

SCHOOL PROFILE 2015 -2016

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FOUR RIVERS is proud to share our students with you. Please contact us if you have any questions about our school.

MISSION STATEMENT

Four Rivers Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service. The school offers a rigorous college preparatory program aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and an emphasis on character development for moral and social responsibility. Three central themes -- nature, technology and community -- guide teaching and learning at the school, engaging students and teachers in a fundamental question of our times: How do we find the healthy, sustainable interrelationship of the natural world, technology in its many forms, and the human community? The school works closely with parents and seeks both to serve and to learn from the many resources of Franklin County.

HISTORY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Four Rivers Charter Public School is a publicly funded charter school serving students in grades 7-12. Founded in 2003, the school is located on an historic farm in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Four Rivers is affiliated with Expeditionary Learning Schools, a non-profit school reform model that links active, project-based academic learning, service and character education. There are 72 students in the Middle School and 144 students in the High School. Four Rivers is located in Franklin County, one of the poorest and most rural counties in the state. Students come from six sending districts and are drawn from a population that is generally moderate-to-low-income, with many students who will be the first in their families to attend college. Four Rivers is open to all students. Prospective students must apply to the school and are enrolled by lottery.

EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

At Four Rivers, learning is active, not passive. Meaningful, engaging projects are central to our curriculum, and teachers use school-wide learning targets as an armature for project and lesson design. Students take part in learning expeditions, during which they use essential and guiding questions to conduct original research and fieldwork, often involving experts in the community. Typically, learning expeditions end with the students producing work that has a real purpose for a real audience, such as a report to a town board, a publication, or a public performance.

ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS COURSES

As a college preparatory school, Four Rivers expects high levels of academic achievement, effort, and teamwork in all its courses. The curriculum grows from the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, with an emphasis on excellence in reading, writing and math, ensuring readiness for the MCAS. The high school program at Four Rivers offers a blend of challenging coursework and increasing opportunities for independent learning.

Passing at Four Rivers requires a notably higher degree of academic achievement than is expected in a school with a passing grade of D, 60 or 1.0. A grade of Meeting (numerical equivalent of 3.5) means that a student has met the standards and has completed work of high quality. Our passing grade is Approaching Plus, equivalent to a 2.5. We don't have separate honors or AP courses, but provide opportunities for students to take on advanced, complex

study within every course that makes it possible for students to go beyond the standards for that course. Students whose work exceeds the course standards are doing Honors-level work. This is indicated with grades of Meeting Plus and above.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

The development of character and community are as important as academic achievement. We emphasize six character virtues - compassion, courage, respect, responsibility, perseverance and integrity – and students are honored publicly for actions that manifest these virtues. Service at school or in the community is required each year and students engage in grade-wide, small-group and individual service projects throughout the year. Service can take place on campus or in the community.

THEMES OF NATURE, TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNITY

Each year students engage in at least one learning expedition that focuses on our themes and the essential question posed in our mission statement: *How do we find the healthy, sustainable interrelationship of the natural world, technology in its many forms, and the human community?*

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

| | 9th Grade | 10th Grade | 11th Grade | 12th Grade |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| English | Intro to Writing and Literature | American Literature | Character in Literature/ Satire | Expository Writing/ Creative Writing |
| Mathematics | Algebra 1 | Geometry | Algebra 2 | Mathematical Modelling & Statistics/Advanced Mathematics or Applied Mathematics |
| Social Studies | US History 1 | US History 2 | Modern World History | American Civics |
| Science | Environmental Science | Biology | Chemistry | Physics |
| World Language | Spanish 2 | Spanish 3 | Spanish 4 | Spanish 5 |

SCHOOL WIDE LEARNING TARGETS

At Four Rivers, we have determined our focus targets from the state curriculum frameworks, various reports about what some call twenty first century skills and reports about the skills and qualities most important for success in college. Every course is designed with these in mind and course standards embody them. FOUR RIVERS

GRADUATES ARE:

INVESTIGATORS

- They can use questions to help shape research.
- They can actively seek out, synthesize and apply new information.
- They can investigate a topic through a variety of sources, ideas and viewpoints.

CRITICAL THINKERS

- They can extract ideas from a variety of learning experiences (reading, group work, lecture, discussion, hands-on activities) and synthesize them into a new understanding of a topic.
- They can independently understand, assess, synthesize and use information from different sources.
- They can develop a comprehensive understanding of a text, an experiment, a concept or idea by looking at its parts or components

CREATIVE THINKERS

- They can demonstrate respect and appreciation for new perspectives with an open mind and a willingness to adapt their thinking.
- They can learn and apply a variety of means of creative expression to share ideas and information.
- They can use expressive, creative and focused language in their communication that engages a specific audience.

PROBLEM-SOLVERS

- They can design and test solutions to problems.
- They can collaborate effectively with peers as necessary to solve problems and complete tasks.
- They can find multiple ways to solve a problem and can share the strengths and weaknesses of different solutions.

COMMUNICATORS

- They can organize and share knowledge and ideas on a topic through speaking or writing or another means of communication.
- They can explain or demonstrate understanding of something that they learn, using appropriate tools, materials or language.
- They can craft well-organized, articulate, compelling, and focused writing appropriate for a defined purpose and audience.

They create products with CRAFTSMANSHIP and QUALITY

- They can craft, refine and polish a piece of work until it is of meeting quality.
- They can use feedback on their work to identify areas of strength and weakness and to take action toward improving themselves (as a student, community member or individual).
- They can complete work with consistent care for organization, detail, and accuracy.

They develop ideas about SUSTAINABILITY

- They can explain the concept of sustainability.
- They can generate ideas, original designs and possibly products that address the Four Rivers Essential Question.
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They develop strong CHARACTER

- They can take responsibility for completing work on time and with good faith effort.
- They can recognize their role in a community of learners and actively try to help to move the whole group forward.
- They can know how to persevere through something that they struggle with.
- They can have the courage to try new things or to tackle work that has been difficult; they are willing to stretch beyond their comfort zone.
- They can have academic integrity: they do their equal share in group work.
- They can respect the opinions of others, even when they disagree.

CURRICULUM NOTES

All courses are college preparatory and include course standards that exceed state requirements. Core classes meet 4 hours per week and students earn 3 credits per core course each semester. Arts and technology and wellness classes meet 2-3 hours per week and students earn 1 credit per semester. Prior to the 2009-2010 school year, the school operated on a trimester schedule and students earned 2 credits per course per trimester. Options for coursework at Greenfield Community College, on-line, other accredited programs or through independent study are reviewed by faculty and the Assistant Principal and, if approved, are evaluated and given credit.

Dual Enrollment: Eligible juniors and seniors may take courses at nearby Greenfield Community College. Juniors may take one course at GCC per semester and seniors may take up to three courses per semester. There is a cost to the family to take classes at GCC and not all families are able to take advantage of these offerings.

Virtual High School (VHS) and Independent Learning Opportunities (ILO): Four River's contracts with VHS, a non-profit collaborative that links students to teachers across the country. VHS offers full-semester on line courses in Arts, Foreign Language, Literature and Writing, Math, Science and Social Studies that augment curricula and meet nationally accepted standards. Juniors and seniors may also propose Independent Learning Opportunities, including Learning Through the World of Work experiences and Independent Studies. To be approved for an ILO, students must collaborate with a faculty mentor, write course standards and present a substantial body of work in order to receive credit.

Junior Internships and Senior Expeditions: In 11th grade students have internships with professionals in an area of interest that is linked to a research project and culminates in a public presentation. In 12th grade, every student designs a Senior Expedition, a year long individual learning expedition that is focused on an essential question, involves extensive research and field work, the creation of a product and culminating in a formal presentation.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduates must earn 128 credits, including 24 in English, 24 in social studies, 24 in science, 24 in mathematics, 12 in world language, 8 in nature/music/art/technology, 6 in physical education/wellness, 4 in service, 1 in Junior year internship, 3 in Senior expedition, and 4 in Crew. Foreign language requirements, as well as a fourth year of math, may be waived for students on IEP’s or 504 plans.

GRADING POLICY

- Four Rivers uses a standards-based grading system and an unweighted GPA scale of 0 - 4.5.
- Each course has a set of standards and students earn a grade for each of those standards.
- Progress reports occur each semester. These reports detail performance in each academic standard, as well as provide a narrative in how a student is working towards meeting and exceeding standards.
- Passing at Four Rivers is noted with an Approaching Plus (numerical equivalent of 2.5) – meaning a student has done significant work toward meeting standards.
- Our scale goes to 4.5 because the quality of work that earns Mt+ and Ex is honors level.

Beginning (Bg): The student's work is rudimentary and just beginning to meet the standards of grade-level work at Four Rivers. Significant improvement is needed if the student expects to pass to the next grade.

Approaching (Ap): The student's work is approaching the standards of grade-level work at Four Rivers. It shows an improving level of quality but is not yet consistently satisfactory work and is therefore not of passing quality.

Meeting (Mt): The student's work is meeting the standards of grade-level work at Four Rivers. It shows proficiency; it is good quality and fully satisfactory.

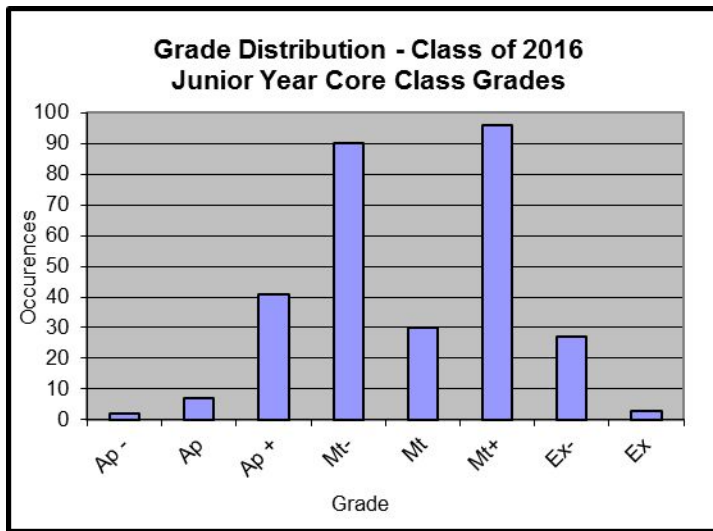
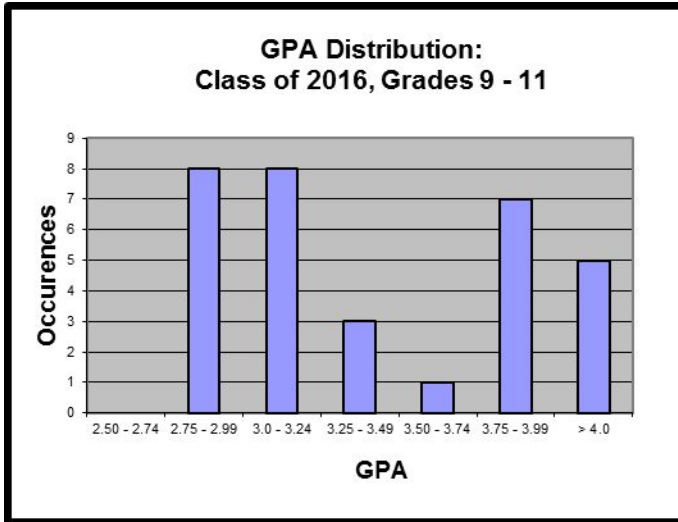
Exceeding (Ex): The student's work is exceeding the standards of grade-level work at Four Rivers. It shows effort and accomplishment well beyond what was required for meeting the standard.

Work Not Accomplished (WNA): The student's work has either not been turned in or is such poor quality that it is unacceptable.

Grade Point Average Equivalents

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----------------------|-----|---|------|-----|
| WNA | Bg | Bg+ | Ap- | Ap | Ap+ | Mt- | Mt | Mt+ | Ex- | Ex |
| 0 | 0.5 | 1 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 3.0 | 3.5 | 4 | 4.25 | 4.5 |
| | Not Passing Standards | | | | Passing | Meeting the standards | | Exceeding standards – Honors level work | | |

CLASS OF 2016 GPA & GRADE DISTRIBUTION



COLLEGE BOARD ADMISSIONS TESTING PROGRAM

| Class of 2010 | | Class of 2012 | | Class of 2014 | |
|------------------|------|------------------|------|------------------|------|
| Subject | Mean | Subject | Mean | Subject | Mean |
| Critical Reading | 556 | Critical Reading | 597 | Critical Reading | 584 |
| Math | 508 | Math | 527 | Math | 545 |
| Writing | 524 | Writing | 544 | Writing | 576 |

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES:

American International College
 American University
 Bates College
 Bennington College
 Bloomsburg University

Boston University
California College of Art
Champlain College
Clark University
College of the Atlantic
Cooper Union
Cornell University
Drexel University
Earlham College
Eckerd College
Elms College
Emmanuel College
Emerson College
Fitchburg State College
Framingham State College
Gannon University
George Washington University
Green Mountain College
Hampshire College

Hartt School/University of Hartford
Hofstra University
Humboldt State College
Ithaca College
Juilliard
Kalamazoo College
Keene State College
Marlboro College
MA College of Art and Design
MA College of Liberal Arts
Middlebury
Michigan Technical University
Mount Holyoke College
School of the Museum of Fine Arts
New England College
Northeastern University
NYU – Polytechnic Institute
Oberlin College
Pratt Institute
Reed College
Rochester Institute of Technology
Salem State College

Savannah College of Art & Design
Smith College
St. Andrews Presbyterian College
Sterling College
Suffolk University
Skidmore College
SUNY Albany, Binghamton,
Tufts University
Union College
University of Maine, Farmington

University of Massachusetts, Amherst,
Dartmouth, Lowell
University of New Hampshire
University of North Carolina
University of Rhode Island
University of Vermont
Vassar College
Westfield State College
Westminster College
Wheaton College
Whitman College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute