

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School was founded in 1995 as a Massachusetts Public Charter Public School. Our mission is:

- To engage students in a school which uses experiential, hands-on activities, the arts, and interdisciplinary studies to foster critical thinking skills and a joy of learning.
- To sustain a cooperative, intimate community of students, staff, families and local community members, which guides and supports the school and its educational program.
- To cultivate children's individual voices and a shared respect for each other, our community, and the world around us.



SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School (HCCPS) was founded in 1995 as Massachusetts Public Charter School. Inspired by the pre-schools of Reggio Emilia in Italy, our educational approach is grounded in knowledge of children's development and in a commitment to teaching creative, critical thinking skills and strong basic skills.

At HCCPS, we believe that children construct their understanding of the world through direct experience with teachers serving as guides and resources. We create an engaging and joyful learning environment using an interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum. Emphasis is placed on asking children and adults to reflect on and

document the learning process. The expressive arts play a critical role in the academic and social curriculum, and create a common language that brings our community together in meaningful ways.

HCCPS welcomes and relies on family involvement. Children, families, school and community form an integrated, interdependent system which operates through an inclusive, consensus-based governance structure. Beyond academic curriculum, children learn essential life skills through participation in an intimate, whole school cooperative. Involvement in the local environment and its communities inspires learning and encourages social and civic responsibility as well as stewardship for the earth.

Parents and teachers help children to care for and respect themselves and each other. We strongly believe that cultivation of each individual voice within a community leads to inclusion of and respect for differences and multiple perspectives.

Academic skills are developed through direct teaching and through a variety of projects connected to student inspired themes and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. We also develop personal responsibility, respect for others, self-understanding, creativity, the ability to work and play cooperatively with others and an appreciation of cultural diversity and community values.

Although we are required to offer the MCAS like every other MA public school, our curriculum and learning structure are more flexible than many other schools, and we require a great degree of independence and responsibility from our students, especially the older ones. Students are expected to be able to work well independently as well as cooperatively.

HIGHLIGHTS

Student projects that exemplify our multi-modality project approach include a student composed opera about Puerto Rico, a fundraising cassette recording of original songs about evolution, an African market and a multi-media Egyptian museum.

Our mini-courses are examples of both community building and integration of the arts. K-8 students choose an extended project from a list of electives. Working with school mates of all ages, they explore topics such as astronomy, yoga, mural painting, electronic music and newspaper writing.

We close each week with an all school gathering. This is a time for students to share their learning with their peers and for everyone to sing together.



STUDENT BODY

The Hilltown School currently has 193 students ages 5-14 in ten mixed-age classrooms which include the traditional grades of K-8.

Hilltown does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or academic achievement.

THE PARENT COOPERATIVE

Hilltown is structured as a parent cooperative because we believe that a child's education is enhanced by visible parental involvement and by a strengthening of the ties between the school and home environments. For this primary reason, and because of the breadth of our curriculum in contrast to our limited operating budget, parent involvement is an essential factor in our program. Parents are expected to volunteer at the school on a regular basis and are strongly encouraged to become voting members of the governing cooperative by fulfilling a work requirement of 4 hours per month, per person. Parents participate in the classroom as well as on the major decision-making bodies in the school and on special task-groups.

The membership of the cooperative elects a Board of Trustees, including parent members, that is responsible for fiscal and legal matters concerning the school. The Community Team is an intersection between the Board of Trustees, the parents and the staff, which makes decisions regarding issues that effect home and school life together.



FACULTY AND STAFF

The staff includes ten classroom teachers, plus our teachers' assistants, special education staff, an atelierista (studio art teacher), a music and movement teacher and an administrative staff. Our teachers have a strong background in the arts and/or sciences, are comfortable with team-teaching and parent involvement and have experience working with an integrated curriculum.

LOCATION

The Hilltown School is located in Easthampton, Massachusetts, a town in the Pioneer Valley at the foot of Mt Tom. Engaging with our local community is part of our mission and we use the areas accessible to us from our new building to enhance the study of the natural world. Parents and carpools provide transportation for the children, with the awareness that a choice to attend this school implies the choice of an alternative and collaborative learning environment at some distance from many of the towns in which the students live.

ADMISSIONS

Our admissions are by lottery, in compliance with state regulations. Siblings of current students and residents of Hampshire and Franklin counties are given priority. The initial lottery is in February. Applications received after that date will be entered in subsequent lotteries throughout the spring. The waiting list is kept active for a year. To find out more, or to arrange a tour, please call or write:

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School
1 Industrial Parkway, Easthampton, MA 01027
413-529-7178 fax: 413-527-1530
e-mail: info@hilltowncharter.org
on the web: www.hilltowncharter.org



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