

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a charter public school?

Charter schools are public schools, free of charge to all students, with enrollment determined by a lottery. Charter public schools give parents more choice in public education, and give educators flexibility for innovation to meet students' needs. Charter public schools are also held to a higher standard of accountability than traditional district schools. Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 89 (b) outlines the purpose of charter public schools:

“the purposes of establishing charter schools are: (i) to stimulate the development of innovative programs within public education; (ii) to provide opportunities for innovative learning and assessments; (iii) to provide parents and students with greater options in selecting schools within and outside their school districts; (iv) to provide teachers with a vehicle for establishing schools with alternative, innovative methods of educational instruction and school structure and management; (v) to encourage performance-based educational programs; (vi) to hold teachers and school administrators accountable for students' educational outcomes; and (vii) to provide models for replication in other public schools.”

Charter public schools in Massachusetts have been created by a variety of people. Some have been opened by educators with innovative ideas; some, like Rising Tide, have been opened by community members seeking a choice in the options for public education. Each charter public school has a unique mission, approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education and the state Board of Education.

There are two types of charter public schools: Horace Mann and Commonwealth. Horace Mann Charter Schools must have approval from the local school committee and the teachers' union; Commonwealth Charter Schools operate independently from local districts under the supervision of a Board of Trustees and report directly to the state. Rising Tide Charter Public School is a Commonwealth Charter School.

For more information about the myths and realities about charter public schools, please visit the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association website:
<http://www.masscharterschools.org/myths>.

What is Rising Tide Charter Public School?

Rising Tide Charter Public School (Rising Tide) is a college preparatory public school for students in grades 5-12. There are approximately 355 students in grades 5-8 and 305 students in grades 9-12 during the 2016-2017 school year.

Rising Tide accepts and serves all grade-eligible residents of Massachusetts. Preference in the enrollment process is given first to siblings of current students and then to residents of towns in the school's designated region: *Barnstable, Bourne, Carver, Duxbury, Falmouth, Halifax,*

Kingston, Lakeville, Marion, Marshfield, Mashpee, Mattapoisett, Middleborough, Pembroke, Plymouth, Plympton, Rochester, Sandwich, Wareham.

How do I enroll my child at Rising Tide Charter Public School?

Enrollment at Rising Tide is determined through a blind lottery process. Applicants need to submit an Enrollment Application (a one-page contact information sheet) along with a proof of residency (such as a current utility bill or current lease) by the end of the enrollment period. If there are more applicants than available spaces, a lottery is held. Spaces available in each grade level are filled according to the order of the lottery drawing; once available spaces are filled, remaining student names will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which they are drawn. Please see the Enrollment Policy for more detailed information.

Who can attend Rising Tide?

As a public school, Rising Tide is open to all students who reside in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In admitting students, Rising Tide does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or in a foreign language, or academic achievement.

Can students with disabilities attend Rising Tide?

Yes. Please see the Notice of Rights for Students with Disabilities.

Can students who are English Language Learners attend Rising Tide?

Yes. Please see the Notice of Rights for English Language Learners.

How much does it cost to send my child to Rising Tide?

Rising Tide is tuition-free for students and families, like all other public schools in Massachusetts.

How are charter public schools funded?

Public education spending in Massachusetts follows the child. The funding that is allocated to charter public schools is based upon the amount of money spent per child by the sending public district. Since sending public districts no longer educate students who attend charter public schools, the charter public schools receive funding for enrolled students. The state also offers Chapter 46 reimbursement aid to sending districts in an effort to give sending districts time to adjust their budgets for the loss of enrollment. For each new charter public school seat, a sending district receives 100% of the money allocated to a charter public school for the first year, and 25% for the next five years. For more information regarding the funding for charter public schools, please visit the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/finance/tuition/Reimbursements.html>

or the MassBudget's website:

<http://children.massbudget.org/charter-school-reimbursement>

For additional information about charter public school financing, visit the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association website:

http://www.masscharterschools.org/myths?field_issues_tid=4.

How are all public schools in Massachusetts funded?

Funding for all public schools in Massachusetts is dependent upon a combination of local, state, and federal revenue. For an overview of how the funding works and how Massachusetts

compares to other states, please visit the MassBudget website:
http://www.massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=ed_census_2012.html.

Chapter 70 education aid is Massachusetts' primary program for contributing to public school funding. For more information about Chapter 70 education aid, please visit the MassBudget website: http://www.massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=Facts_10_22_10.html

What is the background of Rising Tide Charter Public School?

Rising Tide first opened in 1998 with 162 students in grades 5-7. The school expanded in September of 1999 to 216 students in grades 5-8. By September of 2004 the school had expanded to 250 students and in September of 2006 the school grew to its current middle school capacity of approximately 320 students in grades 5-8. Over the past four years, Rising Tide has expanded to include grades 9-12. Currently there are 660 students in grades 5-12. Rising Tide's founders were a group of Plymouth community members who sought to build a small, community-based middle school. They wanted to create a school focused on high academic achievement and project- and skills-based learning. The founders felt such a school would provide parents with a choice in public education.

How is the curriculum at Rising Tide different than other public schools?

The faculty at Rising Tide has continued with the original vision of the founders and developed an inquiry- and skills-based approach. Rising Tide is a small school with innovative educators, and teachers work together to identify learning needs and design learning activities. Research shows us that secondary school is the time to build skills for life-long learning, and the school has the flexibility to develop curriculum that addresses the challenges that children face.

Teachers design and implement the curriculum, guided by our Schoolwide Objectives and aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers communicate and demonstrate high expectations for all students, and encourage good study habits and a solid work ethic. Because our class sizes are small, teachers are able to meet the individual needs of all students. For more detailed information regarding the academic program at Rising Tide, please see the Program of Studies.

Charter Schools must adhere to the same state educational standards, laws, regulations, and tests as other public schools in Massachusetts. Unique to Charter Schools, Rising Tide must submit an Accountability Plan and a publicly released Annual Report to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education; these documents are not required of traditional public schools in the state.

What languages are offered at Rising Tide?

Latin is offered in the Middle School program in grades seven and eight. The classical language is valuable to gaining an understanding of language as well as to establishing a foundation for learning any Romance language. Spanish and Latin are offered in the Upper School program, through level five, providing students with an opportunity to gain foundational skills as well as reading, writing or speaking fluency in a world language. In the Upper School electives program, introductory courses for German, Ancient Greek, and French have been offered.

What arts programs are offered at Rising Tide?

The Arts are a priority of the educational program at Rising Tide, along with English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and World Languages. During their time at Rising Tide, all students participate in foundational courses in Dance, Music, Theater, and Visual Art, and

students in the Upper School have the opportunity to participate in continued offerings in each discipline. There are also a large variety of elective courses in the Arts available to students. Middle School students may participate in the Band Program. Upper School students may participate in the Chamber Orchestra.

Are teachers at Rising Tide qualified?

Teachers at Rising Tide are required to pass the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL), and Rising Tide hires teachers who are highly qualified.

Is transportation available?

Bus transportation, provided by the Town of Plymouth, is available to Plymouth residents.

Are there sports teams at Rising Tide?

We have boys' and girls' soccer, cross-country, golf, basketball, baseball and softball, and tennis teams that compete against other local schools. Rising Tide is a member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) and is a part of the Cape and Islands League. This year Rising Tide is piloting a cooperative football team with Sacred Heart School.

What extra-curricular activities are available?

Students may participate in after-school sports, after-school theater productions, or clubs. The Upper School includes the following clubs: Dance, Debate, Community Action, Gaming, Junior Classical League, Math, Model UN, Music, Newspaper, Rising for Equality, Science, Student Government, Volleyball, and Yearbook.

What is the Middle School Exposition?

The Middle School Exposition provides Middle School students a project-based learning experience. During the Exposition, students have the opportunity to explore a topic, ask questions, make findings, solve problems, and create projects in groups comprised of students from all four grade levels. Students have the opportunity to choose from topics connected to Plymouth and the Southeastern Massachusetts region that are of particular interest to them. The investigations culminate in a schoolwide exposition in which students share their findings or products with the school community.

Do students have a lot of homework?

Rising Tide faculty and staff view homework as essential to the learning process and to high academic achievement. Individual work helps students to build on the skills and knowledge they gain in the classroom, and provides opportunities for students to gain deeper understanding through practice, reflection, and synthesis; in addition, homework assists students in developing organizational skills and the ability to follow directions. Homework is an important part of student assessment and is required for high learning standards. Students should expect to have homework assignments in several courses each night; all students are expected to regularly complete assignments. Depending upon the grade level, homework should take approximately 45 minutes to two hours each night.

In the Middle School and Upper School, students are scheduled for Academic Support time each week, during which they will have an opportunity to get support from teachers to review skills and concepts. If a student is consistently taking more than the expected amount of time per night to complete homework, the student should speak to his or her Advisor.

What is the Advisory Program?

The Advisory Program is central to the structure of supportive relationships at Rising Tide. Each Rising Tide student has a faculty Advisor, who is also a teacher at the school. Each Advisory group acts as a small community within the grade level and the school, and each grade level has a team of Advisors who work together throughout the year to support the personal and academic growth of the students. Advisory Teams collaboratively develop and implement a grade-level Advisory Curriculum connected to the grade-level guiding question that addresses orientation to the school, student skills, community building, wellness, and service learning.

The Advisor is the primary advocate for each student at school. The Advisor works to help each student become responsible for his or her own learning. If a student has any concerns or challenges - academic, extra-curricular, or social - the student should communicate with his or her Advisor.

Advisors work with other teachers, School Nurses, Counselors, Deans of Students, and Principals in supporting the growth of each student. If any other staff member has concerns about a student, or has praise about a student to share, the staff member will consult with the student's Advisor. If the student has good news to share, or has any concerns, the student should communicate with his or her Advisor. If a student has any disciplinary issue, his or her Advisor will always be involved in attempting to resolve the issue.

The Advisor is the primary communication link to the school for a student and his or her family. Parents/guardians are able to communicate with other teachers and school leaders, but should first contact the student's Advisor for any questions or concerns.

Does Rising Tide provide Special Education services?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and related regulations provide eligible special education students with access to services in order to make progress in the general education program of the school. Massachusetts has incorporated the IDEA standards within its General Laws.

Rising Tide Charter Public School provides special education services in accordance with the Massachusetts regulations and federal law. We implement a program that ensures students the right to a free and appropriate education within the least restrictive environment.

What is the social climate like at Rising Tide?

The Rising Tide Charter Public School community is a close and caring group of students, Advisors, teachers, staff, and families. We value our relationships with each other and strive to develop an atmosphere of trust, respect for differences, support, and understanding. We expect that students will behave responsibly and with consideration for the feelings of other students, teachers, and staff. We are proud that Rising Tide is a safe space in which students can grow and learn.

Do Rising Tide students perform well on MCAS tests?

Yes. Students at Rising Tide perform well on MCAS tests in comparison with students across the state; however, we focus on engaging students in activities that encourage critical thinking and help them build skills for life-long learning.