

Quarterly Confluence

Winter Edition 2025

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Alum Spotlight - Hazel Robin-Lerner
Board Member Spotlight - Dr. Derek Pierce
Staff Spotlight - Debby Pitt-Adabie



Alum Spotlight - Hazel Robin-Lerner

Class of 2023, Two Rivers Alum Hazel, could have never imagined that she would ever step back into the halls of Two Rivers, not as a student, but as a mentee, special education intern,

and **future** special educator.

In which grade did you start at Two Rivers? How did you develop as a student and as a human being at Two Rivers? Who helped you along the way?

I began at Two Rivers in the 5th grade. At Two Rivers, I became a motivated student eager to pursue higher education, and Ms. Katona helped me greatly along the way.

How was your time on the debate team at TR? What was your most notable accomplishment?

During my short time on the debate team, we competed in 2 major tournaments and placed first in both. I enjoyed debating, and it was a fun activity.

You graduated from Two Rivers in 2023. How does it feel to return as a student intern in the SPED department?

Returning to Two Rivers as a student intern makes me feel good, and I am glad they created this department; it is truly beneficial to those who have special accommodations.

What are some of the most important things you've learned so far working with special education?

During my time as a student intern, I've learned the importance of classroom management and building personal relationships with students. Additionally, how to create effective reward systems and apply feedback. I've also learned the different ways that individual students might respond to certain emotional regulation phrases/tones, and how I should proceed with redirection.

You are now a junior at the School Without Walls. How does that feel? What are your future plans?

I hope to attend college at Tufts or one of my other top choices. I enjoy being a junior and have really found my footing at Walls. My future plans include becoming a special educator and potentially earning my master's.

Please [click here](#) to learn more about Hazel's journey towards becoming a special educator



Board Member Spotlight - Dr.Derek Pierce

Please share your journey to joining the board of Two Rivers. How did you hear about us? What attracted you?

My journey to the Two Rivers Board began through my long-standing work as an educator in Washington, D.C., where I have spent over two decades supporting students, families, and schools, particularly around equity, inclusion, and academic excellence. I first became aware of Two Rivers through colleagues in the city's education community, who consistently spoke highly of the school's strong mission and commitment to education. What attracted me most to Two Rivers was its intentional focus on character development alongside rigorous academics, as well as its commitment to reflective, values-driven decision-making. As someone who has served as a teacher, compliance and inclusion specialist, and school board member, I was drawn to Two Rivers' emphasis on inquiry, student voice, and continuous improvement not only at the classroom level but also at the governance level. I saw an organization that was not only academically strong but also deeply committed to aligning its practices with its values, and I wanted to contribute my experience to advance that work.

Can you please share your role on the board? What have you enjoyed so far in your tenure?

I currently serve as Vice Chair of the Two Rivers Board and as a member of the Academic Excellence and Finance Committees. I have most enjoyed collaborating with fellow board members and school leaders around data-informed, mission-aligned decisions that center on students and support continuous growth across the organization.

You've been on the board for 3+ years. What do you want folks outside our community to know about ours?

After more than three years on the Two Rivers Board, I want those outside our community to know that Two Rivers is a place where mission and practice are deeply aligned. This is a community that takes its responsibility to students seriously—not only in delivering strong academic outcomes, but in intentionally developing character, curiosity, and a sense of belonging. What truly distinguishes Two Rivers is its commitment to thoughtful, reflective growth. There is a genuine culture of collaboration among educators, leaders, families, and the board, all grounded in shared values and a belief that every student deserves to be known, challenged, and supported.

Two Rivers is not just a school community; it is a learning community committed to continuous improvement and long-term impact

How has your experience as an educator shaped the way you approach board governance and decision-making in support of students and schools?

My experience as an educator has deeply shaped how I approach board governance and decision-making. Having worked directly with students, families, and school-based teams for many years, I understand how board-level decisions translate into day-to-day realities in classrooms and school communities. This perspective keeps me grounded in asking not only whether a decision is strategic or compliant, but whether it is practical, equitable, and ultimately beneficial for students.

In your view, what are the biggest opportunities for Two Rivers over the next few years, and how do you hope to contribute toward them?

Over the next few years, I see a significant opportunity for Two Rivers to continue strengthening academic excellence through the intentional use of data, aligned instructional practices, and targeted supports to ensure all students make meaningful progress. As the academic landscape continues to evolve, maintaining a clear focus on equity in outcomes—not just access—will be essential to the school's continued success. I hope to contribute by leveraging my leadership experience to support rigorous academic monitoring, sound decision-making, and transparent governance, fostering sustainable, collaborative systems that advance student achievement.



Staff Spotlight - Debby Pitt-Adabie

Please share how you landed at Two Rivers and when?

I joined the Two Rivers crew in August 2024. I arrived feeling a mix of excitement and nerves; I had spent the last few years teaching high school and university students, so it had been a while since I was in a middle school classroom. However, being part of a 'crew' and having such a solid support system changed everything. When I first read TR's mission and vision, I knew I had to be here. Teaching is my passion, but being in a place where I can make a genuine difference and provide purpose through the learning process is what truly drives me.

What do you enjoy most about teaching Spanish?

My greatest joy is witnessing my students' transformation as they gain confidence in Spanish. Understanding the challenges of language acquisition, I prioritize a supportive environment built on patience and creative instruction. I consistently integrate proven strategies and new techniques from our weekly professional development to enhance my teaching. It is deeply fulfilling to see students who start with single sentences end the year writing paragraphs and communicating their interests fluently. Ultimately, I am most proud when my students overcome their hesitation and develop a genuine appreciation for cultural diversity.

How do you bring culture and real-world experiences into your lessons?

At Two Rivers, language learning is built exactly on that foundation. Every lesson, activity, and project is intentionally designed to help our students apply what they learn in their daily lives. Our curriculum is crafted with our specific community reality in mind. For example, my 8th-grade students recently completed a project in which they prepared for their first day of high school. After several drafts, they produced a 150-word report in Spanish, using the verbs *ser* and *estar* to introduce themselves and discuss their interests. This authentic scenario allowed them to process their emotions about the upcoming transition to high school. The final products were truly excellent! We take a similar approach with themes like food and music, always reinforcing our scholarly habit: 'I am compassionate and embrace diversity.'

How has your experience as a school leader shaped the way you support students and colleagues?

My leadership experience has given me a voice, but more importantly, it has taught me how to truly listen. Even with my background as a school principal in my home country, serving on the SILT has been invaluable. It has allowed me to understand our community's expectations and priorities for students and teachers firsthand. This perspective enables me to support my colleagues and students more effectively—listening with compassion and acting as a facilitator to bridge gaps and provide the support they need.

What has been the most rewarding moment of your Two Rivers career so far?

In my second year at TR, I am reaching a truly rewarding milestone. I am seeing the culture of our Spanish program become strong, robust, and essential; our students have embraced it and validated it as a core class. Last year, I worked hard to build this foundation, especially with the 7th graders. I won't deny it was a challenge, but today I am reaping the rewards. My students arrive excited to learn, they take ownership of their assignments and assessments, and they advocate for themselves when they need support. Spanish in Middle School is moving full steam ahead and growing—and we're just getting started!

Please share a fun fact about yourself.

Well... here it goes... I'm about to let you in on a little secret! Many years ago, I was a professional clown and a proud member of the Clowns of America International. It wasn't just a costume; it was a profession! So, when my students least expect it, 'Maestra Debby' pulls out her balloons and pump, and a little bit of magic appears in the classroom.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



During the **Fall Film Festival - Artspedition**, our middle school students showcased their SCI-FI films that they had been working on all semester. During the process, Students grew in their ability to take responsibility for their work. They had to collaborate, compromise, and communicate clearly with their team.



The Elementary School Fall Plays: these productions showcased months of practice, creativity, and teamwork. Our young actors and actresses stepped onto the stage with confidence and passion, and we are extremely proud of the hard work they put into bringing each story to life.



Visit [Pulse of the Shark Newsroom](#) on the Two Rivers website to read the latest school and alum stories!

- [Nurturing the Whole Child: How Social-Emotional Learning Comes to Life at Two Rivers](#)
-
- [How 6 Creative Arts Students Cured the Chaos Through Their Film: Experiment 503: A Cure Within Chaos](#)

WHAT'S NEXT?



[Celebrations of Learning](#)

Two Rivers **Celebrations of Learning** will take place the week of **February 2nd**. More than highlighting high-quality student work, it's an opportunity for our community to come together, interact, and build meaningful connections.

[Black History Month](#)

The 2026 **National Black History Month** theme, “**A Century of Black History Commemorations**,” marks 100 years of honoring Black history and its impact on identity, pride, and equity. At Two Rivers, we'll celebrate with a spirit week, a door-decorating contest, an HBCU Block Party, and an evening program **on February 26th**.

[Ms. Brenda's Day of Service](#)

We're excited to come together for **Ms. Brenda's Day of Service** on **Friday, March 13th**, a tradition that reflects her unwavering care for our community. Each crew will donate essential items to support those in need, spreading kindness in her memory.

Stay Connected for all that is coming in SY '25-'26

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

Support Two Rivers

Two Rivers Public Charter School | 1227 4th Street NE | Washington, DC 20002 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!