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www.pacemschool.org
CEEB Code: 460008

Pacem:
/pah' chem/ n.
Latin for "peace"

At Pacem School, we work together to solve problems collaboratively and create a community that honors everyone; we seek peace within ourselves; and we wrestle with the hard questions about how people could live together more peacefully in the world.

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Enrollment:
Total Enrollment: 34
Total Full-time Enrollment: 24
Class of 2023: 3
Average Class Size: 7.25

Faculty:
Total Faculty: 9
Faculty with Advanced
degrees: 63%
Student-Faculty Ratio: 3.8:1

2022-23 School Profile

Our School

Pacem School is an intellectually inspiring, joyful learning community in Montpelier, VT. We are a state-approved, full-time independent 6th - 12th grade school, and, in addition, we offer coursework and extra-curricular support to homeschoolers aged 10 - 18. Our students are curious and passionate. We give them time and freedom to pursue their interests and help them develop the skills to delve deeply.

We support students to be the primary architects of their own education so they may pursue their individual intellectual and creative passions. Small academically challenging classes and a flexible stimulating curriculum foster intense engagement. Pacem's inspired and exceptionally talented teachers celebrate curiosity and creativity and challenge all students to reach their fullest potential. Our students grow into caring, responsible, and confident life-long learners who make a difference in their communities and have the skills and awareness needed to create a more cooperative, just, and sustainable world.

Our Students

Our students travel to Pacem from communities throughout north-central Vermont. About one third of our students come from the city of Montpelier, one third come from the surrounding towns, and one third come from substantially farther (in some cases more than 50 miles away.) Our students represent a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Currently, 33% receive financial aid directly from the school. About half of our students are full-time, and about half are homeschooled and come to us to take a few academic classes to supplement their schooling.

Our Curriculum

Throughout our curriculum, students take charge of their own learning. We teach students to set high standards for themselves, to develop goals that will further their intellectual and social growth, to strengthen their ability to overcome challenges, and to hold themselves accountable. The goal of a Pacem education is for students to graduate with the skills to independently design and complete high-quality, meaningful projects.

In some classes students are guided by their own goals and progress at their own pace, with a teacher helping them to acquire the skills needed to learn independently. In other classes, teachers are stronger facilitators, creating opportunities for student investigation, discussion, and hands-on experimentation. Class content is meant to be substantial and connected — to the student's interests, to other classes when possible, and to the real world beyond the classroom.

We offer rigorous classes in every academic discipline. Pacem does not organize our students by grade level. Instead, students take classes appropriate for their level of knowledge, skill, and development. All classes are multi-age and multi-level. Our high school classes are typically offered on a two-year rotation with students taking courses in either order. Students can also choose to take an independent study if a class is not available in a subject of particular interest.

Our Faculty

Our faculty, who have degrees from elite universities including Harvard, Yale, Swarthmore, Barnard, and Smith, are experts in their subjects. Among our ranks are professional scientists, authors, and artists. Many faculty have professional publications including major award-winning novels and national magazine pieces. Our faculty are passionate educators who have taught in public and elite private schools around the country and have chosen to be members of Pacem's unique educational community.

Schedule and Credits

Our classes take place in a block schedule to allow students the time and space to grapple deeply with the subject matter. A one credit class meets for 190 minutes a week for the whole year. Some classes are ½ credit single semester classes. Although there are 7 possible class blocks, we recommend that students only take 6 classes at a time.

Project Class

“Student Directed Project” class is the cornerstone of a Pacem education. Students may take this class every semester they are not completing a capstone project. In the class, students choose a project of personal interest and set their own project goals. Most projects at the high school level include research as well as an essay, research paper, or other well-developed piece of nonfiction writing. Past projects have included directing a play, hand sewing period costumes, creating animated and live-action short films, building a computer, and researching the relationship between art and psychology.

Honors Classes

A high school student whose passion goes well beyond the usual requirements in a particular subject may take a course with "honors option". Students electing to take a course for honors will participate in the class as usual but will complete additional work or complete the assigned work with additional depth and breadth. Students work with the teacher to determine an appropriate honors project. In a given semester, we recommend that students take no more than two of their courses as honors courses.

Capstone Project

Students who wish to receive a Pacem diploma must complete a Capstone Project in their junior or senior year. This is an in-depth and challenging project experience in which students pursue a focus of personal interest with guidance from a mentor. Students set their own goals and take considerable responsibility for their own progress.

The Capstone Project is expected to include at least one major substantial, well-developed, in-depth piece of work, which can take a variety of forms. Students complete other components in addition to the major work. In total, the Capstone Project must include nonfiction writing, research, learning from an expert in the field (if possible), at least two means of communication in addition to writing, a teaching component, and presentations to the Pacem community or other appropriate audience, including at least one oral presentation. For example, one student studied urban sustainability and sustainable design, and his project included the following: designing and building a bioshelter and using it to raise food, writing a research paper related to his structure, taking a course on permaculture, teaching workshops at Pacem about computer assisted design, and presentations to the Pacem community.

After Graduation...

College Matriculations:

Barnard College
Champlain College
College of the Atlantic
Goddard College
Hampshire College
Plymouth State University
Sarah Lawrence College
Sterling College
University of Vermont

Current activity of classes of 2012 – 2022

Enrolled in a PhD program: 7%
Working having finished a 4-year degree program: 22%
Enrolled in a 4-year degree program: 36%
Enrolled in an apprenticeship or non-degree program: 14%
Working: 14%
Taking a gap year 7%

Assessment

At Pacem School, our teachers have extensive experience using traditional and alternative assessment techniques, and we believe in providing assessment that's relevant to students. We provide formative feedback on all major assignments, narrative assessments at the end of each semester, and opportunities to present work to individual classes and the full community. We do not assess our students by assigning grades. We believe that our students learn better when they are pursuing subjects for the sake of learning and not for the sake of a grade. Students learn to redraft work until it meets our high expectations. If a student does not meet the minimum expectations of a class they do not get credit and the class is not included on their transcript. In lieu of grades, twice a year, students receive a narrative assessment in every class. Every year, students assemble a portfolio of their best work to help them reflect on their academic growth.

Graduation requirements:

Graduation requirements are developed individually for each student by the student, parent(s), and advisor. Our intent is that students discover what they are most interested in and that they gain the skills to pursue their passions and make a difference in the world. Students will work with their advisor to determine the best set of courses to set them on this path and to prepare them for future studies and work.

Students who have been with us for four years should have a total of at least 24 credits accumulated in classes and independent studies. Students are expected to take, at a minimum, 4 credits of writing and literature, 3 credits of culture, history, and peace studies, 3 credits of mathematics, 3 credits of science, 2 credits of the same foreign language, and 1 credit of art. All students must complete a “Capstone Project”