

**Application for Renewal of a  
Public School Charter**

**Four Rivers Charter Public School**

**248 Colrain Road  
Greenfield, MA 01301**

**Peter Garbus, Principal and Head of School**

**Tel: 413-775-4577**

**[pgarbus@fourriverscharter.org](mailto:pgarbus@fourriverscharter.org)**

**Application approved by the Board of Trustees (March 13, 2017)**

**Application submitted March 15, 2017**

March 15, 2017

Dear Commissioner Chester and Director Bagg,

As Principal and Head of School at Four Rivers Charter Public School, I'm proud to offer this application for the renewal of our charter. In the fourteen years since originally chartered, Four Rivers has become a great school. We completed the startup phase and systematized practices and procedures during our first two terms. In this third term, the school has reached a level of maturity and consistency by which we are well known and accepted in our regional community. With excellent teachers, a dynamic and effective educational program, and a strong school culture, Four Rivers has shown in its third charter term that it is here for the long haul.

The pages that follow aim to describe and provide evidence of the following accomplishments realized over the past four years:

1. Enrollment is strong. Four Rivers reached full enrollment of 220. Our waitlist has exceeded our available spots every year. Surrounding communities continue to see Four Rivers as a successful school and families want their children to attend.
2. EL Education (formerly EL Education) practices are embraced and implemented in all classrooms. Four Rivers has begun a process to become "credentialed", a process of creating a school portfolio with assertions and evidence related to the three domains of achievement defined by EL Education: mastery of skills and knowledge, charter, and high quality work. Teachers continue to work each year to implement the active, project-based practices of EL Education, a model for how public schools can help students develop 21st Century skills and strong fundamentals.
3. Academic achievement and growth continue to be strong. While not a test-driven school, we prepare students to succeed on these assessments without turning our entire program towards test prep.
4. Four Rivers faculty and administration have established structures and procedures for effective institutional communication, problem-solving, and decision-making. We know how to operate and we've done so effectively.
5. Four Rivers has completed each of its 14 years with a positive balance sheet. We have budgeted carefully and conservatively, living within our means. We have provided a quality program through challenging financial times and we have not had to rely on private funds or one-time stimulus funds.

As we look ahead to our next five years, we still have practices we want to master. How can we most effectively support and challenge all students? How can we connect their learning to an information-rich, fast-changing world? How can we support the social and emotional well-being of students struggling personally or academically? How do we better teach important skills and understanding through the arts and mathematics? In addition, Four Rivers wants to fulfill an original purpose of charter schools in Massachusetts, which is to share what we've learned with district public schools and beyond.

Sincerely,

Peter Garbus  
Principal and Head of School

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL	Page 3
CRITERION 1: Mission and Key Design Elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Objective 1: EL Education</li> <li>○ Objective 2: Preparation for Lives of Learning</li> <li>○ Objective 3: Preparation for Lives of Service</li> <li>○ Objective 4: Preparation for College</li> <li>○ Objective 5: Education for Sustainability</li> </ul>	Page 4
CRITERION 2: Access and Equity	Page
CRITERION 3: Compliance	Page
CRITERION 4: Dissemination	Page
CRITERION 5: Student Performance	Page
CRITERION 6: Program Delivery	Page
CRITERION 7: Culture and Family Engagement	Page
CRITERION 8: Capacity	Page 8
CRITERION 9: Governance	Page 9
CRITERION 10: Finance	Page
Appendix A: Accountability Plan Objectives and Measures	Page 30
Appendix B: General Statement of Assurances	Page 36
Appendix C: Documents	
Appendix D: Additional Information	
Appendix E: Application Content Checklist	
Appendix F: Additional Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SAT scores over time compared to the state</li> </ul>	

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL

<b>FOUR RIVERS CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL</b>			
<b>Type of Charter</b>	<b>Commonwealth Charter</b>	<b>Location of School</b>	<b>Greenfield, MA</b>
<b>Regional or Non-Regional?</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Chartered Districts in Region</b>	<b>6 districts in Franklin County: Mahar Regional Frontier Regional Mohawk Trail Regional Pioneer Valley Regional Gill-Montague Greenfield</b>
<b>Year Opened</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>Year(s) Renewed (if applicable)</b>	<b>2008 2013</b>
<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>Current Enrollment</b>	<b>219 for 2016-17 223 pre-enrolled for 2017-18</b>
<b>Chartered Grade Span</b>	<b>Grades 7 - 12</b>	<b>Current Grade Span</b>	<b>Grades 7 - 12</b>
<b># of Instructional Days per school year</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>Students on Waitlist</b>	<b>50 (as of Oct 8.1.16)</b>
<b>School Hours</b>	<b>Div 1: 1020 hrs Div 2: 1030 hrs Div 3: 1031 hrs</b>	<b>Age of School</b>	<b>14 years</b>
<b>Mission Statement</b>			
<p>Four Rivers Charter Public School is dedicated to educating young people for lives of learning and service. The school offers a rigorous academic 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.</p>			

## CRITERION 1: MISSION AND KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

***Four Rivers stakeholders share a common understanding of the school's mission. From introductory information sessions to Back to School Night to ongoing weekly and monthly communications to school ceremonies, students, family, staff -- and even the local community -- know what Four Rivers is all about.***

### **1. Model Teaching and Learning -- EL Education**

Four Rivers is affiliated with EL Education, a nonprofit organization devoted to providing a highly respected model of comprehensive school reform. EL Education (formerly Expeditionary Learning) emphasizes high achievement through active learning, character growth, and teamwork, as reflected in the quotes below. EL Education focuses on 5 key dimensions of life in school:

- *Curriculum:* "Our approach to curriculum makes standards come alive for students by connecting learning to real-world issues and needs. Academically rigorous learning expeditions, case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service learning inspire students to think and work as professionals do, contributing high-quality work to authentic audiences beyond the classroom."
- *Instruction:* "Our classrooms are alive with discovery, inquiry, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Teachers talk less. Students talk and think more. Teachers differentiate instruction and maintain high expectations in order to bring out the best in all students and cultivate a culture of high achievement."
- *Assessment:* "Our leaders, teachers, and students embrace the power of student-engaged assessment practices to build student ownership of learning, focus students on reaching standards-based learning targets, and drive achievement. Students continually assess and improve the quality of their work through the use of models, reflection, critique, rubrics, and work with experts."
- *Culture and Character:* "Our schools build cultures of respect, responsibility, courage, and kindness, where students and adults are committed to quality work and citizenship. School structures and traditions such as crew (advisory), community meetings, exhibitions of student work, and service learning ensure that every student is known and cared for, that student leadership is nurtured, and that contributions to the school and world are celebrated."
- *Leadership:* "Our school leaders build a cohesive school vision focusing on student achievement and continuous improvement, and they align all activities in the school to that vision."

### EVIDENCE

- Implementation review scores have been mostly 4s out of 5, a few 5s, a few 3s, and only a couple 2s over the past charter term. Out of 130, these aggregate scores are solid and showing a positive trend, indicating the steady progress we aim for.

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Implementation Review Score	97	100	99	102

- Mini-observations by the Principal throughout the year confirm that most teachers are using EL practices on a regular basis. More detailed data exists from a Classroom Observation Form.
- Feedback from the School Climate Survey indicates generally that students, parents, and teachers feel they see EL practices at work in the school:

		2013	2014	2015	2016
Most teachers post learning targets	Students	88%	95%	92%	95%
Most teachers show models	Students	78%	89%	88%	85%
Most teachers give feedback to revise work	Students	89%	94%	95%	93%
I've done some great fieldwork this year	Students	63%	85%	79%	67%
I can be myself in this school	Students	74%	86%	81%	81%
I care about what I'm learning	Students	69%	85%	78%	84%
Skills/knowledge I'm learning matter beyond the classroom	Students	65%	88%	70%	72%
Teachers make learning as active as possible	Students	69%	81%	81%	72%
Students are held to high academic standards	Students	89%	99%	89%	90%
	Parents	90%	95%	87%	90%
	Teachers	82%	82%	72%	89%
Students are expected to produce high quality work	Students	95%	97%	95%	92%
	Parents	95%	96%	96%	93%
	Teachers	88%	88%	86%	94%
Every student is known well by at least 1 adult	Students	74%	87%	81%	82%
	Parents	96%	96%	81%	91%
	Teachers	100%	100%	86%	95%
The school creates a positive social and emotional environment	Students	69%	89%	79%	84%
	Parents	97%	90%	87%	93%
	Teachers	100%	100%	95%	100%

## 2. Twenty-First Century Skills -- PREPARATION FOR LIVES OF LEARNING

The school has defined the following school-wide learning targets that prepare students for lives of learning:

### 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.

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES ARE 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.

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES ARE 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 and focused language in their communication that engages a specific audience.

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES ARE 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 analyze the effects of different solutions.

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES ARE COMMUNICATORS

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

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES WORK 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.

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES 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 -- How do we find the healthy, sustainable interrelationship of the natural world, technology in its many forms, and the human community?

#### FOUR RIVERS GRADUATES DEVELOP STRONG CHARACTER

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

#### EVIDENCE

- Teachers develop course standards and learning targets with these outcomes in mind.

- Portfolio requirements ask students to reflect on these outcomes and gather artifacts that demonstrate their achievement and growth.
- Passage presentation requirements at the end of 8th grade, 10th grade, and 12th grade ask students to show their achievement and growth in these areas.
- Information from graduates suggests that many of these outcomes were achieved. It also suggests that the outcomes matter for life after Four Rivers. These data show the % that Agree or Strongly Agree that Four Rivers prepared them well in the following outcomes:

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Number of responses	26	8	32	39
Ability to problem-solve	100%	88%	88%	95%
Ability to collaborate and work on teams	96%	100%	95%	92%
Ability to think creatively	89%	100%	91%	97%
Ability to communicate ideas	96%	100%	91%	97%
Study habits and handling responsibilities	58%	75%	85%	62%
Preparation for college	96%	50%	85%	82%

### **3. Character -- PREPARATION FOR LIVES OF SERVICE**

Our hope is that students develop an ethic of service through our school, and don't just fulfill the graduation requirement of service hours. In crew, students talk about what service means. In Division 1, the whole grades engage in service learning, with a significant Service Intensive in 8th grade. In Division 2, students do some whole grade and some whole crew service activities. And in Division 3, students complete individual service hours during their junior and senior years.

#### EVIDENCE

- Students met their requirement for service every year of this charter term.
- The school would like to see higher percentages of graduates report that they voted or volunteered in some capacity, though these numbers are still positive.

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
% met service requirement	95%	98%	96%	92%
% graduates report they voted	15%	63%	50%	39%
% graduates report they volunteered	69%	100%	50%	58%

### **4. College and Career Readiness -- PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE**

Four Rivers prepares students to go to and be successful in college. To us, being prepared for college means students can think and learn independently and that they understand essential knowledge of core disciplines to continue their learning. We believe that every one of our students can succeed in college and we work hard to convey that message. There is a whole range of colleges and other avenues of further learning ahead for our graduates, and there are exciting



possibilities for every one of them.

## EVIDENCE

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
% of graduates				
Plan to go to post-secondary study	100%	94%	94%	91%
Applied to at least 1 college	100%	75%	86%	94%
Earned Adams scholarship	61%	44%	53%	52%

### **5. Engaged citizens -- EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

“Education for sustainability is a lifelong learning process that leads to an informed and involved citizenry having the creative problem-solving skills, scientific and social literacy, and commitment to engage in responsible individual and cooperative actions. These actions will help ensure an environmentally sound and economically prosperous future (Education for Sustainability: An Agenda for Action, President’s Council on Sustainable Development, 1994).” When teachers guide students in inquiry-based, problem-solving activities using authentic case-studies and real-world problems, they help them develop and utilize skills in all disciplines. When students identify a real problem, research it, create a strategy to solve it, and report on their work, they are engaged in authentic learning and are gaining life skills that will enable them to become the systems thinkers who will pioneer the ideas and innovations that will determine the shape of our future.

## EVIDENCE

- Nearly all Four Rivers students have been engaging the school themes of Nature, Technology, and Community throughout the school’s program and grappling with issues related to sustainability.
- Most, but not all, students and parents say these themes are significant in the school.

		<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Completed projects related to sustainability		100%	95%	100%	99%
Reflected on their ideas about sustainability		NA	96%	96%	97%
Said central themes (nature, technology, community) and the essential question about sustainability play a significant role in the school.	Students	NA	89%	74%	79%
	Parents	NA	99%	92%	96%

## Amendments

<b>Date</b>	<b>Amendment Requested</b>	<b>Approved?</b>
7.26.12	Amendment to Increase enrollment cap from 212 to 220	Yes

4.11.16	Amendment to update Expulsion Policy	Yes
---------	--------------------------------------	-----

**CRITERION 2: ACCESS AND EQUITY**

Four Rivers ensures program access and equity for all students eligible to attend the school.

***The school implements a student recruitment and retention plan, including deliberate, specific strategies the school will use to ensure the ongoing provision of equal educational opportunity to students before, during, and after enrollment.***

- Applications and enrollment currently reflect the socioeconomic and racial composition of the school's sending districts.
- Recruitment and retention efforts aim to attract and keep a wide range of students; both data and impressions affirm that is true.

**RECRUITMENT DATA (in percentages)**

ENROLLMENT	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
TOTAL	193	205	208	210	216	217	217
African American	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.9	.9	.5
Asian	0.5	0.5	2.4	1.9	3.2	2.8	2.8
Hispanic	2.6	3.4	4.8	3.3	3.2	3.7	6.5
Native American	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0
White	94.3	92.2	89.4	90	86.6	88	85.3
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Isl.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	1.6	2.4	1.9	3.3	5.1	4.6	3.2
First Language Not English	0	1.0	1.9	1.4	2.3	1.4	2.3
English Language Learners	0	.5	.5	.5	.9	0	0
Low Income	23.2	23.9	22.1	23.3	23.1	19.4	25.8
Students with Disabilities	11.4	11.7	15.9	17.6	16.2	17.5	16.1
Free Lunch	12.4	14.6	18.3	17.1	16.2	24.0	31.1
Reduced Lunch	9.8	9.3	3.8	6.2	6.9	6.9	3.7
High Needs	NA	NA	NA	36.2	36.1	35	37.3
Male	53	49	49	56	51	47	46
Female	47	51	51	44	49	53	54

***The plan is designed to attract, enroll, and retain a student population that is demographically comparable to the population that is enrolled in similar grades in schools from which the charter school might enroll students. This includes analysis of attrition data.***

- Four Rivers draws a student body that reflects the demographics of our sending districts and has high retention rates for all segments of the school's population.
- The school's percentage of students of color has increased from 5.7% to 14.7% over the past seven years.
- Percentages for all subgroups except 1 are above the comparison index: first language not English, high needs students, students with disabilities, and low income students.
- One subgroup is below the comparative index: English language learners.

### CHART (Charter School Analysis and Review Tool) DATA

		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Ave gap
1st language not English	FOUR RIVERS	0.0	1.0	1.9	1.4	2.3	1.4	2.3	1.1
	COMPARATIVE INDEX	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.2	
English Lang Learners	FOUR RIVERS	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.9	0	0	-.2
	COMPARATIVE INDEX	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	.1	.2	
High Needs students	FOUR RIVERS	NA	NA	NA	36.2	36.1	35	37.3	5.2
	COMPARATIVE INDEX	NA	NA	NA	40.1	40.6	30.7	32.1	
Students w/ disabilities	FOUR RIVERS	11.4	11.7	15.9	17.6	16.2	17.5	16.1	3.2
	COMPARATIVE INDEX	12.3	12.7	12.5	12.8	12.7	12.6	12.9	
Economically Disadvantaged	FOUR RIVERS	23.2	23.9	22.1	23.3	23.1	19.4	25.8	4.7
	COMPARATIVE INDEX	30.2	30.2	30.5	31.8	32.5	19.6	21.1	

- The school's overall retention rate has improved 10 points from 2010 to 2016. And the school's stability rate has been strong.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Stability Rate in percentages	93.7	96.2	90.6	94.9	96.3

- The school's retention of **high needs students** has improved from 76.9 in 2010 to 92.6 in 2016.
- The school's retention of **low income students** has improved from 78.1 in 2010 to 93.2 in 2016.
- The school's retention of **special education students** has improved from 75.0 in 2010 to 93.3 in 2016.

### RETENTION DATA

%	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
All	82.7	85.7	87.4	88.8	93.7	93.9	92.8
Female	80.0	88.4	82.6	86.2	96.2	94.5	89.2

Male	85.1	82.9	92.8	91.3	91.5	93.3	97.4
High Needs	76.9	80.7	81.5	89.2	93.7	97.1	92.6
Low Income	78.1	76.7	81.0	89.5	97.6	95.7	93.2
Special Ed	75.0	83.3	85.2	90.6	89.7	100	93.3
Hispanic			100	66.6		83.3	87.5
Multi-race					85.7	80	77.8
White	84.6	86.8	86.9	89.9	93.6	95.5	94.3

\*\* DESE only reports subgroups with at least 10 students.

***The school eliminates barriers to program access, including but not limited to, ensuring that information is readily available to parents, students, and the general public regarding non-discriminatory enrollment practices and the availability of specialized programs and services at the school to meet the needs of all students, particularly those enrolled in special education, English language learners and those with other diverse learning needs.***

- Presenters discuss special education at every information session, and the Home Language Survey puts the school in touch with any family that might need translation.
- Many of the school's supports treat every student as having special needs; differentiation, accommodations, and active/flexible approaches to learning for all tend to serve special education, high needs, and ELL students well.

***School policies, including but not limited to, discipline policies, allow all students to access the educational program.***

- If there are any discrepancies related to discipline, a disproportionate number of boys in grades 8-10 seem to get called on their behavior. Otherwise, all students appear to have equal access to the educational program.

### CRITERION 3: COMPLIANCE

***The school is operated in accordance with the provisions of General Laws chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00 and all other applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, required trainings and deadlines, and such additional guidance as the Department may from time to time establish.***

- The Director of Finance and Operations will be attending a Charter School procurement training in April. Audit reports and End of Year Reports are filed by the deadline as well as any required federal or state forms.
- All staff are required to undergo both a CORI and federal background check before they have contact with students. Any results with records found are reviewed by the Director of Finance and Operations and the Principal/Head of School. If necessary, these are

addressed with the potential staff member. CORI and fingerprinting checks are updated every three years.

- All health and safety certifications are current (attached copies). Two of the school's three buildings were built new and are completely up to code. The farmhouse building does not contain classrooms and is fully accessible on its first floor. There are only administrative offices on the second floor, which is not fully accessible, and therefore meetings are held on the first floor. Spaces used to serve special education students or ELL students are fully equipped to meet the needs of those students.

***The school complies with all legal requirements, including but not limited to the following: the Open Meeting Law; Public Records Law; Coordinated Program Review requirements; and all health and safety codes.***

- Open Meeting Law: The school follows the Open Meeting Law by posting meeting notices on the the website and in a public place in the school as well as sending meeting notices to all sending communities.
- Public Records law: The school is complying with the new regulations by designating a Public Records Officer and posting meeting agendas and other information on the website. Requests for public records are addressed within the allowable time frame.
- Coordinated Program Review: All required documentation has been submitted. One day of records review has been completed; two days of site visit are scheduled for April.
- Health and Safety Codes: The school meets all health and safety codes and is current on all inspections.

***The school undertakes corrective action when needed and implements necessary safeguards to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.***

- The school is not in compliance with state regulations regarding teacher qualifications. Three teachers beyond the first year of employment have not taken the necessary MTEL. Those three teachers are all signed up to take the necessary tests to be highly qualified.

## CRITERION 4: DISSEMINATION

***The school provides innovative models for replication and best practices to other public schools in the district where the charter school is located.***

- The school has invited both individuals and teams of teachers from local schools to see classrooms in action and to share methodology and pedagogy.
- The school has shared practices that district schools have adopted and we have reached out to local schools to collaborate on projects.

**The school disseminates innovative models for replication and best practices to other schools, districts, and organizations beyond the district where the charter school is located. There are multiple forums and activities through which a charter school may disseminate, including but not limited to:**

- Four Rivers has done extensive work with teacher training programs to share both practices and school design.
- The school has hosted student visitors, worked with student teachers, shared student work for analysis, and participated in events held by graduate education programs.

<b>Best Practice Shared</b>	<b>Year Dissemination Occurred</b>	<b>Vehicle for Dissemination</b> (describe the method, format, or venue used to share best practices)	<b>Criteria</b> that best aligns to the shared best practice (choose from the drop down menu)	<b>With whom</b> did the school disseminate its best practices? (Partners and Locations)	<b>Result of dissemination</b> (List any resulting artifacts, materials, agendas, or results from partners. Also indicate if the school received grant funding to disseminate and if a grant report was written.)
			Choose an item.		
			Choose an item.		
			Choose an item.		

## Charter School Performance Criteria Relating to Academic Program Success

### CRITERION 5: STUDENT PERFORMANCE

*The school consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness in 10th grade, while middle school scores for math led to 2 years of the term at Level 2.*

- Four Rivers has been at Level 1 or 2 over this charter term.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 2	Level 2
	Meeting Gap Narrowing Goals	Not meeting gap narrowing goals	Not meeting gap narrowing goals Low assessment participation	Meeting Gap Narrowing Goals Low assessment participation
Percentile	75	70	71	79
CPPI all	75	69	67	83
CPPI high needs	92	79	69	92

- Tenth grade English proficiency has been 100% for 7 of the past 9 years.
- Tenth grade Math proficiency has been in the mid or upper 90s for 6 of the past 7 years.
- The Cumulative PPI for High Needs students has been higher than for All each year this charter term.
- Median Student Growth Percentiles show improved growth overall from 7th to 10th grade and strong growth in both ELA and Math for 10th grade all four years.

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
7th ELA	12	30	62	61
8th ELA	56	44	52	52
10 ELA	<b>84</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>65</b>
All ELA	56	46	61	59
7th Math	36	43	60	42
8th Math	46	21	15	33
10th Math	<b>86</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>
All Math	54	43	47	47

- Four Rivers continues to outperform sending districts in almost all categories.
- Several critical elements of the school's program may have contributed to ongoing success:

- Teachers in all subjects, especially English, Social Studies, and Science, emphasize literacy skills related to writing, close reading, and using evidence to support claims.
- EL Education approaches match well with Common Core Standards incorporated in state frameworks, especially those emphasizing higher order thinking.
- Standards-based grading and assessment for learning emphasize revision, growth mindset, and academic behaviors that encourage students to learn and improve skills.
- Two particular adjustments may have been responsible for improvements:
  - The school has given particular focus to the math program during this charter term, including a program review, purchase of new materials, and two years of working with a math coach.
  - Professional development on close reading, as well as vertical alignment related to writing skills, have strengthened literacy skills in the middle school.

**B. Assessment of and response to Accountability Level of 2**

- Level 2 performance in 2014 and 2015 stemmed from middle school scores, particularly in Math. The school conducted a program review and took several steps to strengthen the program.
- Level 2 performance in 2016 was due to low assessment participation from middle school students who opted out. Given the school’s small population, it takes only 2 students to drop participation below 95%. Communicating this information, along with sharing Commissioner Chester’s recent statement on the subject, should help the school ensure 95% participation.

**C. Additional Assessment Data**

The only other assessment Four Rivers students take are PSATs and SATs.

- Four Rivers SAT scores were higher than our sending districts for Reading and Writing in 2016:

	Four Rivers	Frontier	Gill-Montague	Greenfield	Mahar	Mohawk	Pioneer
Reading	575	530	494	532	500	530	518
Writing	521	514	472	486	486	503	492
Math	526	538	483	531	513	532	496

- The performance of Four Rivers students on the SATs has improved from the first years of the school and has outpaced the state average every year since 2009.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
# Tested	20	18	18	24	27	30	28	34	25
Reading	511	563	556	581	593	584	584	575	568
Writing	482	522	524	576	539	567	576	521	548
Math	495	534	508	538	524	541	545	526	535



## CRITERION 6: PROGRAM DELIVERY

The school is delivering an academic program that provides improved academic outcomes and educational success for all students.

### A. Curriculum

- **The school's documented curriculum is aligned to state curriculum frameworks and expectations.** Teachers have developed curriculum maps using the state frameworks; these maps can be found [HERE](#). Four Rivers--and EL Education-- has embraced the Common Core standards and expectations, which emphasize strong literacy and numeracy, as well as higher order thinking.

As a college preparatory school, Four Rivers expects high levels of academic achievement and effort in all its courses. The program offers a blend of challenging core coursework and increasing opportunities for independent learning.

	7 <sup>th</sup> Gr	8 <sup>th</sup> Gr	9 <sup>th</sup> Gr	10 <sup>th</sup> Gr	11 <sup>th</sup> Gr	12 <sup>th</sup> Gr
<b>English</b>	7th Writing and Lit	8th Writing and Lit	Intro to Writing and Literature	American Literature	Comp Lit/ Satire	Expository/ Creative Writing
<b>Math</b>	Foundations	Pre-Algebra	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra 2	Data Analysis/ Intro to Calculus or Applied Math
<b>Social Studies</b>	Ancient World History	Middle Ages and Renaissance	US History 1	US History 2	Modern World History	American Civics
<b>Science</b>	Earth Sci/ Human Bio	Physical Sci/Engineering	Environmental Science	Biology	Chemistry	Physics
<b>Language</b>	Spanish 1A	Spanish 1B	Spanish 2	Spanish 3	Spanish 4	Spanish 5

- **The curriculum is aligned vertically between grades.** Subject area teams meet periodically each year to work on vertical alignment. The English team all use the same language of 6+1 Writing and similar language for reading standards. The Math team has been working for two years now on Standards for Mathematical Practice as well as how to cultivate a growth mindset when approaching math learning. The Social Studies team uses similar standards for research, investigation, and use of evidence, as well as action/taking a stand in the high school. The Science team has worked on developmentally advancing levels of scientific inquiry through lab work. And the Spanish team (of 2) uses the same methods of Organic World Language and the same categories of standards through all levels.

[SCHOOL-WIDE LEARNING TARGETS](#) provide language that defines overarching goals all students are working towards from 7th grade through 12th grade, further guiding vertical alignment.

- **The curriculum is fully implemented in classrooms.** Mini-observations by the Principal provide the clearest evidence that the documented curriculum is fully implemented. These short periodic visits happen every few weeks or so and are recorded in Classroom Observation Notes made available on the website (lower left corner).

- ***The curriculum supports all students to master these skills and concepts.*** The school's [DISTRICT CURRICULUM ACCOMMODATION PLAN](#) describes procedures and interventions that ensure all students have access to the curriculum and support to succeed.
- ***The curriculum is regularly reviewed and revised.*** Teachers and administrators review the curriculum annually and periodically through the year, revising learning targets, updating or changing case studies, refining assessments, and updating or changing expeditions. Annual item analysis of PARCC/MCAS results help teachers make adjustments to timing and topics that might address curricular gaps.

## **B. Instruction**

### ***The school staff has a common understanding of high-quality instruction.***

- Teachers and administrators at Four Rivers know that EL Education practices related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school culture lie at the heart of the school. Common understanding of high-quality instruction is an expectation for all right from the start.
- Each teacher maintains a [PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN](#) which includes the school's Standards for Teacher Practice. These are a subset of criteria defined by EL Education and part of each year's Implementation Review. They also match closely to the state's standards. Teachers self-assess against these standards every year, they set goals related to improvement towards them, and they reflect on any feedback they receive from students, colleagues, or administrators.
- [WHAT TO EXPECT IN FOUR RIVERS' CLASSROOMS](#) provides a useful summary of the most important instructional practices the faculty uses in common.

### ***Instructional practices are aligned to this common understanding.***

- Previous site visit reports, feedback from visitors, and the Principal's mini-observations continue to provide evidence that teachers design their instruction with a common vision and common practices in mind.

### ***Instructional practices are based on high expectations for all students.***

- Course standards are the same for all students in the school's standards-based grading system, so all students are expected to meet--or at least pass--the same expectations. The standard for passing is set at an Approaching Plus, which equates to a C+ when aligned to a traditional grading scale, so the threshold for passing and meeting standards is fairly high. Scaffolding or greater complexity and independence might differ for students depending on their individual need for support or challenge, but all students learn together and strive towards the same outcomes.

### ***Instruction fosters student engagement.***

- EL Education practices of active pedagogy, learning expeditions, and assessment for learning aim specifically at student engagement. In addition, the school's focus on

character, Habits of Work and Learning, and non-cognitive factors that support student success help students learn to engage.

<i>% STUDENTS who agree or strongly agree</i>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Most teachers post learning targets	88%	95%	92%	95%
Most teachers show models	78%	89%	88%	85%
Most teachers give feedback to revise and strengthen their work	89%	94%	95%	93%
I've done some great fieldwork this year	63%	85%	79%	67%

- With each round of mini-observations, the Principal rates the level of engagement witnessed in each classroom. For several years now, most classrooms have a rating of 4, indicating almost every student seems engaged. Here are data compiled this year:

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8
16-17	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.9	3.9		

- Annual school climate survey results indicate students' increasing levels of engagement and pride in their learning.

<i>% STUDENTS who agree or strongly agree</i>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
In general, I care about what I'm learning at Four Rivers.	69	70	80	84
The skills and knowledge I'm learning matter beyond the classroom.	65	71	72	72
I feel proud of the work or products I create to demonstrate my learning.	78	77	82	87

- A new system of monthly school climate temperature checks asks students for ongoing measures of how engaged they feel in their learning. Not enough data to report yet.

***Classroom environments are conducive to learning.***

- Small class size of around 18 students and a small school mean that every student is known well, which creates a fundamental feeling of safety at the heart of the learning environment. Teachers create conditions conducive to learning through their classroom routines and classroom interventions that address student behavior. And the Dean of Students, backed by the rest of the administrative team, provides more significant interventions--both discipline and support--when student behavior or student need might interfere with others' learning.
- Annual school climate survey results indicate conditions support learning:

<i>% students who agree or strongly agree</i>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
I generally understand the educational program at 4R.	90	98	87	95
Academic expectations are clear.	88	96	86	92
There is sufficient challenge.	85	95	87	89
Teachers assign the right amount of homework.	52	52	58	53
Teachers offer sufficient support	89	95	82	90
Students are held to high academic standards.	89	99	89	90

The school creates a positive social and emotional environment.	77	89	69	84
Behavior expectations are clear.	90	86	94	89
Students are expected to produce high quality work.	94	98	95	92
Every student is known well by at least 1 adult.	78	87	74	82

- Disciplinary data from this charter term indicate a relatively low number of classroom disruptions and very few serious infractions.

### **C. Assessment and program evaluation**

***The school uses qualitative and quantitative data to improve student outcomes as well as to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the program in serving all students and modifies the program accordingly.***

- The school began assessing new students last year, using GRADE (Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation) and GMADE (Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation).
- GMADE/GRADE and MCAS data is used for Title 1 eligibility and interventions and to inform classroom differentiation. Modifications to programs and classroom practices can be driven by data collected from these assessments.
- Qualitative data comes from teacher impressions shared at Monday meetings. If there is a persistent concern the qualitative data can be used to create a Student Success Plan or other interventions to support students such as advisor or teacher support.
- Special Education diagnostic assessments administered include the following: Woodcock Johnson IV Test of Achievement, Woodcock Johnson IV Test of Cognitive Abilities, Woodcock Johnson IV Test of Oral Language, Weschler Individual Achievement Test, Key Math, Grey Silent and Oral Reading Test, Test of Written Language, Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children, Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale, Differentiated Abilities Scale, Draw-A-Person (Intellectual Screening), Weschler Memory Scale, Wide Range Memory and Learning Test, Children's Memory Scale, Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure Drawing, Child Trail-Making Test A&B, Adult Trail-Making Test A&B, Connor's Continuous Performance Task II, Test of Developmental Visual-Motor Integration, Bender Gestalt Test, Roszenweig P-F Study (Adolescent Form, Child Form), Thematic Apperception Test, Children's Apperception Test, Rorschach Ink Blot, Draw-A Person (Emotional Disturbance Screening), Child Behavior Checklist, Teacher Report Form, Youth Self-Report, Semistructured Clinical Inventory for Children and Adolescents, Reynold's Adolescent Depression Scale, Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale, Connor's Rating Scales-Long Forms (Parent, Teacher, Self-Report), Connor's Rating Scales-Short Forms (Parent, Teacher, Self-Report), Depression and Anxiety in Youth Scales (Parent, Teacher, Student Forms), Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning (Teacher, Parent, Self-report forms), Adaptive BEhavior Assessment Systems-second edition, Australian Scale for Asperger's Syndrome.

- Quantitative data from assessments are used to determine disability and Special Education services or 504 accommodations. Qualitative Data is also gathered during an evaluation period and used a part of the assessment process as well.
- Tier 1 classroom/teacher interventions, after school help sessions, in-class accommodations as outlined by IEPs and 504s, in-class special education classroom supports, Title one instruction, pullout individualized instruction for Special Education Students. Push-in and pull out support for ELL students as determined by evaluations.
- Four Rivers has the following systems to identify students in need of support:
  - We meet each week to discuss students of concern.
  - We utilize standardized test score data, weekly academic status and report cards to identify students who may need academic support.
  - When necessary a student may be referred for a comprehensive special education evaluation.
  - If we identify a student may be in need of emotional support our student support team meets to discuss and make recommendations for next steps.
  - Evidence that supports our efforts is our academic status document, documentation of standardized testing and protocol for the special education evaluation process.

#### **D. Supports for diverse learners**

***The school has systems to identify students in need of support, and provides supports, interventions, and resources to meet the academic needs for all students, including but not limited to students with disabilities and English language learners.***

- Four Rivers has strong supports for diverse learners. The academic support team includes a Director of Academic Support, the Guidance/College Counselor, a .85 FTE School Psychologist, the Dean of Students, a .2 FTE Wellness Advocate, and a .5 FTE School Nurse. In addition, four members of this team meet weekly as KBAM (Kate, Bill, Amanda, and Matt) to follow-up on students with social or emotional learning needs.
- The school's population of students on IEPs and 504s has been equal to or higher than our sending districts for each year of this charter term.
- Title I and the school's own Student Success Plans provide further supports for students who might struggle but don't qualify for an IEP or 504.
- The school has had only 4 ELL students over its 14 years, each of whom received appropriate supports while almost fully included in our regular education classrooms.
- Regular education teachers meet together weekly with administrators to check in on students with plans to monitor each student's progress and any students of concern. The team problem-solves, with follow-ups from a student's advisor, teacher, or one of the administrators.
- A learning specialist and assistant teacher per division provide learning center specialized instruction and in-class support according to students' plans.

## CRITERION 7: CULTURE AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

### Social, Emotional, and Health Needs

***The school creates a safe school environment and addresses the physical, social, emotional, and health needs of its students.***

- School climate survey results indicate

<i>% STUDENTS who agree or strongly agree</i>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
The school creates a positive social and emotional environment.	77	89	69	84
<i>% PARENTS who agree or strongly agree</i>				
The school creates a positive social and emotional environment.	90	90	87	93
The school helps students grow as people.	93	93	94	99
Every student is known well by at least 1 adult.	96	96	80	91

- Each student at Four Rivers is a member of a Crew, an advisory group comprised of 11 to 13 students and led by one of the full-time faculty members known as the student's advisor. The advisor monitors the overall academic progress of the students in his or her crew, working with other teachers and individual students to ensure the student is learning to his or her best. Through crew meetings, Community Meetings and special activities, the Crew Program works to foster growth in character and a positive school culture. The advisor is the primary contact for parents over general academic and behavior issues of students in his or her crew.
- The Wellness program aims to give students the knowledge, skills, and habits to live healthy lives. Four Rivers strives to create a safe and supportive environment, fostering healthy self management and encouraging students to analyze influences and practice decision-making. These concepts promote habits and conduct that enhance health and wellness, and they guide efforts to build healthy families, relationships, schools and communities.
- Check-ins at weekly Monday Meetings allow teams to monitor the social, emotional, and general well-being of students, with follow-up provided by advisors, teachers, or administrators.
- KBAM (Kate, Bill, Amanda, Matt) is a wellness and school intervention team that problem-solves and develops further plans for students who need social, emotional, or health support.
- Break plans accommodate students who need to take short breaks from class.
- SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment) is being added to the annual health screenings for 8th and 9th grades this year.

### Family Engagement

**Provide evidence about how the school develops strong working relationships with families/guardians in order to support students' academic progress and social and emotional well-being.**

- Working relationships with families and guardians begins with information sessions and a New Families Dinner, both of which convey core aspects of the program and start building community.
- The most important ongoing maintenance of strong working relationships happens at three meetings each year between families and advisors. An August Advisor meeting involves families updating the school with what we might need to know in order to educate their child well. Fall and spring student-led conferences involve students presenting updates on goals, progress, and challenges to parents and advisor.
- Parent and guardian attendance at these meetings is strong:

% parents attending	<b>2016</b>
August Advisor Meetings	99
Fall Student-Led Conferences	94
Spring Student-Led Conferences (Seniors optional)	91

- Communication between school and families through the almost weekly Flash emails and monthly Currents newsletters provide information about what is happening at school, both in terms of logistics but also with context and explanation of deeper academic and school culture issues.

<i>% PARENTS who agree or strongly agree</i>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
The Flash, Currents, and other mailings provide good information.	97	97	89	92
Communication with teachers is easy and adequate.	89	89	88	90
Communication with administrators is easy and adequate.	96	96	86	92
The school has built a strong sense of community.	94	94	88	93

- The annual School Climate Surveys, as well as smaller periodic opportunities for input, engage families and convey that families have a role in shaping the success of the school.
- Two additional face to face opportunities for input and discussion of school issues are a monthly Coffee with the Principal and a newly formed Local Education Council. Only a handful of parents participate in these, but notes and summaries are provided more widely, again conveying the message that family involvement matters at Four Rivers.

**Charter School Performance Criteria Relating to Organizational Viability**

**CRITERION 8: CAPACITY**

## **School Leadership:**

***The school has an effective school leadership team that implements a clearly defined mission and set of goals.***

- The Farmhouse Team--comprised of Principal, Assistant Principal, Dean of Students, Director of Academic Support, Guidance/College Counselor, Registrar, and School Secretary--and the Leadership--comprised of a representative from all 3 divisions, plus the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Dean of Students--provide leadership around all academic and school culture issues.
- Issues related to Work Life have in the past been managed by a Work Life Committee, though periodic airtime/problem-solving sessions have been sufficient over the past couple years to raise and work through related questions and concerns.
- The school's leadership shares 2 distinct characteristics which have provided both stability and commitment: nearly every administrator has been working at the school for 10 years or more and nearly every administrator has seen his or her own child attend the school (all admitted through the standard enrollment process).

***The school defines and delineates clear roles and responsibilities among leaders, staff, management and board members.***

- Current roles and responsibilities for administrators, staff, and faculty have been clear and consistent throughout this charter term.
- Board members clearly recognize their responsibility for governance, leaving management to the Head of School. The board completes a self-assessment every year that confirms this understanding; the Head of School further confirms there has not been a single incident of role conflict this term.
- The faculty job description has not needed a single change these past four years.

***The school has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication processes among all members of the school community.***

- All members of the Four Rivers community know that they are encouraged to bring up questions and concerns and to offer input that might improve the school. It is part of every student community meeting, it is requested from families, and staff have regular opportunities to do so. Most decisions in the school include input from those affected and there is an institutional ethos to fix whatever problems can be fixed in order to support effective teaching and learning.
- A decision-making grid delineates between decisions that are administrative, administrative with input, consensus, or delegated.
- A Leadership Team comprised of administrators and faculty representatives meets biweekly to discuss and manage all issues related to academics and school culture.



- The Farmhouse Team comprised of administrators meets weekly to discuss and manage ongoing logistics, communication, policy, and procedural issues.
- Airtime/problem-solving sessions and occasional convening of a Work Life Committee allow discussion and development of proposals on issues related to work life.
- Faculty teams meet weekly by division to discuss and manage team logistics, students of concern, and curriculum coordination.
- All staff use a shared Google doc--Kudos, Question, and Concerns--to communicate issues that need to be addressed or to provide positive reinforcement for actions that are appreciated. Administrators communicate follow-up actions through Farmhouse updates to the Leadership Team.
- The school employs a number of surveys to gather information on school climate, administrator job performance, and teacher or coach performance. This data feeds into performance reviews, proposals for revised or new programs, and teacher/coach adjustments.
- There is widespread understanding that the Principal maintains an open door, open email policy for anyone to share any concern they might have.

#### **Professional Climate:**

***The school staff regularly, frequently collaborate and engage in professional development to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice.***

- Ongoing, continual improvement defines staff culture at Four Rivers. Every employee sets one or two professional goals each year, with a conference every other year to present assertions and evidence of their progress.
- The school organizes annual objectives and actions for professional development through a Faculty Work Plan which cycles through four major topic areas defined by the Work Plan Plan--Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and School Culture.
- Faculty are organized into divisions (7th/8th, 9th/10th, 11th/12th) that meet twice each week to talk about students and coordinate, and subject area teams to work on disciplinary outcomes and vertical alignment.
- Faculty contracts include 10 days for collaborative planning, with 7 days before the start of school, 2 during the year, and 1 at the end.

***A system is in place for monitoring instructional practice for consistency, which includes a formal process of teacher evaluation.***

- The school has defined Standards for Teacher Practice, directly aligned to EL Education core practices, and consistent with MA Teacher Rubric Standards.
- Annual self-assessment, goal setting, digital portfolio development, and reflections on feedback reinforce those standards.

- Principal mini-observations, bi-annual Teacher-Led Conferences, and bi-annual performance reviews hold teachers accountable for progressing towards standards.

**C. Contractual Relationships:** Not applicable.

## CRITERION 9: GOVERNANCE

***Members of the board of trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school.***

- All trustees complete training on Conflict of Interest and Open Meeting Law and complete financial disclosure forms, which remind and reinforce to all members that they are public agents.
- Board minutes document the competent and appropriate governance provided by the Four Rivers trustees.

***Board members are active and engaged; know and fulfill their legal responsibilities and obligations; exercise their fiduciary duties of care and loyalty; comply with the board's bylaws; and always act in the best interests of the school.***

- Again, board minutes demonstrate that members are active and engaged.

***The board has clear and well-understood systems for decision-making and communication processes; board meetings are designed to foster open, deliberate, and thorough discussions to facilitate and ensure public accountability.***

- The board uses simplified Roberts Rules to organize meetings.
- All agendas are posted; members of the public have not attended meetings, though chairs are set up for that purpose at every meeting.
- Effective January 2017, board agendas and minutes and all other documents that go into the packet are available on the school's website.

***The board demonstrates appropriate oversight of the charter school administration, financial health, progress towards meeting academic and other school goals, and alignment with the mission and other terms of the charter, without managing the day-to-day operations of the school.***

- The Principal's Report provides monthly, quarterly, and annual data related to academic performance, attendance, behavior and discipline, dissemination, college and post-Four Rivers planning, and finances.
- Active board committees--Finance and Facilities, Trustees and Personnel Policies, Accountability, Development--review the data more closely, bringing analysis and recommendations to the full board when called for.

- The board gathers extensive data from trustees, staff, parents, and students as part of the Head of School's annual performance review. An executive summary is presented and approved by the board each year, as consideration of the Principal's 3-year contract.

***The board engages in strategic and continuous improvement planning by setting, and regularly monitoring progress relative to, priorities and goals that are aligned with the school's mission, vision, and educational philosophy.***

- Reviewing each annual report and related data allow the board to monitor Academic Success, Organizational Viability, and Faithfulness to Charter; any concerns or conclusions get raised in the annual process of reviewing Head of School and faculty objectives.
- The board discusses and approves annual objectives for the Head of School; it also reviews objectives determined by the school faculty, though it does not have authority.

## CRITERION 10: FINANCE

***The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition and operates in a financially sound and publicly accountable manner.***

**The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition and demonstrates a history of positive net assets, adequate cash flow to sustain operations and support the academic program.**

- Key financial indicators reported in the Massachusetts Charter School Financial Dashboard show that for the past five years the School has been low risk for all key indicators except Percent of Total Revenues Expended on Facilities, where the risk is moderate.
- All academic needs for staff, instructional expenses, materials, and capital purchases have been satisfied every year.
- Conservative budgeting has ensured that operating results are positive for all years the school has been in operation.
- The School has adequate cash flow to sustain operations and support the program.

**The school develops an annual budget that can be sustained by enrollment and other sources of historically stable revenue. The budget supports student performance.**

- As shown on the Financial Dashboard, the school had an average Change in Net Assets Percentage of 1.8% in the past five years.
- The School's annual budget reflects this increase and sufficient revenues are budgeted to support student performance.

- The Board of Trustees provides long-term fiscal oversight, guided by the Finance and Facilities Committee, which includes a community member and the Principal/Head of School.
- The Finance and Facilities Committee meets at least four times a year to review financial information and discuss financial and facility needs. The committee reports to the board periodically, and reviews the annual budget before presenting it to the full board.
- When necessary, modeling techniques and instruments are used to understand the long-term impacts of inflation, increase in facilities costs, projected salary and benefits increases, and projected tuition increases.

**The school uses an accurate accounting system and engages in appropriate budgetary planning, budget oversight, and budget revision.**

- The School accurately maintains the accounting records in Quickbooks.
- Budget preparation involves academic and administrative personnel identifying needs, which are verified and compiled by the Director of Finance and Operations. The Board of Trustees approves an annual budget based upon recommendation of the Finance and Facilities Committee. Budget revisions are rarely considered necessary.
- Major revenue sources are relatively stable: tuition, student fees, and grants. The budget includes prior year contribution revenue received by the Four Rivers Educational Foundation, ensuring that contributions have been received before being budgeted. Tuition revenues are budgeted conservatively by estimating student enrollment lower than anticipated.
- The Director of Finance and Operations regularly reviews financial performance and at least quarterly provides information to the Principal/Head of School and Finance and Facilities Committee.
- The School is currently working on developing a long term capital plan.

**The school has and is maintaining appropriate internal controls, documented by a written set of fiscal policies and procedures.**

- The School follows MA Charter School recommendations for appropriate internal controls.
- Invoices are received and processed by the Director of Finance and Operations, who maintains the Accounting Records. The Principal/Head of School is the only staff member with check signing authority. Invoices are reviewed by the Principal/Head of School before checks are signed. Review of individual expense accounts as well as overall results are done periodically.
- Receipts are received by the School Secretary, who credits student accounts. Receipts are summarized and given to the Director of Finance and Operations to review and deposit. Periodic review of unpaid accounts and revenue expectations are made.
- Every staff member completes a bi-weekly time sheet, which is submitted to the Director of Finance and Operations for entry into the payroll system. Pay rates are checked

against the budget at the beginning of the year and when changes are made. Employees have online access to their pay information.

- All major purchases are processed by the School Secretary or the Director of Finance and Operations. Instructional expenses are approved by the Principal/Head of School.

**The school follows generally accepted accounting principles as evidenced by independent financial audits with an unqualified audit opinion and a limited number of findings that are quickly corrected.**

- As evidenced in the Financial Dashboard, the School has had unqualified audit opinions and the audit reports are free of any audit findings.
- The School follows generally accepted accounting principles.

## PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

As the Four Rivers board and school community reviews achievements and needs after fourteen years in operation, a number of priorities emerge for the next five year charter. EL (EL Education) Education encourages schools to consider 3 dimensions of achievement: mastery of knowledge and skills, character, and high quality work. Four Rivers embraces these categories and seeks to move students further and further to achieving these important outcomes by focusing on the following areas of our program:

1. **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING:** Four Rivers aims to teach all students as whole people, with motivations, social skills, learning strategies, mindsets, and behaviors that affect nearly every aspect of how they learn and function. This focus area will continue efforts the school has made on habits of work and learning, non-cognitive factors, and character development for all students, with a particular focus on those students who struggle with school or learning individually or at particular stages of their movement through the school (i.e. grades 8-10).
2. **EL Education:** The principles, practices, and priorities of EL Education lie at the heart of the Four Rivers program. The school's success--and whatever models it has to share with district public schools--have mostly to do with structures such as learning expeditions, connecting to real world settings, creating real products for real audiences, sharp focus on literacy and numeracy, creating learning experiences that engage, active pedagogy, and more. The school will continue and increase opportunities and supports for expeditions, fieldwork, intensives, and the active learning experiences that make the school what it is.
3. **MATH:** The school has made specific improvements over the past 3 years in the Math Program, including a comprehensive program study, a review of textbooks and materials, curriculum revision, focus on standards for mathematical practice, and two years of work with a math coach on instruction and assessment. While there appears to be improvement in middle school math achievement, the school will continue to work on practices and structures of its math program.
4. **ARTS:** Engaged, active, inspired, skilled young people who are prepared for college and citizenship requires broad learning in many academic disciplines, including the Arts. It can be challenging for a small school with limited facilities to offer rich and varied opportunities for visual arts, music, and performing arts. The school will work to expand arts opportunities through clubs, intensives, expeditions, and specials.
5. **PARTNERSHIPS/COLLABORATION:** Four Rivers embraces its purpose as a charter school to contribute to important outcomes for all students, not only those attending Four Rivers. The school will increase resources and staff time to support partnerships and collaboration with district public schools, towards the purpose of defining and sharing best practices that all schools might implement and from which all students might benefit.

## Appendix A Accountability Plan Performance

### ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

#### **Performance Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements**

The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals.

Objective 1: EL Education The school implements EL Education Core Practices to further its mission and lead to important student learning. Teachers meet the school's Standards for Teacher Practice by the end of their fifth year at the school.

	Charter Term Performance				Evidence
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	
Measure: Each year, the school achieves scores of 3 or above on a 5-pt. scale for the annual EL implementation review.	NOT MET	NOT MET	NOT MET	NOT MET	While most scores have been 3-5, we've had a 2 here and there each year. The overall score improved from 99 to 102. See Appendix for all scores from the Implementation Review. Next year's Work Plan intends to bring further improvements.
Measure: Each year, the school meets designated Faculty objectives related to the Accountability Plan.	NA	MET	MET	MET	100% of faculty made progress on goals related to improving implementation of Standards for Teacher Practice.

Objective 2: Preparation for Lives of Learning Students progress towards the Schoolwide Learning Targets, which embody the school's key outcomes for student learning.

	Charter Term Performance				Evidence
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	
Measure: Each year, 90% of students demonstrate successful achievement of schoolwide learning targets by earning Approaching plus or better in all of their academic course standards. Most students who have not passed all standards in June make them up by the end of the summer.	NOT MET	NOT MET	MET	NOT MET	Each year there have been spots where less than 90% pass all standards.

Measure: Each semester, 90% of students meet all of their HOWL (Habits of Work and Learning) standards, demonstrating achievement of habits and skills required for effective effort.	NA	NOT MET	NOT MET	NOT MET	Each year, fewer than 80% of our students have met all HOWLs. Note that meeting (Mt) is a higher standard than passing (Ap+), which partly explains the difference between these 2 measures.
---	----	---------	---------	---------	--

Objective 3: Preparation for Lives of Service Students consciously develop their character and learn to be of service to their school and community.

	Charter Term Performance				Evidence
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	
Measure: Each year, 90% of students set and meet goals for academic and personal growth.	MET	NOT MET	MET	MET	95% of students set goals and met the goals they set.
Measure: Each year, 75% of responding students and parents indicate they believe the school creates a positive social and emotional environment.	MET	MET	MET	MET	Responses from students and parents have been in the 80s and 90s each of the four years.
Measure: Each year, 90% of students meet requirements for service to the school and the community.	MET	MET	MET	MET	Over 90% of students met the service requirements each of the four years.

Objective 4: Preparation for College Students successfully apply to college or another post-secondary opportunity for learning or service.

	Charter Term Performance				Evidence
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	
Measure: Each year, 90% of seniors complete a senior expedition and 90% of juniors complete a junior internship.	MET	MET	MET	MET	100% of seniors completed a senior expedition.  97% of juniors completed an internship.
Measure: Each year, all seniors complete a post-Four Rivers plan.	MET	MET	MET	MET	100% of seniors completed a post-Four Rivers plan.
Measure: Each year, 90% of seniors apply to at least one college.	MET	MET	NOT MET	MET	94% of seniors applied to at least 1 college.



Measure: Each year, 75% of responding graduates report they have begun a course of post-secondary study and that they plan to continue towards graduation.	NA	NA	MET	MET	The survey was not administered for 2 of these years. The other 2 years, we've met the measure.
--	----	----	-----	-----	---

Objective 5: Education for Sustainability Students develop ideas about the interrelationships between nature, technology, and community, and they analyze issues related to sustainability.

	Charter Term Performance				Evidence
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	
Measure: Each year, all students successfully complete an individual or group project that demonstrates understanding of relationships between the environment, the economy, and social equity -- key concepts that define sustainability.	MET	NOT MET	MET	NOT MET	99% of students in all divisions completed an individual or group project connected to the school themes and big essential question.
Measure: Each year, all students successfully complete an assignment that requires them to reflect on the school themes -- nature, technology, and community -- and the essential question in the mission statement.	NA	NOT MET	NOT MET	NOT MET	Completion of this reflection has increased over the years, but never reaching 100%.

## Appendix B General Statement of Assurances

This form must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the charter school. An application for renewal will be considered incomplete and will not be accepted if it does not include the Statement of Assurances.

As the authorized representative of the charter school, I hereby certify under the penalties of perjury that the information submitted in this application for renewal of a public school charter for \_\_\_\_\_ (name of school) located at \_\_\_\_\_ is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and further, I certify that the school:

1. Will not charge tuition, fees, or other mandatory payments for attendance at the charter school, for participation in required or elective courses, or for mandated services or programs (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(m), and 603 CMR 1.03(3)).
2. Will not charge any public school for the use or replication of any part of their curriculum subject to the prescriptions of any contract between the charter school and any third party provider (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(l)).
3. Will permit parents to enroll their children only voluntarily and not because they must send their children to this school (The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title V, Part B, Subpart 1 — Public Charter Schools Section 5210(1)(h)).
4. Will enroll any eligible student who submits a timely and complete application, unless the school receives a greater number of applications than there are spaces for students. If the number of application exceeds the spaces available, the school will hold a lottery in accordance with Massachusetts charter laws and regulations (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71 § 89(n), and 603 CMR 1.05).
5. Will be open to all students, on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or academic achievement (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(m)).
6. Will be secular in its curriculum, programs, admissions, policies, governance, employment practices, and operation in accordance with the federal and state constitutions and any other relevant provisions of federal and state law.
7. Will comply with the federal Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

8. Will adhere to all applicable provisions of federal and state law relating to students with disabilities including, but not limited to, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws.
9. Will adhere to all applicable provisions of federal and state law relating to students who are English language learners including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, and chapter 71A of the Massachusetts General Laws.
10. Will comply with all other applicable federal and state law including, but not limited to, the requirement to offer a school nutrition program (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 69, § 1 (c)).
11. Will meet the performance standards and assessment requirements set by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for all students in public schools including, but not limited to, administering the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(v), and 603 CMR 1.04(3)(k)).
12. Will submit an annual report to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on or before the required deadline (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71 § 89(jj)).
13. Will submit an accountability plan no later than the end of the first year of the school's charter, establishing specific five year performance objectives as specified in the state regulations (603 CMR 1.04 (3)(l)) and guidelines.
14. Will submit an annual independent audit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of the State Auditor no later than November 1st of every year, as required by the charter school statute (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(jj), or at such other time as designated in 603 CMR 1.08 (3)).
15. Will submit required enrollment data each March to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the required deadline (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(o), and 603 CMR 1.08(5)).
16. Will meet enrollment projections through demonstration of support for the proposed charter school in the communities from which students would be likely to enroll (603 CMR 1.04(3)(c)).
17. Will operate in compliance with generally accepted government accounting principles (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(jj)).
18. Will maintain financial records to meet the requirements of Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89 and 603 CMR 1.00.
19. Will participate in the Massachusetts State Teachers' Retirement System (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(y)).

20. Will employ individuals who either hold an appropriate license to teach in a public school in Massachusetts or who will take and pass the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) within their first year of employment and meet all applicable staff requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71 § 89(ii), and 603 CMR 1.06(4)).
21. Will provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with written assurance that a criminal background check has been performed, prior to their employment, on all employees of the school who will have unsupervised contact with children (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 38R, and 603 CMR 1.04(7)(d)).
22. Will obtain and keep current all necessary permits, licenses, and certifications related to fire, health, and safety within the building(s) and on school property (603 CMR 1.04(7)(e), 1.04(7)(f), 1.05(7)(g), and 1.05(7)(h)).
23. Will maintain uninterrupted necessary and appropriate insurance coverage (603 CMR 1.04(7)(h)).
24. Will submit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the names, home addresses, and employment and educational histories of proposed new members of the school's board of trustees for approval prior to their service (603 CMR 1.06(1)(b)).
25. Will ensure that every member of the school's board of trustees shall meet all training as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and any other requirements by other state agencies, including the requirements under the Commonwealth's open meeting law and conflict of interest law (603 CMR 1.06).
26. Will ensure that all members of the school's board of trustees file with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the State Ethics Commission, and the city or town clerk where the charter school is located completed financial disclosure forms for the preceding calendar year according to the schedule required by the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(u)). The disclosure is in addition to the requirements of said chapter 268A and a member of a board of trustees must also comply with the disclosure and other requirements of said chapter 268A.
27. Will recognize, if applicable, an employee organization designated by the authorization cards of 50 percent of its employees in the appropriate bargaining unit as the exclusive representative of all the employees in such unit for the purpose of collective bargaining (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(y)).
28. Will provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with a federal taxpayer identification number issued solely to the charter school and all required information regarding a bank account held solely in the name of the charter school (603 CMR 1.04(8)).
29. Will, in the event the board of trustees intends to procure substantially all educational services for the charter school through a contract with another person or entity, submit such contract for approval by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to

provide for any necessary revisions and approval prior to the beginning of the contract period (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(k)(5)).

30. Will notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education immediately in writing of any change in circumstances that may have a significant impact on the school's ability to fulfill its goals or missions as stated in its charter (603 CMR 1.08(11)).
31. Will submit in writing to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education a request to amend its charter if the school plans to make a change to its operations as defined in 603 CMR 1.10.

**Signature: Peter Garbus**

**Title: Principal and Head of School**

**Date: March 1, 2017**

### Renewal Application Certification Statement

<b>Name of School:</b>	FOUR RIVERS CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL
<b>Location:</b>	GREENFIELD

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for renewal of a public school charter is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; that this application has been approved by the school's Board of Trustees; and that, if awarded a renewed charter, the school shall continue to be open to all students on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.

Signature: Chair of Board of Trustees (or designated signatory authority)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Print/Type Name:	PETER GARBUS
Title (if designated):	HEAD OF SCHOOL
Date of approval by board of trustees:	FEBRUARY 13, 2017

## Appendix C Documents

Appendix C must contain documentation of compliance with all building, health, safety, and insurance requirements as well as Department Guidance. *If these are not up to date, please provide evidence that you have scheduled the necessary inspections for the fall of 2016.* Please attach the following as a part of Appendix C:

- Up-to-date Certificate of Occupancy - attached (3 buildings)
- Up-to-date Fire Inspection Certificate - attached
- Up-to-date Building Safety Inspection - attached
- Up-to-date Flammable Compounds and Liquids Certificate (if applicable) n/a
- Up-to-date Health Inspection - attached
- Up-to-date Insurance Certificate(s) - attached
- Asbestos Inspection and Management Plan (if applicable) - attached
- Lead Paint Inspection (if applicable) n/a

**Appendix D**  
**Additional Information**

Board of Trustees Turnover

<b>School Year</b>	<b>Total Membership</b>	<b>Members Joining</b>	<b>Members Departing</b>
<b>2012-13</b>	12	1	2
<b>2013-14</b>	11	2	2
<b>2014-15</b>	11	2	2
<b>2015-16</b>	11	3	1
<b>2016-17 ytd</b>	13	2	1



## Appendix E

### Application Content Checklist

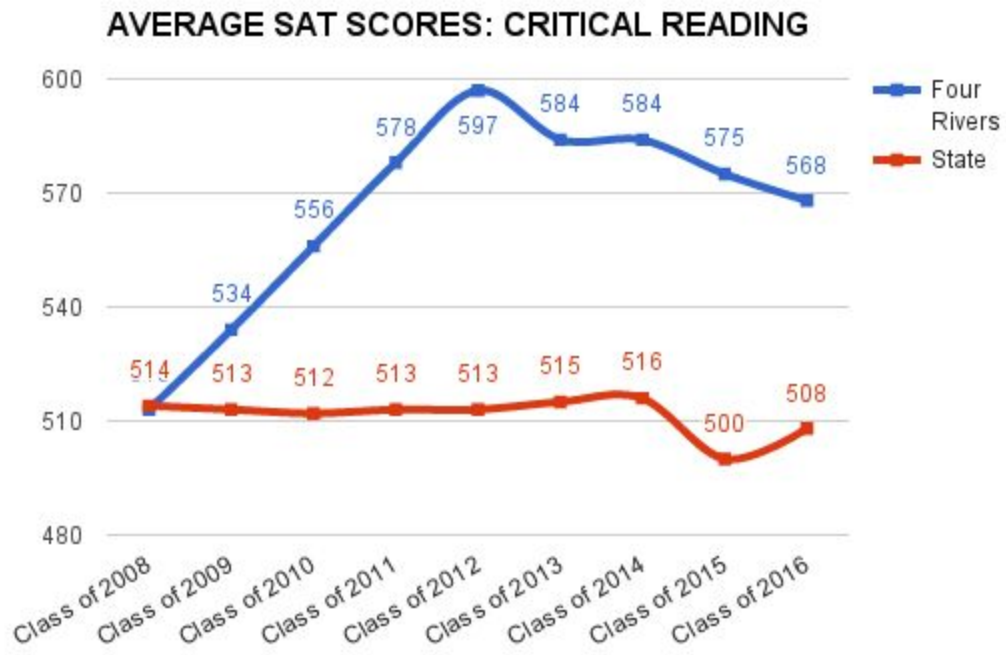
The completed Application should present the required information in the following order:

- Cover page labeled “Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter” that lists the following information:
  - School name
  - School address
  - School contact information: name, title, telephone, and email address
  - Date that the school’s board of trustees voted approval of the Application
  - Application submission date
- Cover letter (optional)
- Table of contents listing all major sections and appendices
- Introduction to school (Table)
- Performance and plans section (should not exceed 25 pages)
  - Faithfulness to Charter
    - Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements
    - Criterion 2: Access and Equity
    - Criterion 4: Dissemination
  - Academic Program Success
    - Criterion 5: Student Performance
    - Criterion 6: Program Delivery
    - Criterion 7: Culture and Family Engagement
  - Organizational Viability
    - Criterion 8: Capacity
    - Criterion 9: Governance
    - Criterion 10: Finance
  - Plans for the Next Five Years
- Appendices
  - A. Accountability Plan Performance
  - B. Statement of Assurances and Certifications

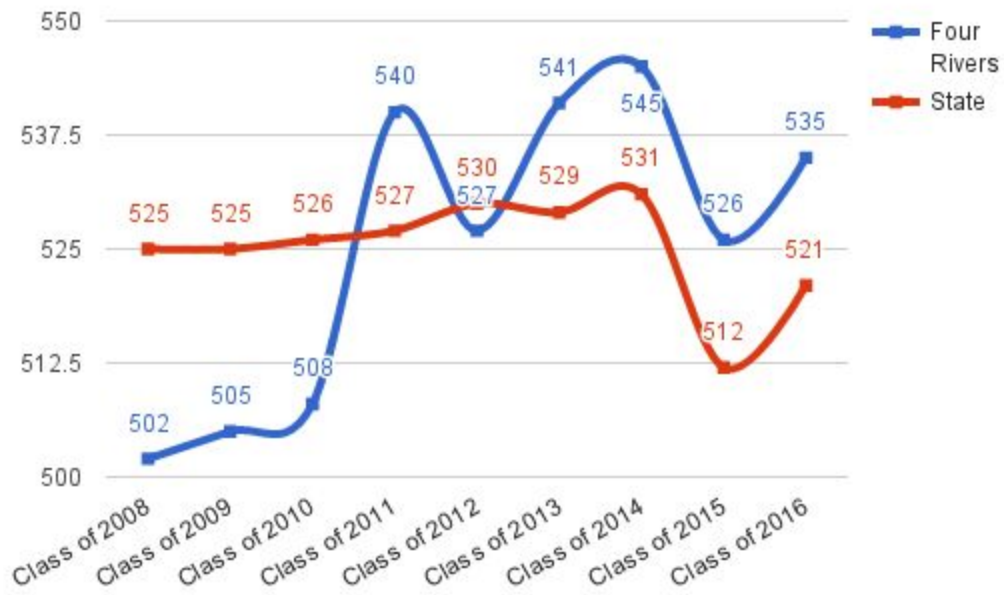
- Statement of Assurances
- Renewal Application Certification Statement (required of Commonwealth and Horace Mann charters)
- Horace Mann Renewal Application Certification Statement (required of Horace Mann charters)
- C. Documentation of compliance with all building, health, safety, and insurance requirements. *If these are not up to date, please provide evidence that you have scheduled the necessary inspections for the fall of 2016:*
  - Up-to-date Certificate of Occupancy
  - Up-to-date Fire Inspection Certificate
  - Up-to-date Building Safety Inspection
  - Up-to-date Flammable compounds and Liquids Certificate (if applicable)
  - Up-to-date Health Inspection
  - Up-to-date Insurance Certificate(s)
  - Asbestos Inspection and Management Plan (if applicable)
  - Lead Paint Inspection (if applicable)
- D. Additional Information, as required in these *Guidelines*
  - Board of trustees turnover

## Appendix F Additional Data

### SAT SCORES OVER TIME



### AVERAGE SAT SCORES: MATH



### AVERAGE SAT SCORES: WRITING

