bartcharter.org

## @ BART

### Don't miss Get *BART Smart*!

BART will be holding its annual fundraiser, Get *BART Smart*, on Saturday, April 28 from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Get *BART Smart* pits teams against one another in a fevered competition of trivia, math, literature, and SAT questions.



At the end of the night the winning team will be crowned "Valedictorian" and, along with prizes, wins untold fame, fortune and adulation throughout Berkshire County. For more information please visit <http://bartcharter.org/news-events/gbs>

## NEW YORK CITY BALLET

# BART Students Get Hands-On with New York City Ballet

For the second year in a row, the New York City Ballet made Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (BART) a part of their annual trip to Williams College. The acclaimed ballet company recently hosted 30 students at the '62 Center for Dance and Theater at Williams College.

By all accounts, the trip was a success, as BART students showed no fear by jumping right into the fray, learning from two of the Ballet's principal dancers, Jared Angle and Jenifer Ringer.

Instead of learning basic ballet steps, the two instructors taught the students a complete dance. The program introduced students to *Liebeslieder Walzer*, a work based on the music of

Johannes Brahms and choreographed by George Balanchine.

After demonstrating the performance, and impressing students with their grace, the dancers broke the dance into several small steps, giving the BART students the opportunity to put the pieces together into the full performance.



"We love this visit and were thrilled to have the dancers work with our students again this year," said Julia Bowen, BART Executive Director. "I know the students and faculty were impressed by how easily the dancers could translate their passion for ballet into an engaging workshop for our students."

Brian O'Grady, BART Arts Program Coordinator,

who helped plan the visit and accompanied the students to Williams, agreed the event was a special opportunity for the students. "It was truly unique. How often can a high school student who is interested in dance have the chance to work directly with two dancers who have reached one of the highest levels of professional achievement?"

BART would like to thank both Williams College and Bob and Martha Lipp for making this special opportunity available to our students. ✨

