

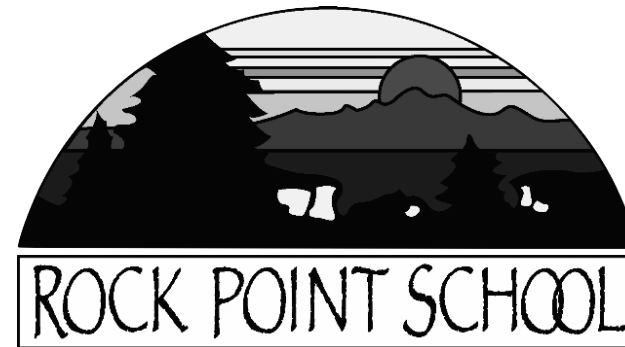


Rock Point School is a co-educational boarding and day high school located on 125 acres of wooded lakefront property in Burlington, Vermont. Rock Point is an alternative high school that focuses on educating the whole person. In our small classes and cohesive community, students form close relationships with teachers and peers and often grow in ways they never would have thought possible. Whether in the classroom, on the playing field, or out in the wider community, our mission is to help young people become their best selves.

Viewpoints

Rock Point School

One Rock Point Road
Burlington, Vermont 05408
www.rockpointschool.org



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Winter 2013

Greetings from Rock Point School,

As we are catapulting into winter here in Vermont, I've been thinking about the actual catapult that a group of students built recently in Physics class. Rather than build the catapult to a set of specifications with a guaranteed outcome, the students created their catapult from scratch, imagining what would be needed, and then experiencing a good deal of trial and error, and eventually success. The education was focused on letting students learn a process that can be applied to creating or problem solving in any area of their lives or studies. They were working with the questions at the core of all research and production endeavors: What do I know? What don't I know? What do I need to know? What worked? What didn't work? In what way didn't it work? What needs to be adjusted, and in what direction? From relationships to essays to "rocket science," if we can internalize and utilize these questions, we can move forward. And the catapult itself reminds me of our work at Rock Point School: the first and most important thing is to aim in the right direction. Catapults, like life, are inexact endeavors, but both work well if one aims in the right direction and makes adjustments as needed.



I see students doing this day-in and day-out at Rock Point--aiming themselves toward the futures they want, working hard, and making adjustments as they see the results of their efforts themselves and get feedback from others. You will see in this student-written issue of Viewpoints many of the directions that students are aiming themselves in, including designing a computer game application, procuring a baking internship, volunteering to help the local community, pursuing independent studies in Japanese and Mandarin, pressing gallons of homemade cider, and writing for publication. In addition to this, students are studying math and science, designing t-shirts and logos, writing literary essays and college-application essays, and studying history both locally and globally. And students really will catapult into winter soon, as our Nordic skiing program and snowboarding programs begin.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Viewpoints. Thank you for your support of Rock Point School and the momentum that you contribute to the education and success of students who are working hard for success. You can always let me know what you think about the direction the school is aiming in by emailing me at cspirito@rockpointschool.org.

C.J. Spirito
Head of School

Acknowledgements

Thanks very much to all the students who helped put together this newsletter, and especially to Aaron, Hank, James, Jimmy, Julia, Kevin, Luke, and Sam for writing articles. Thanks also to all the staff members who worked to make this happen, in particular Emily Skoler, Ann Ely, Lonnie Edson, CJ Spirito, and Isaiah Keepin. And our boundless thanks to our wider community, and particularly our current families, for coming together to make this remarkable thing called Rock Point School.



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Volunteer Efforts: 11th Annual Ooky Spooky Run and Hike for Hunger

by Jimmy D, junior

Rock Point students have multiple opportunities throughout the year to help out the community by volunteering. One opportunity earlier this fall, The Hike For Hunger, involved Rock Point School students raising money and hiking to increase awareness about childhood hunger in the state. Our school raised \$474 dollars for Hunger Free Vermont, an organization that provides food to families who have trouble attaining sustenance and that educates people in the state about the problem of childhood hunger.



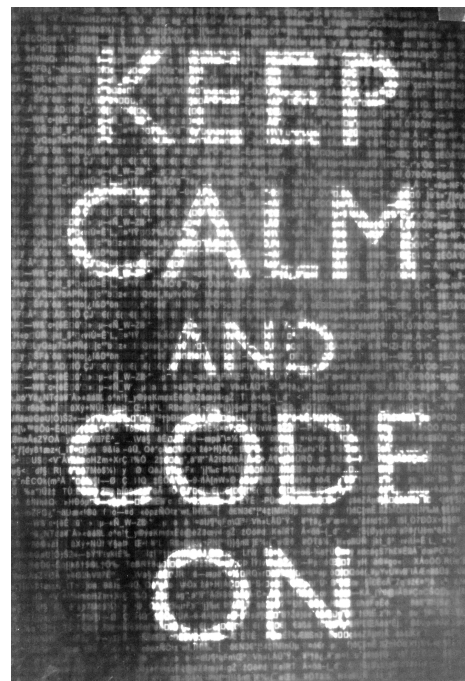
For the past eleven years, Rock Point School has been hosting the Ooky Spooky race for COTS (Committee on Temporary Shelter) at the end of October, during our fall Parents' Weekend. COTS provides shelter to people who don't currently have a home. Students, parents, and Burlington community members come, often dressed in costume, to run the 5k race. All registration fees for the race go to COTS'. Students help out by organizing, placing signs, and working along the course. One student even baked pies for the winners. This year we had over eighty runners and raised \$835 for COTS! It has been really fun participating in these events and raising money to help others in our local community. I look forward to more volunteering opportunities as the year goes on.



Independent Project

by James G, senior

As an independent project, my classmate Dan and I decided we wanted to develop a two-dimensional, physics-based, puzzle-platforming game for the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, and iPad Mini. As project partners we complement each other well. I am the programming mathematician and the annoying neurotic. Dan is the brilliant cynicist, the articulate enthusiast, the perspicacious evangelist, and the divine artist. We are more complementary than New York Apples and Aged Vermont Cheddar. The synergy of our imagination manifests through this project we have been developing over the past couple months.



When Angry Birds breeds with Mario, you get our iPhone game. In most iPhone applications, the more features a game has, the harder it is to learn. But a far greater experience is promised after overcoming this learning curve. Our game will differentiate between experienced gamers and those relatively new to gaming in order to give gamers instructions relevant to their experience level. Our “smart” game will evaluate the user on their “game intelligence” based on a variety of indicators in how the player interacts with the game as soon as the game is opened. Then we can display the “how to” in a way that best suits them and teaches them how to play the game with respect to their preferred teaching style. This is all done seamlessly behind the scenes without the user knowing. We are aiming to release the game to the App Store in Spring of 2014. In the meantime, our dorm suite at school is our game-development headquarters.



Cider pressing

by Aaron S, junior

Living in Vermont, apples are a well-appreciated fruit, growing well in the climate. Living at Rock Point, apples are also a dietary highlight. With several trees on the property, as well as the traditional once-yearly trip to the orchard, apples have made their way into our school culture. Of course, not all of our apples can look perfect. Our solution to apples that wouldn't otherwise keep or look unsightly is none other than to smash them all. Smashing and then pressing them into cider, of course! Out comes our wooden cider press, as well as student volunteers to team up and run it. After collecting buckets and buckets of pressed cider, a little pasteurization provides some more confidence to some otherwise unsightly apples. Everyone is gracious when it appears in a dispenser for all to enjoy, or is ladled out of a heated pot on the stove. At the rate we drink it, we might just plant an orchard yet...



Sweet Internship

by Kevin J, junior

When I came to Rock Point last year in October I needed a way to make friends and I wasn't sure how. Everyone seemed nice, but I didn't know how to start. I decided I saw one thing in common with all of the students. They all loved good food! Within a week I decided to whip up some chocolate chip cookies. Everyone loved them. In the following weeks I made cupcakes, then more cupcakes, then cakes, then whoopie pies. By then I had made friends, but I also discovered something about myself: I loved, and was good at, baking.

This year I wanted to do something more with baking. I knew it wouldn't be a good idea to look for a job as a baker because of the hours, but someone recommended an internship. I started emailing around and got a response from August First, a great local bakery and café. I didn't know how to go about following up, so I talked with my guidance counselor, and we decided I would write a letter. She helped me become aware of things that I could put in the letter that I hadn't realized were relevant. For example, saying that you have been doing a kitchen work crew and running an industrial dishwashing machine looks very good. Not many kids do this. I saw that my Rock Point work crews were good job experiences. When I sent the letter, I got a response back about not only how good the letter was, but how soon I could start!



I have begun working with the pastry baker on Saturday mornings. I am really happy that this opportunity came about, that I was able to work with a staff at Rock Point to get this internship, and that I got a position at a real bakery where I am trusted to carry out tasks that benefit the company. It's very rewarding and I look forward to it every week. It is not only something fun to do; they also give me a delicious breakfast sandwich for my work! The internship is helping me learn more about what I want to do in my future. I appreciate everyone who has worked with me at Rock Point School, and especially Liza and Phil at August First.



Exhibit of student artwork at our recent Thanksgiving service

Gaming at Rock Point School

by Luke H, junior

Rock Point School is a place to have fun as well as to learn. There are many students that like to relax at night by kicking back and playing some card games. Now, these aren't the usual kinds of card games like "Crazy Eights" or "Old Maid"; no, the game these students play is called "Magic: The Gathering." Students delve into an imaginary battle between forces summoned with an elaborate deck of cards. It can be a calm way to decompress after a long day of school, or an intense encounter that puts the players on the edges of their seats.



Besides playing card games throughout the week, there are a select few students who participate in a type of game called a tabletop roleplaying game. The two versions played are called "Age of Wonder" and "Call of Cthulhu." In these games, players create imaginary characters and control them as they participate in creating an interactive story with one player being the narrator and controller of the game world. Players have to work together to complete a goal given to them. It is a test of teamwork and imagination as all of this game is played in the players' heads and through their words.

Students at Rock Point School work hard throughout the week and really love kicking back and playing all sorts of games. Whether it is "Magic: The Gathering" or "Age of Wonder," there are always laughs to be had in the community.



Spotlights



Student Profile: Ben

by Hank M, junior

Ben is a senior from Saratoga, NY. He arrived at Rock Point in March of 2013. Some of his favorite activities at Rock Point have been white water rafting and rock climbing. His favorite class is history. After he graduates, he wants to go to college for either history, anthropology, or physics.



Student Profile: Noe

by Hank M, junior

Noe is a sophomore from Fresno, CA and she is in her first year at Rock Point. Her favorite thing about being at RPS is “Being in a community with people my age.” Noe enjoys math class because she “likes equations and challenging myself.” So far, her favorite weekend activity has been ice skating and she is looking forward to skiing in Vermont for the first time!

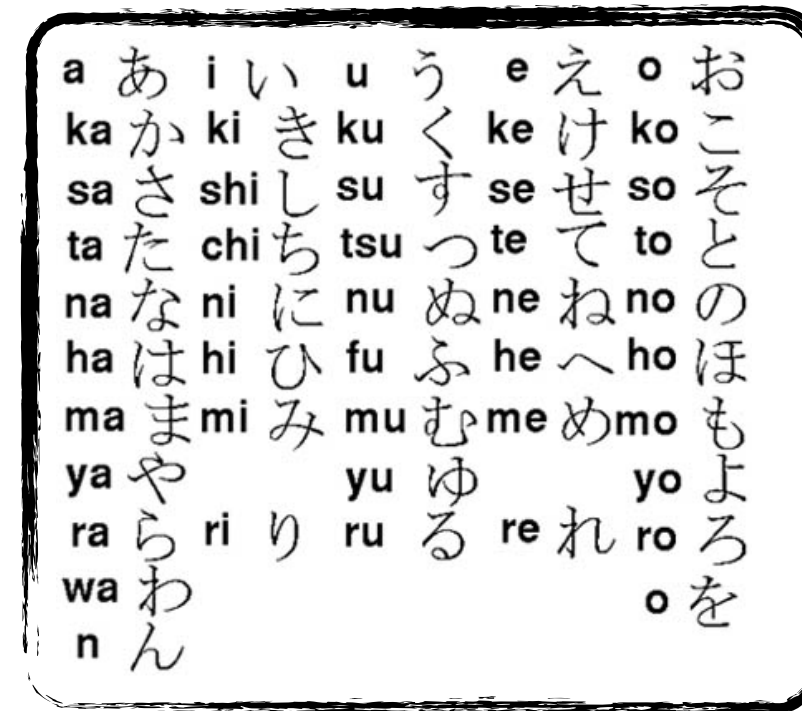


Staff Profile: Justin Gay

by Sam M., junior

Justin Gay is one of the new dorm staff this year. Justin found out about Rock Point School from his friend, whose mother worked here as the Assistant Headmaster. Before Rock Point, Justin was working as a hut master for Carter Notch Hut in the White Mountains in New Hampshire. For Justin, the most exciting part of his job at Rock Point is the opportunity to experience all of the different roles at the school. He works as a Dorm Parent, Teacher, Advisor, and on weekends he works as a chef to cook the meals. His favorite activity so far this year was the boys’ camping trip at the start of the year. Justin says that so far he has enjoyed being able to help high school students grow during adolescence, and enjoys helping them find things they enjoy. He enjoys having fun with the students and at

times being goofy, something that isn’t allowed in a lot of jobs. I look forward to the rest of the year with Justin and the rest of the dorm staff here at Rock Point School.



Foreign Language Study

by Julia E, junior

At Rock Point School, we do not have foreign language classes, but juniors and seniors who want to study foreign languages can do an independent study for credit. Currently we have three students, all juniors, including myself, taking a language course independently. Luke and I are studying Japanese. and Aaron is studying Mandarin. We use some of our electives course time to do this, as well as our own personal time. With a full course load already, it’s hard to make this work, but we take on this challenge for multiple reasons, including our interest in the cultures of the languages we’re learning. I first got interested in learning more about Japan through Animé, a Japanese form of cartoon-

art that has great story lines. Luke and I have talked about the challenge of learning a language with a grammar structure so radically different from English. It has taken awhile to understand the sentence structures and how to form a correct sentence. John Rouleau, the former Headmaster of Rock Point School, has studied Japanese for many years and used to lead school trips to Japan for cultural and educational exchanges. We hope to meet with him to get pointers on our pronunciation, and to talk with him about his experiences learning Japanese and traveling to Japan.

Two are taking Japanese, and one is taking Chinese. These students take time out of out of electives and their own personal time. In addition to the regular course size for a Junior, students take on this extra burden of learning a language. Another thing that makes it challenging is that both languages are some of the hardest languages to learn for an English speaker. Students take on this challenge for multiple reasons including their own interest in the culture, and what they want to do in the future.

Some Questions for Students Studying a Foreign Language

“What got you interested in the language?”

Julia- I have always liked the culture in Japan and I frequently watch anime. Anime is like the Japanese form of cartoons that have great story lines in them.

Luke- I have been interested in Japanese for many years because of the impact Japanese culture has had on my interests and lifestyle.

“What is challenging for you about it?”

Luke- The challenging aspect of learning the language is that their grammar is so radically different from English that it can take awhile to understand the sentence structures and how to form a correct sentence.

Julia- It is hard to focus in on Japanese for me for long periods of time, meaning one hour or more.

“How do you make time to do the work?”

Julia- I make it work by doing it during Study Hall, free time, and during electives.

Luke- I use blocks in the day that are regularly scheduled to be elective blocks to instead do the work for Japanese. I use a Rosetta Stone software program which allows me to access the lessons at anytime I need.