

A Public High School Committed to Sustainability Education and Social Justice

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OUR MISSION

To prepare our diverse student body to meet the challenges of citizenship, work, and life-long learning in the 21st century. Our interdisciplinary academic program features hands-on, community-based learning that supports students in solving real-world problems. New Roots Charter School students earn a Regents diploma and demonstrate readiness for higher education by earning college credit and creating a graduation portfolio that demonstrates that they have met or exceeded all New York State Learning Standards. Our school community is creating a model of secondary education that integrates best practices in sustainability education with those proven to support educational equity.

New Roots Charter School empowers young people as citizens and entrepreneurs to create just, democratic communities and thriving green economies that restore the natural world that sustains us.

We put the best available tools—and the power of informed optimism—in the hands of tomorrow's leaders.

STUDENT BODY

Students from 15 regional school districts in the greater Ithaca area are enrolled at New Roots in the 2023-24 school year, in some cases commuting up to an hour each way daily. Our school is ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse, bringing together students from rural, urban, and suburban communities.

COLLEGE PREPARATORY PROGRAM

Students experience a challenging and engaging academic life at New Roots designed to prepare all graduates to complete higher education.

- Students encounter a single, rigorous curriculum at New Roots. There is no variation in course type or level.
- Drawing on the rich legacy of human knowledge offered by traditional academic disciplines, New Roots poses essential questions and themes that help students connect what they learn in the classroom and in the world around them.
- Students complete a four-year sequence of sustainability-oriented math and science courses.
- All students take concurrent enrollment courses for college credit during their junior and senior years.
- Faculty mentors track students' progress through the use of online digital portfolios and other online tools.

FACULTY

100% of New Roots Charter School faculty and staff are not only qualified and experienced in their subject areas but have also demonstrated their commitment to sustainability and social justice in their classrooms.



CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW ROOTS ALUMNI

Alumni from our graduating classes have started the next chapter in their lives in places such as Ithaca College, Syracuse University, Wells College, Bennington College, Evergreen College and Babson College. They are traveling the world to places like Italy, Bhutan, and Mexico for language and biodiversity studies, sailing the North American Coast studying marine biology, and pursuing many diverse passions. The life path taken by students who choose New Roots are many, but one common characteristic of our students is that their college and career readiness extends far beyond academic content and skills.



WHY SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION?

Since we opened our doors in 2009, the impact of New Roots Charter School on our students has been described as “transformative.” Our innovative model supports high academic achievement for all students and develops their capacity to be leaders in this time of unprecedented global transition.

New Roots was created in response to the United Nation’s Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. World leaders have called for a complete rethinking of education in response to the social, economic, and ecological challenges we face. We have heeded the call by drawing on best practices in education developed during the reform movements of the 20th century. Our model was recognized by the State University of New York’s Charter Schools Institute as one with potential to change the face of secondary education. In New York State, the new priorities of the Education Department will ensure that charter schools take their place alongside existing school districts as valued options in public education.

The work of civically engaged young people accelerates our community’s preparedness for technological, environmental and economic changes. We are proud of the many ways our students are contributing to the success and stability of this place they call home.

SCHOOL HISTORY

New Roots Charter School grew out of the greater Ithaca region’s constellation of initiatives designed to support the community’s transition towards a sustainable economy, social equity, and environmental preservation. Many of the school’s founding trustees are higher education professionals. The majority of New Roots trustees are associated with Ithaca College, a leader in the field of sustainability in higher education. Consistent with its mission, the school chose to locate in the Clinton House in downtown Ithaca, repurposing an historic building and revitalizing the city center.

The school opened with 9th and 10th grade cohorts in September 2009 and has added a new 9th grade class yearly growing to a four- year high school program in 2011-2012.

COMMUNITY

The Ithaca region has a rich history of educational enterprise, with Cornell University and Ithaca College acting as catalysts for the community’s economic and social development. The City of Ithaca is home to over 30,000 people, nestled within the Finger Lakes region of Central New York. Waterfalls, gorges, and lakes shape the landscape, and economic drivers span agriculture to higher education.

The school is within just a few short blocks of the Tompkins County Public Library, major bus stops, parks, and the rich variety of community events offered downtown. With easy access to two world-class educational institutions, New Roots students truly have the world at their fingertips.

We are fortunate to be located at the epicenter of a community of business owners and not-for-profit organizations who believe “it takes a village to raise a child.”



PATTERN OF THE SCHOOL DAY AND YEAR

Modeled on the college experience, New Roots courses are taught in one semester, in a block schedule providing ample time for project-based learning and place-based field work. Courses integrate themed, interdisciplinary anchor projects that create connections between subjects, and reinforce the skills and knowledge needed for success on required Regents exams. New Roots features time and support built into the school day for students to complete work to standards, allowing more time for balanced life pursuits outside of the school day.

Spring and Fall Intensive course weeks provide students with choices among week-long, in-depth integrated courses of interest, choosing from a diverse range of topics from native habitat restoration to filmmaking, backpacking the Finger Lakes Trail to Ithaca Parade float design, permaculture gardening to African drumming and dance!

ALL NEW ROOTS SENIORS DEMONSTRATE COLLEGE READINESS BY PASSING COLLEGE COURSES.

OUR GRADUATES BRING TRANSFERABLE COLLEGE CREDITS WITH THEM WHEREVER THEY GO NEXT.

SENIOR YEAR PROGRAM

The Senior Year Program at New Roots Charter School is an intellectually and academically rigorous year of transition to college and service to our community.

OUR SENIORS...

- Exceed NYS graduation requirements
- Graduate with a NYS Regents or Advanced Regents Diploma
- Take advanced math and science courses
- Earn college credit for core classes
- Complete a senior capstone project and graduation portfolio
- Explore careers through internships and work-based learning



EVALUATING THE QUALITY OF STUDENT LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

Our grading system is designed to communicate a student's level of mastery of course content and skills. Learning outcomes are defined in a set of course learning targets. Designed to meet New York State and Common Core Learning Standards, learning targets capture the essence of the goals of the New Roots curriculum and provide a guide for students in their learning.

Faculty's response to student work includes whether they are "meeting" or "exceeding" the learning target. They may also be "beginning" or "approaching" the target, or there may be "insufficient evidence" for a teacher to make a determination of learning. Students must substantially meet all learning targets to earn course credit towards graduation.

For ease of communication with parents and colleges, these levels of mastery have been calibrated to the 100-point scale commonly used by high schools. The threshold for "meeting" a learning target is work that would receive a grade of at least 80 points, a common standard of college and career readiness. (Please see below):

Exceeding— (GPA equivalent 90-100)
Meeting— (GPA equivalent 80-89)
Approaching— (GPA equivalent 70-79)

Beginning— (GPA equivalent 60-69)
No Evidence— (GPA equivalent 0.0)

FEATURED PROGRAM ELEMENTS

To rise to the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century, tomorrow's citizens will need to create new life choices, new technologies, and new ways of thinking. Sustainability education is not just another word for environmental education. It emphasizes instead the interrelatedness of our social, economic, environmental, and personal health. Our aim at New Roots is to help young people develop the adaptability and skills they will need as adults to better balance the needs of their families, their communities, and the natural world.

FARM TO SCHOOL

As we enter an era of declining fossil fuel resources, New Roots students' experiences at local farms and in our school kitchen demonstrate the value of bioregional food self-sufficiency to our community's health. Our Farm to School program is integrated into our curriculum and helps students apply their academic learning to field experiences. As part of a growing Farm to School movement across the country, our school lunch program brings healthy food into the cafeteria, while helping our young people see the impact that food systems have on our community.



SERVICE LEARNING AND INTERNSHIPS

A vital dimension of New Roots Charter School is our connection to the community. All students engage in service learning and place-based projects that encourage exploration of the "community as classroom." Internships allow our students to explore career possibilities, gain insight into community needs, and make lasting contributions to the organizations in which they are placed.



NEW ROOTS COLLEGE READINESS PROGRAM

Students are introduced to aspects of their future college career starting in their 9th grade year. Small group visits from college admissions officers and faculty-facilitated college searches help them start their college planning.

Other aspects of our college readiness program include:

- Integrating college readiness skill building into core academic courses
- College tours and college fair visits
- Admissions officer panels



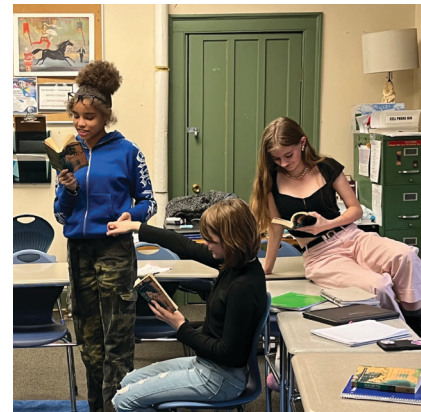
COURSES FOR COLLEGE CREDIT

New Roots offers concurrent enrollment college-level classes for credit through Tompkins Cortland Community College's College Now program. Students earn three or more credits per course. Courses offered include selections such as:

Tompkins Cortland Community College:

MATH 120 - College Algebra
MATH 122 - Technical Mathematics
MATH 135 - Precalculus Mathematics
MATH 200 - Statistics
BUAD 109 - Personal Money Management
CHEM 101 - Principles of Chemistry I
PHSC 104 - General Physics I
ENVS 101 - Introduction to Environmental Science
HSTY 210 - American History to 1877
HSTY 202 - American History Since 1877

POSC 103 - American National Government
ECON 101 - Introduction to Economics
ENGL 101 - Academic Writing II
SPAN 202 - Intermediate Spanish II
ENVS 110 - Food Systems I
BUAD 103 - Entrepreneurship I
ENVS 149 - Roots of Success I
ENVS 249 - Roots of Success II
ACAD 100 - Introduction to the College Experience



Discover what a personalized education can look like for you

