



ROCK POINT SCHOOL

Become Your Best Self

VIEWPOINTS

FALL/WINTER 2020

One Rock Point Road, Burlington, Vermont 05408

802.863.1104

www.rockpointschool.org

Dear Rock Point Friends,

Happy holidays to one and all! Here at RPS, we are in the midst of our 92nd year. We are also in a pandemic, which is an unprecedented experience for the school. We find that so much about the school has had to change, yet so much is deeply the same. This year we wear masks, keep physical distance, wash our hands (a lot), clean, disinfect, and cycle back to do it all again. Strange times, indeed. Strange, but also quite joyful. We feel fortunate that our students can be together when so much of our society is distanced and isolated. Students engage in classes, learn and grow, play together, do work crews, and try new things, as they do each year. In this vastly different time, the core values and strengths of our mission remain constant, and we still find joy every day.



This autumn, I had the opportunity to be with students while teachers and residential educators held remote conferences with parents. We were in the backfield on the west-facing side of the school in the late afternoon. Students had spent the day running, hiking, swimming in the lake, reading, writing, walking dogs, and making art. After a full day, we all decided to relax in the grassy field and enjoy the sun as it warmed us, casting long shadows while arcing towards the horizon. At this moment, I was struck, yet again, by the knowledge that it is not the innovative classes, fun activities, or shared work that make our community so valued by our students. It is being together that matters the most. Students—some of whom had challenges making friends and being in groups in the past—were enjoying just being together. They were laughing, asking questions about each other, and sharing about their lives. They were happy, which, in turn, warmed my heart.

May you be blessed with joy and kindness in your lives, and thank you for helping us keep this community thriving for our students and families.

Yours in health and community,

C.J. Spirito
Head of School

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Alyssa Barrett
John Davis
Mariah Kelley
Haley Sparks

ROCK POINT & THE PANDEMIC

By Cecily, Grade 12

In COVID-19 times, Rock Point School has had to implement changes to the program to keep everyone safe and follow the state rules. Currently, we practice social distancing with staff, students, and visitors. We maintain a six-foot distance and are required to wear masks in the presence of people coming from outside the building. Our food is served to us from behind barriers to avoid many people coming in close contact with others' food. While we have had to adjust some things, being at Rock Point has many built-in advantages to cope with COVID-19.

Being at a school like this, with minimal people and living on campus, helps minimize the risk from being around large groups of people where we could be exposed to the virus. We have become a close-knit community, which is especially helpful when many people have become isolated and overwhelmed in quarantine. Being connected to close friends and caring staff helps keep us focused on what's in front of us instead of spiraling down the many possibilities that COVID-19 can hold. We are also able to do safe, fun activities outdoors like hiking and playing ultimate frisbee. Online learning is not ideal for many people, so as long as we're staying safe, we can remain open and give everyone the natural in-person learning experience.

While Rock Point's new guidelines are essential and helpful, they can be challenging to maintain. Of course, things can't be entirely normal; we have to live differently and change what we do. I've found it difficult to adjust to some of the new procedures we have: sometimes I have to run back and forth to my room for a mask, there can be times where social distancing can be hard, and morning health screenings can take a while. While necessary, it takes time to



^ Author of this piece, Cecily, enjoying time in nature at Lake Willoughby

adjust and implement these changes into my everyday life. As a senior, this is my last year of high school before college. With classes in a different format and times where remote learning is planned (such as between our November and December breaks), it can certainly be frustrating to live so unconventionally. However, with such high stakes during the pandemic, being at Rock Point is a good option. I get to live in a place where I don't need to worry much about my safety because we take enough precautions. Rock Point staff do their best to make the school a place we enjoy. We work out ways to have fun and feel safe. In the end, it's about doing what we can to live happily, despite the challenging situations.



^ Director of Admissions, Hillary, enjoys lunch behind a plexiglass barrier

HIKING CLUB

By Alyssa Barrett, Residential Educator

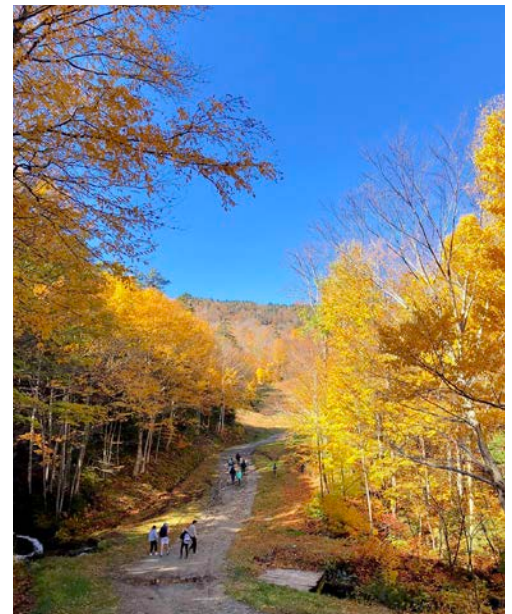


^ Students at the top of Snake Mountain

The RPS Hiking Group was born out of a desire to get outside this fall! While COVID-19 has presented many challenges, we recognize that we are so fortunate to be located here in Vermont. Social distancing is practically the norm here, and outside spaces are abundant. Students were enthusiastic about exploring many different hiking trails, all within about an hour of campus. The group had varying levels of experience with hiking, but they were all eager to challenge themselves. The hiking group tackled various peaks, including Snake Mountain, Mad River Glen, and Mount Philo.

Each hike was unique in its length, terrain, and location and allowed us to see some new parts of Vermont while getting outside! Snake Mountain brought us down south towards Middlebury, VT, and provided stunning views of Addison County. We got to ride the historic Single Chair chair lift down the mountain at Mad River Glen after a tough hike up. And on Mount Philo, we had a beautiful perspective of Lake Champlain and its surrounding basin.

These hikes were not only a great way to get outside, but the perfect place to take in Vermont's fall foliage, physically challenge ourselves, and enjoy some yummy snacks for our efforts!



^ This foliage shot of the Mad River Glen Trail shows the true beauty of Vermont in autumn.



Students at the top of Mount Philo >

CRAFTY TIMES AT ROCK POINT SCHOOL

By Haley Sparks, Residential Educator

As a new residential educator this year, one of the most impressive things about our student body was their desire and ability to be creative! As someone who went most of their life being told by art teachers that I didn't have excellent artistic skills, it's been rewarding and eye-opening for me to watch students find unique ways to showcase what "art" looks like to them. I appreciate their ability to find what works for them artistically and use making art to ground themselves, and I wish I had used this technique as a teen. During downtime in the evening or over the weekend, students are scattered throughout the craft room engaged in making something cool.

Some of the highlights of our artistic pursuits thus far have included: painting pots and planting succulents in them, stained glass class on Friday nights, painting tiny canvases, Halloween string art, and sticker making. No matter what time of day art is offered, students show up week after week to advance their skills, learn new things, or just relax. As one of our students, Gray, put it, "Making stained glass is harder than it seems, but Val (student) and Mariah (staff) are great teachers!"

One of my favorite ways to be creative with the students is making stickers. The sticker maker in the craft room gives us the ability to turn almost anything into a sticker. The students made me laugh with the witty stickers they created and impressed me with the things they drew that they then turned into stickers. We've made stickers featuring our ironic love of characters from the Twilight series and our serious appreciation for Ultimate Frisbee. You may notice these little pieces of art on water bottles or binders on your next visit to the School!

As the winter comes and cooler weather moves in, I believe that our community at RPS will continue to stay engaged in artistic endeavors, crafting, and creativity!



^ Gray working on a stained glass piece

Above: Rebecca painted a pot for her succulent plant

SCIENCE IN ACTION: Airflow Testing, COVID-19 Protocols, and Energy Efficiency

By Marika Dalton, Science Teacher

This fall, Rock Point School embarked on a project to evaluate the airflow in the school building. In this time of COVID-19, understanding the density of occupants in an area, how big our shared spaces really are, and how often the air in a room is replaced can be important for reducing the spread of COVID-19 in aerosols. It can also help us make the best choices for keeping our school well-ventilated and warm at the same time. Luckily, our school is filled with budding scientists and mathematicians who can appreciate the collection of this data!



^ Science teacher, Marika Dalton, works with seniors in Physics

With the help of funding from Efficiency Vermont, we were able to enlist the services of CX Associates to consult and perform airflow testing. This group surveyed the building to understand our complicated vent system, and at the end of October, they took airflow measurements from our vents and from inside our air ducts. With this information, they calculated the airflow rates in all of our shared spaces and compared this to ventilation guidelines.

CX Associates generously shared explanations of their tools, methodology, and history with our students. Our science classes were able to see engineering and scientific problem-solving in action. Our math students participated in estimating room areas. As several classes this fall have been working on transforming units of measurement—from area to volume to flow rates—this real-life example of our studies has been an unexpected gift.

The airflow testing results were revealing—we learned that the overall outside air flow rate into our school is appropriate, which spaces are best for groups, and some mechanical fixes that can help us use more areas effectively. In addition, we now have guidance on how to heat our school and reduce outside drafts safely. Best of all, our students can understand what information helped produce these recommendations, how this data was collected, and what drives these best practices for Rock Point School.

Welcome To The Newest Members of the RPS Team



Mary Hamilton



Haley Sparks and John Davis



Nora Mitchell



Josepha Austin

We are excited to introduce our newest staff members!

Mary Hamilton joined us in June as our new Office and Systems Manager! Mary has taken the reigns of the front office with aplomb. After opening her own business, Mary decided she wanted to return to the lively world of education. We are grateful for her expertise and positive energy.

Haley Sparks and **John Davis** joined our Residential team this fall! Haley grew up in New Hampshire, but after spending each winter skiing at her family's house in Stowe and attending UVM, she likes to consider herself a Vermonter at heart. After working as a ski instructor and wilderness therapy guide in Utah, Haley is delighted to return to the Green Mountains and continue to share her passion for the outdoors with Rock Point students. John has roots in Vermont, where he grew up and spent time on his grandparents' farm. There, John learned an appreciation for experiential education that he is eager to share with our students.

After 27 years of being a friend of the school, **Nora Mitchell** has joined the staff as a College Counselor for the 2020-21 school year. She is working with juniors and some seniors and their parents to help them plan for life after high school, while Emily Skoler, our long-time college counselor, reduces her work this year. Nora has taught at several nearby colleges, most recently at Champlain College. She has also advised first-year college students, worked in college administration, and has long focused on the transition to college and the first-year experience. Her experience has been invaluable for our students and their families as they prepare for life after high school.

Josepha Austin started her work as a special educator at Rock Point School in October. Josepha started her teaching career working as an art teacher at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf. She continues to meld creativity and pedagogy to benefit students of all abilities. We are thrilled to have her on board.

Meet Our New Trustees:

Welcome, Robin and Mo, our newest members of the Board of Trustees!

Robin Lloyd Miller, RPS Class of 2010, speaks animatedly and positively of his four-year experience at RPS. He is not shy to add that while he was at Rock Point, the structure, rules, and staff supervision could be challenging. However, after he graduated, he realized more and more that his time at our school was transformational in his life. Robin is grateful for the organizational skills he learned at Rock Point, which helped him earn his degree in technology and game design at Champlain College. While at RPS, he grew a broader sense of himself and others, impacting how he is in the world today. Robin joined the Board to do his part in making sure that Rock Point School stays available as an option for all those who need it, as he needed the School many years ago.



After working at RPS for three years as our Director of Community Development, Mo Reilly is now returning as a trustee because she believes in the School's mission and wants to contribute to our success. She is an independent thinker and acts from a position of strength, making her actions positively impact the world around her. In her work at RPS, she found kindred spirits in students, parents and staff, all working together in the same direction. Mo now works for the Vermont Department of Commerce and Community Development and wants to stay connected to the Rock Point community. We are lucky to have her positive energy and skills on our board!



Covid-19 Generosity

By Mary Hamilton, Office and Systems Manager

We have successfully completed 2.5 months of in-person education and community-building at Rock Point School! Students were safe while learning away from home and in the company of peers. Faculty and staff worked diligently to keep protocols in place, gently reminding students as the inevitable COVID-19 weariness set in.

The incredible Rock Point School Community of Donors played a huge role in making this effort a success. No one put COVID-19 in their budgets this year, including you, when you were planning your philanthropic giving. And yet, you have given over \$20,000.00 toward our goal of \$30,000.00 to help offset the costs of making Rock Point School a safe place to live, learn, and work.

THANK YOU! And, if you have not yet helped and would like to, head to www.rockpointschool.org/giving/ to make your gift now or use the enclosed envelope.



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VIEWPOINTS



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.