

Cannon River STEM School

Independent Charter School District 4194-07



2011-2012 Annual Report on Curriculum, Instruction and Student Achievement
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INTRODUCTION

At Cannon River STEM School, adults and children alike aspire to become excellent questioners, able to investigate the world with confidence and character. We are a K-8 public charter school in Faribault, MN with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and math.

MISSION

Our mission is to foster each student's innate curiosity and joy of discovery. We prepare students to become excellent questioners, scientific thinkers, and responsible citizens, who are able to contribute to the world with confidence and character. We achieve this through student-centered, collaborative and experiential learning, with an emphasis on the environment as an integrating context.



VISION

Cannon River STEM School's vision is to become an innovative leader in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) in Minnesota while creating a community of students who love to learn.

To reach this vision, CRSS will integrate the following methods throughout the instructional program:

- Place-based Education
- Inquiry-based Education
- Project-based Education

HISTORY OF SCHOOL SITE

Cannon River STEM School occupies four buildings on the 55-acre St. James Campus of Shattuck-St. Mary's School in Faribault, Minnesota. (CRSS is not affiliated with Shattuck-St. Mary's, but leases the facility from Shattuck.)



The main classroom building, Old Main, was built between 1860 and 1880. It was originally the St. James School for Boys. Old Main currently houses grades 1-4, computer lab, media center, special education services, Title I services, Reading Corps services, and the administrative offices. Grades 5-8 occupy new classrooms attached to the Gymnasium, a complex referred to as the Middle School Village. Kindergarten (affectionately known as Kinderland) is in the same building as the cafeteria. A decommissioned chapel has been converted to the music (both vocal and instrumental) classroom, and art has its own classroom space located within the Middle School Village.

While on a historic campus, CRSS possesses the latest technology, over 180 computers (both PC & Mac), 24 iPads, 18 SMART Boards, classroom sets of digital cameras, digital thermometers and other exploratory equipment, such as GIS software.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Cannon River STEM School is governed by a seven member Board of Directors.

BOARD ROSTER

| Name | Position | Appointment/Expiration | Email |
|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Teri Menard | Chair (Parent) | July 30, 2009/January 2014 | teri@TeriMenard.com |
| Julie Finnesgard | Treasurer (Parent) | January 14, 2010/January 2013 | julief@tsbf.com |
| Caren Putrah | Secretary (Parent) | August 20, 2009/January 2014 | cputrah@yahoo.com |
| Cheryl Freund | Member (Community Member) | September 10, 2009/January 2013 | cifreund@live.com |
| Todd Rost | CSP Grant Manager (Parent) | January 19, 2012/ January 2015 | todd@adventurespecialties.com |
| Deb Scheil | Member (Teacher) | July 16, 2009/January 2013 | dscheil@cannonriverstemschool.org |
| Jen Walls | Member (Teacher) | January 19, 2012/January 2015 | jwalls@cannonriverstemschool.org |

GOVERNANCE

CRSS has 7 Board members, five of whom have completed all three required training modules. Two new members, elected in January 2012, have completed the Finance module. In addition, Board members each have a copy of the Charter School Board University Handbook, and on a quarterly basis, the Board meeting will include a discussion about some topic from the book.

Strategic planning was conducted in FY12 to guide the school. The mission and vision were refined and reaffirmed, and the following were developed:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: By the December 2012 Board meeting, CRSS will have a Board adopted curriculum framework that describes the K-8 curriculum goals from a macro to micro level.

1. Strategy: Develop a subject level document that identifies curriculum strands and their progression through the K-8 grades.
2. Strategy: Develop parent-friendly document for each grade level related to curriculum goals.
3. Strategy: Develop and update annually curriculum maps that include a scope and sequence that address State of Minnesota curriculum standards.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: By June 2013, CRSS student performance will be measured authentically as well as via State approved standardized tests.

1. Strategy: All CRSS students will have an academic portfolio that measures academic progress in metrics required by the CRSS Board.
2. Strategy: In staff Board meeting reports, at least quarterly, a reflection of portfolio data and progress will be presented.
3. Strategy: Annually the CRSS Board will examine the following data:
 - DRA or F&P levels for each grade, average annual growth per grade cohort, and an anecdotal reflection of needs and strengths by grade level. Include a parent component.
 - Math facts achievement for each grade.
 - Writing achievement as evaluated by Six Traits rubrics.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: By August 2013, CRSS will have a parent information system established that will empower parents to be involved in their child's educational career.

1. Strategy: Develop a minimum of 2-3 short videos that demonstrate an educational process parents can use at that grade.

2. Strategy (LONG TERM): Develop/compile written resources for parents on educational processes/procedures.
3. Strategy: Revamp weekly peeks, parent-teacher-student conferences, and parent communication to establish and monitor progress on individual learning plans with goals.
4. Strategy: Host 2 parent information nights for each cohort (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) each year.

The CRSS Board meets monthly at 7 p.m. on the second Thursday in the school cafeteria. The Board's Finance Committee meets at 6:30 p.m. on the evening of the regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Building Committee led by the Executive Director meets regularly with the landlord to plan for the anticipated new spaces. The Curriculum Committee meets the last Tuesday of the month from 1-2:30 p.m. in the Teacher Workroom (affectionately referred to as the "Bat Cave") of Old Main. Agendas, meeting minutes, policies, budgets and audited statements are posted on the school's website: www.cannonriverstemschool.org.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Cannon River STEM School had four administrative positions in FY12. Three of the four individuals served the entire FY11 School Year:

- Nalani McCutcheon, Executive Director
- Nicole Broden, Office Manager
- Tammy Donahue, Lunch Program Coordinator (left mid-year)
- Heidi Schmoll, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant

Three of the four are returning in FY13.

In addition, CRSS is supported by contracted consultants to provide additional administrative functions:

- Mike Pocrnich, BKDA, Financial Management & Accounting
- Sandy Strand, Innovative Special Education Services, Special Education Director

CRSS has operated without any major stumbling blocks, coordinated an expansion of both the campus facility and the student body (growing by 40 students, 35 of whom were in the second section of 1st and 2nd grade added in FY12) maintained fiscal integrity (ending FY12 with a 29% fund balance) and maintaining core staff members. Additional administrative staff (meal program coordinator and receptionist/administrative assistant) have added to streamlining of systems.

CRSS's Executive Director does not possess an administrative license, and as such must develop a professional development plan to guide her efforts. The goals from FY11 remain a priority, so are reported again in FY12 along with additional goals:

- To develop staff to provide balanced and integrated experiences in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) content and in place-based instruction.
 - The Executive Director worked with the leadership team to develop a professional development plan for staff to build their knowledge and skills in STEM and place-based instruction. The Executive Director arranged for professional development to be provided to staff from the Rice County Historical Society (RCHS) and the University of Minnesota/MN DNR. The RCHS was able to work with teachers to develop their

understanding of the social environment of Faribault, and resulted in several meaningful field experiences focused on history and social science. Carrie Jennings of the University of Minnesota and the MN DNR, led the teaching staff through an exploration of the Cannon River watershed and discovering environmental education resources in our county while learning about its geological origins.

- To develop staff to provide a school-wide implementation of the principles and practices of Responsive Classroom/Developmental Designs.
 - The Executive Director arranged for professional development funds to support all instructional staff to participate in the 1st level of either Responsive Classroom or Developmental Design workshops in the summer of 2011 or 2012 and for returning staff, extending to 3rd level in 2012. This level of training allows for implementation of Conspiracy of Caring (a school-wide intervention system) to be implemented monthly at staff meetings. In addition, a Responsive Classroom trainer was on site for 2 days during FY12 to support the implementation of that framework throughout the school.
- To support meaningful service learning opportunities for students K-8.
 - The Executive Director arranged for the establishment of a monthly service day for the campus and supported staff in implementing service projects in the community: River Bend Nature Center (removing vegetation from wetlands, pulling buckthorn, clearing ski trails, special event material production, etc.), Rice County Historical Society (canvassing Faribault to evaluate percentage of stone basements), Milestone Senior Living (visiting and assisting senior residents), Infants Remembered In Silence (IRIS) and Red Cross (organizational tasks), as well as contributing to the community thanksgiving, providing cards to hospitals and senior living facilities, and pen-pal relationships with area seniors.
 - The Executive Director applied for and received funding for a Promise Fellow to provide support to middle school students and to guide service learning activities.
- To establish a financial framework that will result in a fund balance of at least 10% in 2011 and builds by 5% each subsequent year.
 - The Executive Director worked to contain budgeted expenses and to build the school's fund balance. The ending fund balance for FY12 was 29%, maintaining the policy goal of 25%! While a \$125,000 line of credit was the anticipated need, the school never tapped the line of credit during FY12.
 - The Executive Director worked to expand staffing levels by pursuing grant opportunities that assist in staffing: MDE's Visiting Teacher from China program provided a full time Chinese teacher and Americorps provided a full time volunteer to work with middle school youth. In spring of FY12, application was also made for an Reading Corps volunteer, which was granted for FY13.
- To develop a plan for the reorganization and expansion of the Cannon River STEM School's physical infrastructure to accommodate grade and section expansion through 8th grade.
 - The Executive Director worked with Shattuck-St. Mary School staff to implement a plan for a Middle School Village and Elementary School expansion. During FY12 and the following summer, six classrooms and bathrooms were completed as an addition to Old Main, housing elementary students. The long term plan will result in a total of 13 new



Carrie Jennings helping staff explore the Cannon River Watershed.

- classroom spaces to support the expansion of the school from 135 students when opened to just over 400 students in FY19.
- The recess/playground area continued to expand with the installation of the stage in the summer of FY12, constructed by middle school students during summer session.

TEACHING/INSTRUCTIONAL FACULTY INFORMATION

Cannon River STEM School utilizes both certified and non-certified staff to provide instruction and support for our students.

CERTIFIED STAFF

Cannon River STEM School had 12 classroom teachers and 7 specialists in FY12. Eighteen certified staff served the entire FY12 School Year and fourteen have returned for FY13.

- Clara Johnson, Kindergarten Teacher, FF#463259
- Lauren Westphal, Kindergarten Teacher, FF# 454274
- Sarah Olson, 1st Grade Teacher, FF#418655
- Theresa Brownlee, 1st Grade Teacher, FF#202828
- Dan Church, 2nd Grade Teacher, FF#445651
- Deni Buendorf, 2nd Grade Teacher, FF#460445
- Ryan Johnson, 3rd Grade Teacher, FF#428272
- Sarah Mueller, 4th Grade Teacher, FF#447365
- Ben Wallerus, 5th Grade Teacher, FF#447624
- Abby Grajewski, 6th Grade Teacher, FF#459801
- Erica Friedman, 7/8 Grade STEM Teacher, FF#
- Jen Walls, 7/8th Grade Humanities Teacher, FF# 453385
- Jane Jirik, Special Education Teacher, FF#325669
- Paul Carlson-Donohoe, Special Education Teacher, FF# 340873
- Marcy Goss, Title I Teacher, FF#428150 (hired mid-year)
- Kyle Schafer, PT Music Education (.5 FTE), FF#446240
- Sarah Wallis, PT Art Education (.5 FTE), FF#445782
- Wenhao Xu, Visiting Teacher from China, Community Expert, FF#997837
- Deb Scheil, Lead Teacher/Mentor Coordinator/Teacher On Special Assignment, FF#237990

Each staff member had two formal evaluations by the Executive Director, including pre-observation and post-observation conferences. Staff were evaluated focusing on Charlotte Danielson's Domains of Teaching. In addition, teachers had observations from the Mentor Coordinator and in some instances were provided release time to observe other teachers in their subject area.

Creating a deep understanding of the MN State Academic Standard was a focus of the beginning of FY12 as staff worked collaboratively to redesign the report card. Understanding the proposed and eventually adopted social studies standards focused staff development in the middle of the year. Examining educational best practice and literacy practices was an end of the year focus.

NON-CERTIFIED STAFF

In addition to the certified staff, CRSS employed seven paraprofessionals, providing essential support in early intervention:

- Jeramy Girard, Special Education paraprofessional
- Todd Langeslad, Special Education paraprofessional
- Judy Parry, Special Education paraprofessional
- Sue Peters, Special Education paraprofessional
- Tiffany Reuvers, Special Education paraprofessional
- Karen Savig, General Paraprofessional
- Margie Westling, Title I Paraprofessional

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS, ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT ATTRITION

Cannon River STEM School conducted its admissions through a lottery process, with applications drawn and ordered into classes or waiting lists on March 8th, 2012. In FY12, CRSS had an enrollment high of 226 students, and our October 1 student count was 226.

All told between September 6th, 2011 and September 4th, 2012 32 students withdrew from CRSS to transfer to another school in the area. FY12 began with an 83% retention rate, FY13 has begun with an 90% retention rate, with an actual enrollment number of 255 students in grades K-8.

FY12 was the first year that CRSS matriculated students, with thirteen 8th graders commencing into the 9th grade at other institutions. Of those students, 3 continued at other charter schools, 1 pursued a private high school, and 9 continued on at their resident district high school.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Students at Cannon River STEM School are involved in inquiry-based, project-based, and place-based learning. We believe that learning should extend beyond the walls of a traditional classroom into the natural environment and the local community. As evidence of this blurring of lines between the formal and non-formal, our middle school students walked the neighborhoods of Faribault assessing the number of stone basements in the community to determine the amount of stone taken from a local quarry. This project involved social studies (learning about quarries and their historic role in building construction), geography (understanding plat maps), and statistics (how to extrapolate from a small pool of data to larger context.) It also involved data collection and recording all in the context of service to the Rice County Historical Society.



Rice County Historical Society volunteer
Larry Richie working with students to survey
stone basements in Faribault

The CRSS curriculum is integrated, so that all subject areas—science, math, language arts and social studies, as well as art, music, and P.E.—will be connected, and students will learn to see all knowledge as connected, rather than artificially separated into discrete disciplines. Authentic project-based, inquiry-based learning will enable students to see the connections between subjects, and the connections between what they are learning and the world around them. For example, the sixth graders noticed that when the rug was removed from their classroom that the noise level increased. Since sound is part of their science curriculum, they embarked on a project to research and propose strategies for dampening the sound in their classroom. Small groups developed proposals, including powerpoint slide shows, that they presented to the Executive Director and TOSA.

Though we are a STEM school, we realize that strong reading, writing, and comprehension skills are the gateway to other disciplines. CRSS staff will dedicate a significant portion of each day to build each child’s literacy through differentiated instruction. Literacy centers, games, guided reading, conferencing, and a variety of other strategies will be a part of the curriculum. With our commitment to student-centered, integrated learning, students will engage in a variety of literacy activities in the context of other subjects. STEM journals and notebooks were evidence of writing in the content area. This experience will provide students with meaningful opportunities to build connections and utilize their emerging and developing skills.



Students puzzle out how to start a fire in the wild without matches

Through its integrated, multidisciplinary approach, CRSS helps students develop the higher-level critical thinking skills needed to solve problems in the real world. Just as important, the curriculum promotes the school’s mission of fostering each child’s innate curiosity and joy of discovery.

Summer of FY12 saw the launch of a summer school program, piloted initially to service Title I students at the elementary level, and the Promise Fellow’s cohort group at the middle school. Offered twice a week for six weeks, it was a great first step into hosting a full summer school program.

CRSS staff have been working to continue to formalize the curriculum and develop integrated curriculum maps. During FY12, the CRSS Board formally adopted the following K-8 curricula:

- K-3 Literacy Plan
- Music and Art
- Technology

The Board is scheduled to adopt social studies in the summer of 2013.

PERFORMANCE GOALS

Cannon River STEM School's performance goals changed twice during FY12. For the purposes of this report, below are the goals that we operated under during the FY12 school year. Our goals changed in June of 2012, and those will be reported in subsequent Annual Reports.

Reading: Cannon River STEM School District #4194 will achieve a 95% reading proficiency by 2017:

- Reading proficiency will be measured by MMR data.
- Reading proficiency will be measured by MAP RIT scores.
- Reading proficiency will be measured by DRA/F&P scores as recorded in Individual Academic Portfolios (IAPs).

Math: Cannon River STEM School District #4194 will achieve a 95% math proficiency by 2017:

- Math proficiency will be measured by MMR data.
- Math proficiency will be measured by MAP RIT scores.
- Math proficiency will be measured by fact fluency and grade level specific CRSS developed tools as shown in the Individual Academic Portfolios (IAPs).

Reading: Cannon River STEM School District #4194 will achieve a .9 reading growth score by 2017, as measured by the MMR.

- NWEA MAP growth index scores will be an additional measure used to monitor student academic growth.

Math: Cannon River STEM School District #4194 will achieve a .75 math growth score by 2017, as measured by the MMR.

- NWEA MAP growth index scores will be an additional measure used to monitor student academic growth.

CRSS student performance will be measured authentically as well as via State approved standardized tests. Specifically:

- All CRSS students will have an academic portfolio that shows academic progress in the following disciplines: English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science & Engineering, and Technology.
- Quarterly, Board members will examine portfolio progress in one discipline.
- Annually, the CRSS Board will examine specific proficiency and growth data based on the IAPs.

In FY13, in each grade level, students will spend a minimum of 3 hours a week out-of-doors using the environment as an integrating context for learning. That amount will increase each year, as measured by teacher self-reporting, to the target minimum of 5 hours per week.

- 100% of students will have two or more off-site field



Student visiting the teepee in the prairie at River Bend Nature Center

experiences each year. These experiences may include but are not limited to our partner organizations: River Bend Nature Center, Rice County Historical Society, and Audubon Center for the North Woods.

- By September, 2012, CRSS staff and students will develop a strategic plan for “greening” our campus that will include elements of energy conservation, resource conservation, and water conservation.

PROGRESS TOWARD PERFORMANCE GOALS

Our performance goals are long term, but we can evaluate the first steps of our progress in this annual report. Much of the work completed in FY12 was in the systems development toward performance: completion of a K-3 literacy plan (including revising our markers and measures for literacy for each grade); establishing the elements of individual education portfolios (including specifying what will be added/assessed in each grade) and establishing each student’s initial literacy portfolio; developing a system for screening students in math and reading literacy (using the DRA and math fact fluency assessment tools); and redesigning how we administer and utilize NWEA MAP tests.

Related to student achievement, we saw significant increases in math proficiency from FY11 to FY12 across all grade levels, and smaller increases in reading proficiency for nearly all grades. We are clearly moving in the right direction, but will need to monitor to make sure that we are on a trajectory to achieve our goals by FY17.

In regards to student growth, as measured by the MMR, we have more work to do both in understanding how the growth z score is determined, as well as making sure we are supporting our students as learners to reach those goals. In the three years for which we have growth data (though those scores were all determined in 2012,) our scores have jumped up and down. Since we have only had the MMR model for less than a year, we couldn’t work on a measure we didn’t yet have. Understanding the MMR scores, and determining how to support improvement on the growth portion of the MMR, will be a focus in FY13.

Regarding our environmental goal, we achieved our objective with 100% of all CRSS students having two or more off-site field experiences. In FY12 students visited River Bend Nature, the Rice County Historical Society, downtown Faribault, rural farms in Faribault, the Carleton College Observatory and Arboretum, City of Rochester STEM Fair, Young Scientist’s Roundtable, Faribault Area Chamber of Commerce, a local Maple Syrup production facility, the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, MN Band Directors Association Band Festival, Regional Science Fair competition, Wacouta Park, the University of Minnesota Confucious Institute, Feed My Starving Children, American Red Cross, IRIS, Milestone Senior Living, and Base Camp at Fort Snelling. Additionally, all classes regularly spent instructional time out on our 55 acre campus. In FY13 we will be charting this time in order to quantify it.



Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade students all spent 1-3 days exploring history with the Rice County Historical Society

Results from our Parent Satisfaction Survey (conducted in May 2012) indicate the following:

- 94% of parents felt welcomed by staff when they come to CRSS
- 89% of parents report their child(ren) spend time outside for instruction at school
- 88% of parents report that their child(ren) are encouraged to ask questions about the world around them and investigate the answers at school.
- 88% of parents report that their child(ren) has learning opportunities that combine more than one subject on a regular basis.
- 87% of parents report that their child(ren) have been supported as readers.
- 82% of parents report being pleased with our academic program.
- 82% of parents report their child feels safe at school.

TEST DATA (MCA-II & MCA-III)

MCA tests were administered to grades 3-8. The math portion (MCA-III) was the same test as administered in FY11, but a different administration procedure (students could take it up to three times). CRSS chose only to have students take it twice, and then only if they were on the cusp of improving their proficiency or growth score. It is unclear how comparable the scores are from FY11 to FY12 as a result.

As a new school with very small sample sizes, it will take several years to feel like MCA test data can reliably reflect what the curriculum is achieving. In the three years that we have collected MCA data, it reflects the fluctuations that can be seen when we attempt to compare one small group to another small group. Below are the MCA-II and MCA-III proficiency and average scores for FY12.

| | CANNON RIVER STEM SCHOOL | | | | | ALL MINNESOTA SCHOOLS | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Reading | | Math | | Sample Size | Reading | | Math | | Sample Size |
| | Proficient | Average Score | Proficient | Average Score | | Proficient | Average Score | Proficient | Average Score | |
| 3rd Grade | 90.0% | 375.5 | 95.0% | 365.9 | 20 | 80.4% | 364.7 | 75.5% | 357.6 | 60981/61356 |
| 4th Grade | 77.3% | 464.1 | 81.8% | 464.2 | 22 | 75.3% | 459.4 | 73.3% | 457.6 | 59641/59939 |
| 5th Grade | 86.3% | 562.9 | 50.0% | 551.4 | 22 | 79.3% | 560 | 62.3% | 551.8 | 59045/60031 |
| 6th Grade | 61.9% | 653.4 | 42.9% | 647 | 21 | 76.2% | 658.2 | 59.8% | 651.2 | 58472/59087 |
| 7th Grade | 57.9% | 755.1 | 52.9% | 751 | 19/17 | 71.4% | 756.5 | 58.6% | 750.7 | 59162/59197 |
| 8th Grade | 53.9% | 851.3 | 46.2% | 849.1 | 13 | 72.4% | 856.5 | 62.0% | 852 | 58388/58546 |

CRSS also uses data from the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments. In previous years students were tested in Fall and Spring. Beginning in FY12, students were assessed via MAP test in Fall and Winter, with the spring left open for MCA testing. As a result, we will be assessing Fall to Fall scores from FY13 forward. Since MAP testing will not be completed until after the deadline for this Annual Report, CRSS is unable to report NWEA data.

CRSS also administered the EXPLORE test to our 8th graders. We will be using this data to help inform our instruction as well.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES



All of our classes spend significant time using the environment as a context for learning. We have a 55 acre campus and even our kindergarteners have explored the woods and ravines. As our teachers have become more comfortable with our campus, they are using it in more intentional and integrated curriculum connections. Regular hikes by the 3rd grade incorporate tree and bird identification and observation with physical education goals to develop lifelong outdoor activities, for instance.

Every class engaged in engineering projects, based on our emphasis on engineering. All grades looked at the engineering process in these projects. Lego systems, Kid Wind turbines, earthen dams constructed during a literature unit are examples of integrated projects.

As a faculty, we work on an inquiry philosophy and instilling the scientific process in all that we do.

Our school specifically looks for projects that link into our community and our place. Our kindergarten students toured the Rice County Historical Society's "main street" exhibit then walked main street Faribault to compare historical main street to current...and then they imagined main street of the future. Our students helped clear vegetation off of the seasonal ponds of River Bend Nature Center during the winter to promote the future health of the pond. Our middle school students helped collect data for the Rice County Historical Society for their research regarding the amount of stone removed from a local quarry. For the third year now, our students in grades 3-8 spent a morning packing meals at Feed My Starving Children. Our 3rd-6th science fair participation sent 3 projects to Mankato. Our students will have a lasting and positive impact on our campus and our community!

Our school also focuses on parent involvement. Throughout the year parent/family volunteers regularly organized the library, helped in classrooms, went on field trips, took on special projects with the playground, and constructing furniture.

We have a conference before the start of school where parents and their child(ren) can meet individually with the teacher to talk about hopes and dreams for the year in addition to the 2 more traditional conferences during the year. We hosted parent information nights throughout the year to help build parents knowledge on topics that are important to them. For these parent information nights, children are either asked to not be present, or staff provide options for child care on campus so that parents can learn without interruption. In all things, we aim to be a community of learners.

We work to build connections between students and to the campus as a whole. From the beginning of school where staff open car doors and greet students each and every day, to advisory groupings at Middle school where adults are matched with 7-8 students that they meet

with weekly. Classes at CRSS are matched up with buddy classrooms (Kinder with 7th and 8th grade, 1st with 4th grade, 2nd with 5th grade, 3rd with 6th grade) that spend time together each week learning and sharing with each other. In addition, monthly the whole school gathers together for service learning and sharing.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

PERSPECTIVE CHANGE

As a charter school with a unique and innovative curriculum, it takes time for parents and children to get used to a new way of doing “school”. Over the past three years we have worked hard to communicate better about the reasons for our curriculum design: we share research that is the basis for policies, each year we have expanded the ways we communicate with parents (parent information nights, orientation events, monthly newsletters, etc.) CRSS is not about “how it’s always been done in other schools” and that perspective change takes time and intentional effort. One of the strategies we employed in the summer of FY12 was to have staff members work together to draft emails to families regarding summer reading once each month.



Students learn yoga during Fall Festival

TIME/SMALL STAFF

As with many charter schools, Cannon River STEM School has a bare-bones staff that work extra hours to provide students with an excellent education. Instructional staff receive far less preparation time than they would in a traditional setting, and are often called on to perform many additional functions during the course of the week. While we seek to formalize our curriculum, we also want to challenge our instructional staff to stay current on best practices and continue to move toward a stronger inquiry, project and place-based program. This focus on continuous improvement takes significant time and energy from our highly dedicated and skilled staff.

MISSION MOTIVATED CLIENTS

As local districts see increasing class sizes and levy challenges, it provides incentive for parents to seek other educational options. As a charter school with limited class sizes and waiting lists, we would like to have students enrolled that are drawn to our school because of an alignment with our place-based, project-based, inquiry-based mission, and not because they are getting away from the other public school options.

CAMPUS DESIGN

The St. James Campus was not built to accommodate a public school campus that requires parking, traffic flow, and students moving between buildings. As a result, we work hard to make sure that we have safety in mind as we identify corridors to transport children, parents picking up

and dropping off children, and parking for staff and visitors. As the student population grows, there will be even greater pressures on traffic design to keep kids safe, prevent cars from backing up onto 14th Street, and move parents through campus in a timely fashion. As student population increases, we also have more pressure to provide adequate recess areas, cafeteria space, gym availability and computer labs.

FINANCES

The preliminary FY12 audited ending fund balance is expected to be \$552,044 (29% fund balance). The projected FY13 ending fund balance is \$609,456 (28% fund balance).

CRSS in FY12 obtained a \$125,000 line of credit that was never tapped. We ended the year with no debt. Our fund balance policy calls for a 25% fund balance at the end of FY14, and we reached that goal in FY11, and are projected to maintain a fund balance in excess of the policy for FY13.

AUTHORIZER

Audubon Center for the Northwoods (ACNW) is CRSS’s sponsor, having a three year contract with CRSS covering FY10-FY12. CRSS’s contract with ACNW was renewed in June 2012 and covers FY13-FY17. ACNW is a private, non-profit residential environmental learning center, a wildlife rehabilitation facility, and a conference & retreat center nestled on the shores of Grindstone Lake near Sandstone, MN in east-central Minnesota. ACNW offer’s a great variety of environmental learning experiences for people of all ages, with programming in natural history and science, team-building, adventure programming, and outdoor/environmental education.

Our liaison is Pat Bernhoft. Pat can be contacted at: 612-987-1376.

SCHOOL’S STATE REPORT CARD

DEMOGRAPHICS

Cannon River STEM School had 226 students at the October 1 Child Count in FY12 in grades K-8.

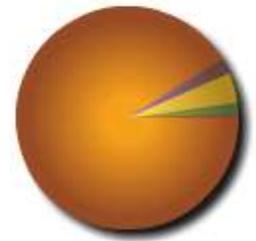
30.5% of CRSS students qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 9.3% of students received special education services.

Student to Licensed Teacher ratio was 14:1.

2012 Student Population

CANNON RIVER STEM SCHOOL

| Ethnicity | Count | Percent |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Am Indian | 1 | 0.4% |
| Asian | 4 | 1.8% |
| Hispanic | 10 | 4.4% |
| Black | 5 | 2.2% |
| White | 206 | 91.2% |
| Total | 226 | 100% |



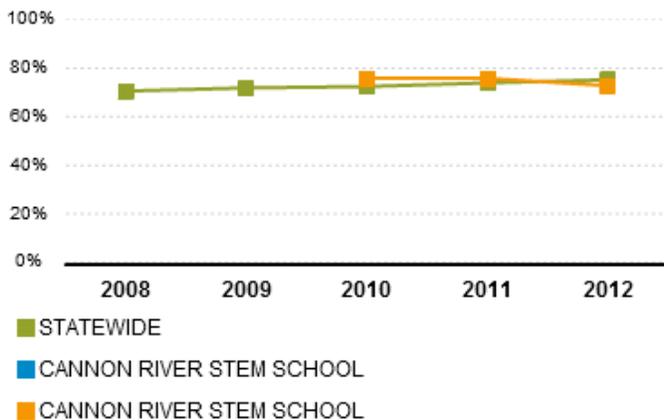
AYP AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

CANNON RIVER STEM SCHOOL met AYP for all students, however fell below target short in one of eight subgroup (white, not of Hispanic origin.) Therefore CRSS did not make AYP for 2012.

Trend All Accountability Tests Proficiency

Reading All Grades

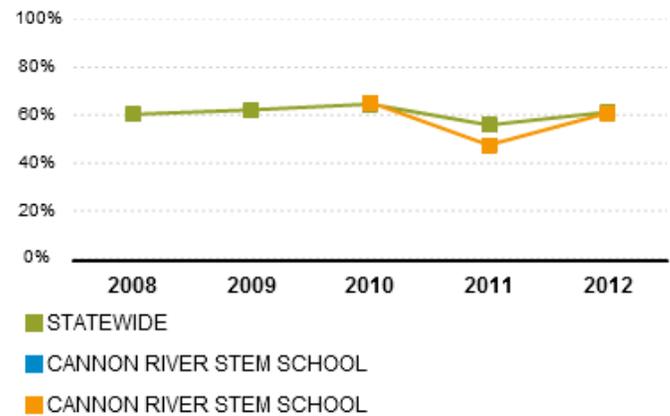
All Students



Trend All Accountability Tests Proficiency

Math All Grades

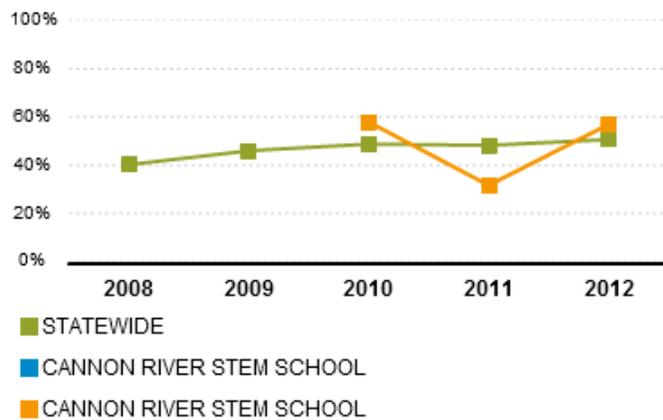
All Students



Trend All Accountability Tests Proficiency

Science All Grades

All Students



NON-PROFIT STATUS

Cannon River STEM School is a 501c3.

INDICATORS OF FUTURE SUCCESS

Specific indicators of future success:

- Expansion of Partnerships: CRSS embraces the opportunities to work with and learn with others. In FY12 we partnered with Shattuck-St. Mary's Middle School to provide inter-mural soccer and basketball for 6-8th grade students and provided opportunities for Shattuck

students to have service learning opportunities on the CRSS campus as part of their Day of Service. We hosted several educational institutions looking to develop STEM programs. CRSS also worked with MDE and the Confucious Institute to provide a teaching opportunity for a visiting teacher from China, as well as the National Alliance for Youth to provide an Americorps Volunteer an assignment at the CRSS Middle School. We also strengthened our partnership with River Bend Nature Center and the Rice County Historical Society, having students visit both for programming and for service experiences. Cannon River STEM School also partnered with Cornell University in a grant to the National Science Foundation, which was funded and will result in professional development opportunities for both CRSS and Cornell University's Education program in FY13 and FY14. CRSS was also the lucky beneficiary of being "adopted" by several retired librarians connected with the College of St. Kate's library science program. They have spent many days on our campus, organizing our library.

- Commitment to the social curriculum. Every full time instructional staff member was sent to Responsive Classroom training and we are working to incorporate RC throughout the school. In FY12, 100% of the teaching staff had received at least one full module of Responsive Classroom/Developmental Design instruction, with five having completed all modules (RC I, II and III or DD I and II.)
- Development of a culture of learning. CRSS has worked to build a learning community that extends beyond the students to the parents, visitors and staff. We all learn together, enjoy exploring the natural world together!

