



Great River School

Engaging intellect, shaping character, building community.



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Great River School is an urban Montessori charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota. Founded on leadership, service, and peace formation, Great River fosters independence, critical thinking, respect, responsibility to self, to others, and to the earth. We believe that learning should transcend school buildings and classrooms and that adolescents learn best while learning in creative cooperation with their guides. We strive to connect our curriculum to the outside world through travel and experience in our communities.

Key Experiences

Together with their teachers, our high school students have toured Midwestern colleges, worked on the land at Lake Country Land School in Wisconsin, kayaked the Apostle Island while building leadership skills, canoed five days beginning at Lake Itasca and in Voyageurs National Park, attended the 2009 Nobel Conference at Gustavus Adolphus, competed in First Robotics and Inventteams, and completed service work in New Orleans. Students finish the year with a two-week spring intensive, investigating and working on student-designed/teacher guided projects that have ranged from filmmaking to urban biking to volunteering to traveling in Costa Rica.

CAS Block

Great River School juniors and seniors experiment with what their roles will be in their future adult lives and develop the less academic, but equally important, part of themselves by engaging in creativity, action and service (CAS) on Wednesday afternoons. With support from their advisors, each student plans internships, volunteer experiences and other creative, active and/or service activities.

Each Wednesday students may leave school at noon to work in their chosen field. Currently students:

- Volunteer at art museums, the Wellness Center, the Humane Society, Stepping Stone Theater and other local hospitals, schools, and other organizations
- Tutor their peers in academics as well as teaching and learning new musical instruments
- Set and work toward new goals for their growth as soccer and ultimate Frisbee players as well as other active endeavors
- Develop new skills in web design, sketching, painting, speaking another language
- Prepare to write a novel for National Novel Writing Month
- Plan their volunteer/intern experiences with St. Paul City Council, an organic farm distribution organization, a filmmaking company, a local prison, the Ramsey County Defenders' Office, and many other incredible local institutions.

Great River School was authorized by the IBO in April 2008 — the first charter school in the state of Minnesota to offer the IB Diploma Programme.

School History

Great River School was founded in 2004 by Larry Schaefer (founder of Lake Country Montessori School) as a Montessori secondary school. The doors opened with seventh through tenth graders. In June 2007 nine students graduated. Since then our senior class has grown to 29 students. GRS graduates have been accepted by an array of colleges, some of which include:

Reed College	St. Thomas University	St. Catherine's	Lake Forest College
Superior College	Cornell College	Naropa University	Lewis and Clark College
Century College	Carleton College	Macalester College	St. John's College in NM
Bard College	University of Vermont	St. Olaf College	Carnegie Mellon
Boston College	Augsburg College	Coe College	Rhode Island School of Design

Academics

Great River School is a 7-12 school with 263 students. All juniors and seniors are enrolled in IB courses in history, English, mathematics and science. Each student chooses whether to take IB certificate exams in their favorite courses, to pursue the full IB diploma, or to take no IB exams. Juniors and seniors create their schedules for core classes each week by planning when they will attend their lessons and take responsibility for their education by managing the independence of a flexible schedule in a prepared environment.

Great River School offered its first IB exams in May 2009 with five students taking six exams; Our first class of Diploma candidates will graduate in May 2010, during which we expect to offer 36 exams to 11 students. IB courses offered include English A1 HL, Spanish SL, History of the Americas and 20th Century World History HL, Environmental Systems and Society SL, Math Studies, Mathematics SL and HL, Music HL and SL, and Visual Art HL and SL.

Mission and Vision

Great River School, an urban Montessori learning environment, prepares students for their unique roles as responsible and engaged citizens of the world.

Great River School is a place where college bound students are excited and inspired to learn. Great River School encourages students to ask complex questions, seek new and difficult challenges and be effective communicators across disciplines. Great River School combines academic and social experiences in a culture of civility and trust through peaceful practices. Great River School is a place where students feel safe to express and challenge themselves as they develop ethical integrity and civic competence. Every student at Great River School is a valued member of the community. The exceptional Great River staff teaches teamwork through cross-country travel, experiential learning, drama, the arts, and micro-economic ventures while helping students set individual academic goals.

Our school's mission and the IB mission of developing "inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" provide an invigorating foundation for students and faculty teaching, learning, thinking and engaging with the world.