

Four Rivers tops in MCAS

By JOHN TILTON
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GREENFIELD -- MCAS testing results have placed the Four Rivers Charter Public School among the best in the state.

Results from the spring 2011 standardized tests set a record for the school, with the 10th-grade class boasting a 100 percent proficiency rating for both English and biology and a 98.5 percent proficiency in math.

The state average stands at 84 percent for English, 74 percent for math and 67 percent for biology.

"These results put us at the top of the state, which we are very proud of," said Principal Peter Garbus.

Results for grades 7 and 8 hover around the state average. Scores are typically lower at the middle school level than at the high school level, said Garbus.

The school average stands at 86 percent of students proficient or higher in English and 59 percent for math.

Garbus believes the trend of scores increasing through the grades is evidence of the students' accomplishments and the school's teaching methods.

"We are not a test-driven school," said Garbus, "yet these results affirm an approach to teaching and learning that builds strong fundamental skills while teaching students to use their minds well."

Garbus said this approach is "project-based learning," which requires students to call upon their own knowledge to help them solve complex open-ended problems.

"It appears that those fundamental skills are developing in strong ways even while our main focus is not the test," said Garbus. "Our main objective is to teach the 21st-century skills of communication, problem solving, creative thinking and collaboration, none of which are tested by the MCAS."

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