



**ANNUAL REPORT | FISCAL YEAR 2014–2015**



**VERITASPREP**  
**CHARTER SCHOOL**

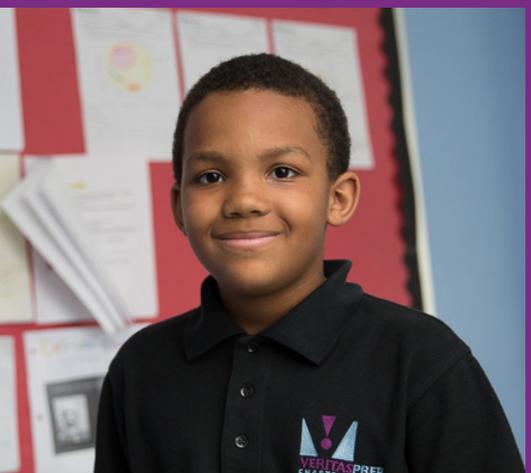
**Veritas Prep** is  
founded on the belief  
that **all students...**



Regardless of  
**race, class, or**  
**socioeconomic**  
**circumstance...**



Are entitled to a  
**high quality**  
**public education...**



Defined by  
**high academic**  
**and behavioral**  
**expectations.**



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**Executive Director,  
Rachel Romano**

*Dear Friends,*

I am pleased to share with you our annual report for the 2014-2015 school year. In our third year of operation we expanded our program to serve more than 240 scholars in grades five through seven. Additionally, we hired 15 teachers to join our team and began the hard work of developing them into extraordinary teachers who drive dramatic gains in student achievement.

Research has shown that the quality of a child's classroom teacher is the biggest predictor of a child's academic success. We agree! Veritas Prep scholars' results on the 2015 PARCC tests prove that great teaching can change the trajectory of a child's life and put them back on a path to academic success. With three consecutive years of quality curriculum and instruction at Veritas Prep, our scholars are outperforming state proficiency averages by a wide margin and firmly on a path to college. The vast majority of these children came to us several grade levels behind. We are so proud to be realizing our mission and we remain driven to put every scholar we serve on a path to college and future success. We've reset the bar for Springfield's middle schools and we will keep pushing ourselves to prove what is possible for Springfield scholars.

As we move forward in our fourth year of operation, now serving more than 300 scholars across four grade levels, we continue to tackle our biggest challenge: finding and developing talented teachers and leaders to continue to serve our scholars and grow our program. We will continue to keep teacher recruitment and retention as a top priority so that we can continue to defy the odds and prove what is possible when talented people join together around a critical mission.

Thank you for your support and interest in Veritas Prep. With your help, we will continue to transform public education in the city of Springfield.

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Romano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

**Rachel Romano**  
*Executive Director*

## THE NEED IN SPRINGFIELD

Many of our scholars live in neighborhoods where **educational opportunities are limited and expectations for academic achievement are low**. Less than 32% of Springfield residents have graduated with a four-year college degree. Almost half of the students who start as kindergartners in Springfield city schools do not graduate from high school.

*Of the students in Springfield...*

**ONLY**  
**41%**

are **reading and writing** at grade level by the end of 8th grade.

**ONLY**  
**16%**

are able to pass a **grade level test in Mathematics**.

**ONLY**  
**9%**

demonstrate grade level **proficiency in Science, Technology & Engineering**.

## RESPONDING TO THE NEED

Veritas Preparatory Charter School ("Veritas Prep") was granted a charter by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on February 28th, 2011 and opened its doors to serve our inaugural class of 81 fifth graders for the 2012–2013 school year.

In our third year of operation, we served more than 240 scholars in grades 5-7. In 2015-2016, we are serving more than 300 scholars in grades 5-8.

### OUR MISSION

To prepare students in grades 5 through 8 to **compete, achieve, and succeed** in high school, college, and beyond.



Springfield is ready  
for change.

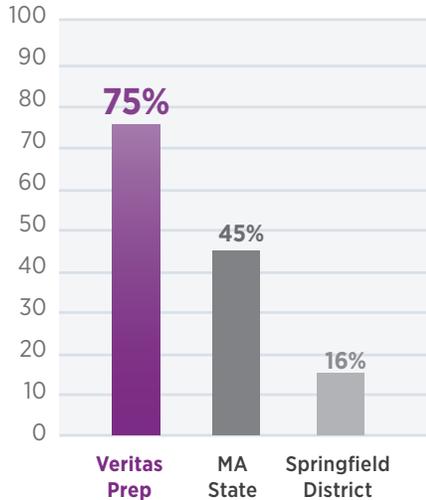


# PROVING WHAT'S POSSIBLE!

Veritas Prep Scholars are proving that being from Springfield does not determine one's ability to achieve academic success and outperform their peers across the state.

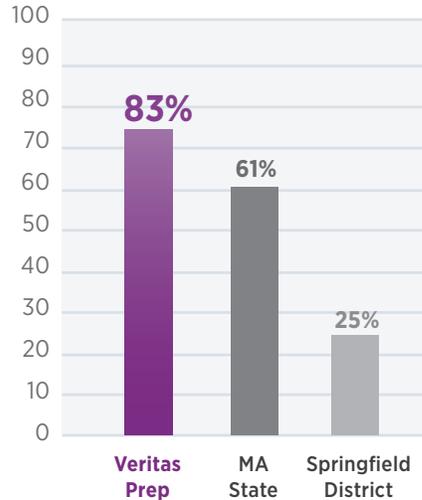
## Math PARCC Scores

Percentage of 7th grade students scoring proficient or advanced



## ELA PARCC Scores

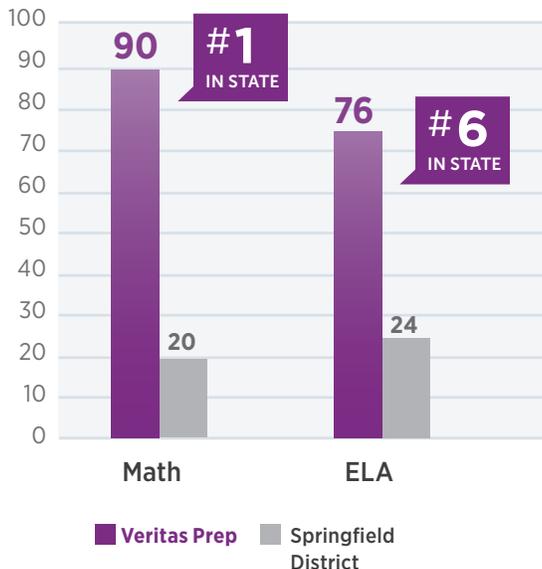
Percentage of 7th grade students scoring proficient or advanced



We're most proud of how much our scholars have improved since enrolling at Veritas Prep. Student Growth Percentile (SGP) represents the improvement of individuals compared to their academic peers across the state. Veritas Prep scholars in all grades had a median SGP in both Math and ELA much higher than their peers in other schools.

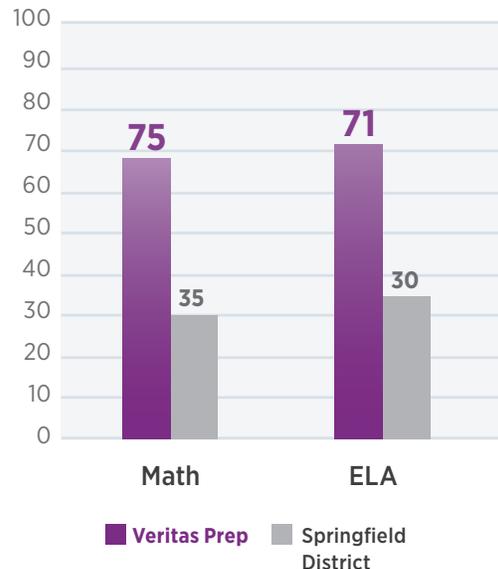
## Student Growth | Grade 7

Student Growth Percentile Scores (Spring 2015)



## Student Growth | Grades 5-7

Student Growth Percentile Scores (Spring 2015)

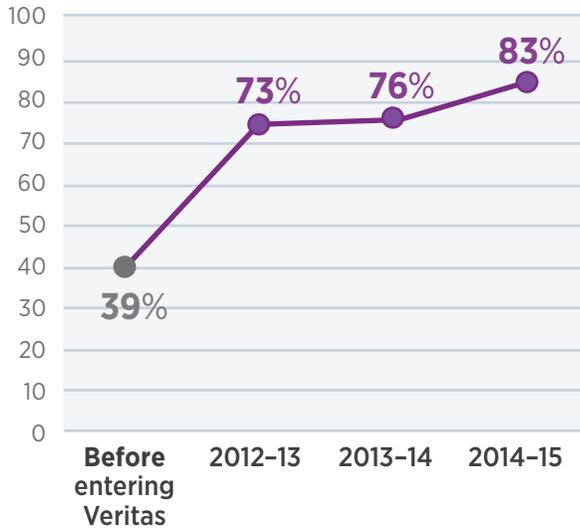


# VERITAS PREP STUDENTS OVER TIME

After three years at the school, Veritas Prep scholars have surpassed their district peers and are outperforming the state with 83% scoring proficient or advanced in English Language Arts (ELA) and 75% scoring proficient or advanced in Math.

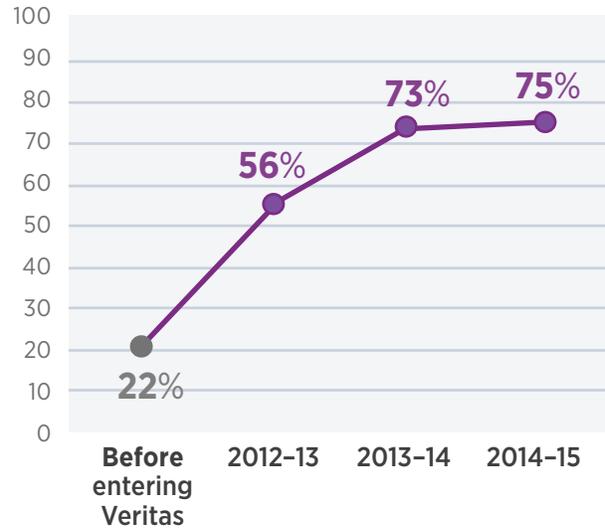
## ELA MCAS/PARCC Scores

Proficient or advanced



## Math MCAS/PARCC Scores

Proficient or advanced

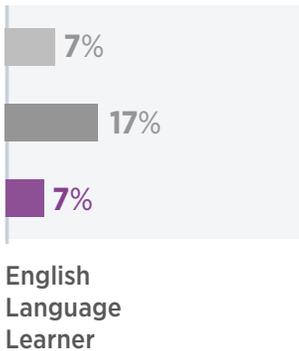
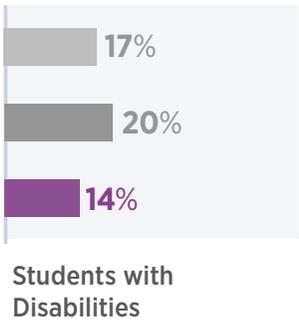
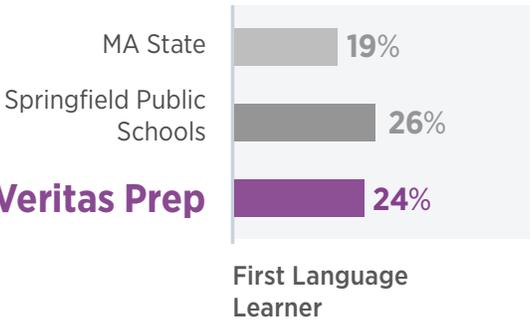
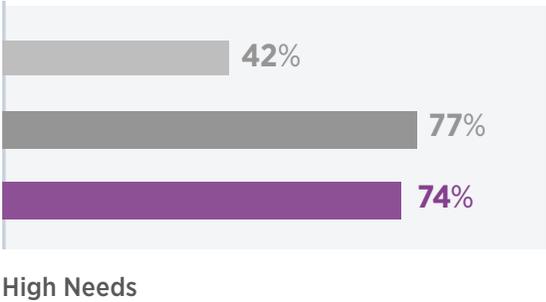
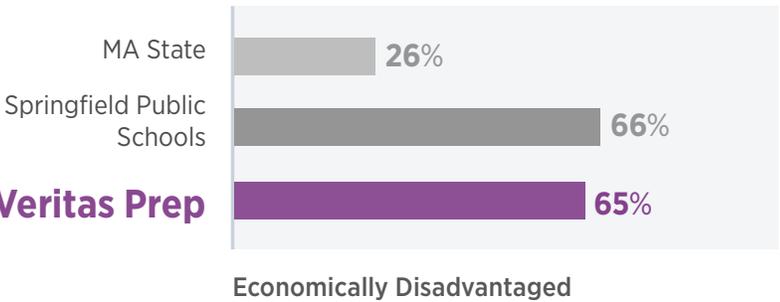
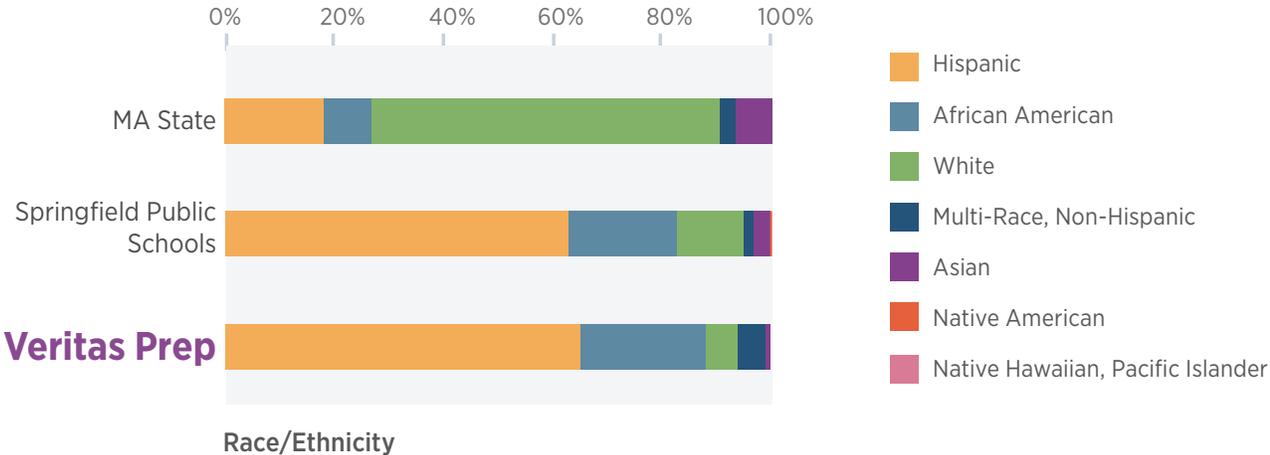


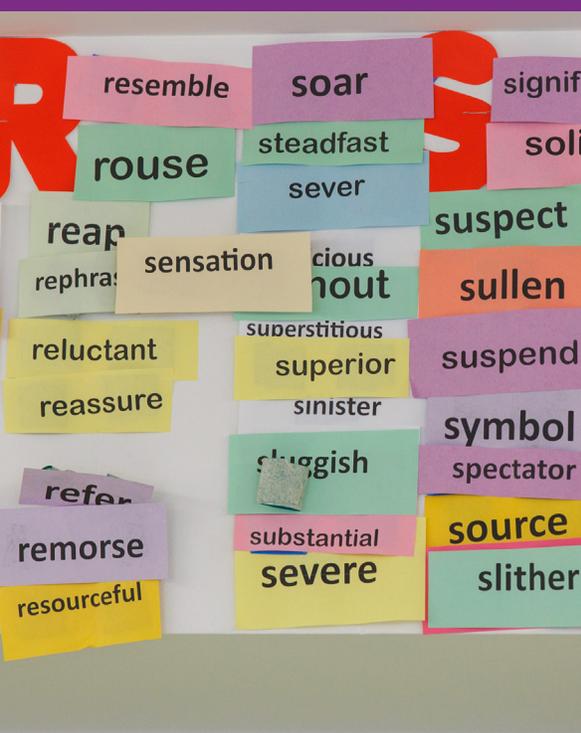
We're setting the bar for excellence in one of Massachusetts's most challenged cities.



# MEET OUR SCHOLARS

Our student population mirrors the Springfield Public Schools, the sending district of our scholars. We provide a full range of services for students with special needs and English Language Learners.





## OUR MODEL

### ■ We maintain **high expectations.**

We believe each of our scholars is college bound and hold them all to high expectations. Scholars are meeting those expectations and forming the scholarly habits that help them make significant gains. All stakeholders, students and staff, are accountable for achieving results.

### ■ We believe in **structured environments.**

Our structured learning environment allows the focus to stay on achievement. We teach expectations to scholars and then hold them accountable with their individual "scholar dollar paycheck" which tracks specific behaviors for each individual scholar.

### ■ Our curriculum is **focused on outcomes.**

We truly begin with the end in mind...college success for all scholars. The road to college begins with the ability to read well, write well and compute accurately.

### ■ We use **data to drive instruction.**

Data drives instruction at Veritas Prep. With regular data meetings to look at student work and assessment results, we respond swiftly to the needs of our scholars. All scholars receive daily tutoring targeted to meet their needs.

### ■ Our scholars have **more time to learn.**

We have a longer school day, 7:30 am-4:30 pm, and a longer school year by up to 10 days more. Each scholar has ample time for all subjects, personalized tutoring, and enrichment with the longer day.

### ■ We focus on **character development.**

Character and discipline are critical components to our college prep curriculum. Our scholars have weekly character ed classes and scholar dollar bonuses are awarded to students who demonstrate our DRIVE values.

### ■ Our teachers **make all the difference**

We recruit top talent to our team and grow our teachers through quality professional development. We create and nurture a professional environment in which all staff members are mission-driven team players who do whatever it takes to put our scholars on the path to college.

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF VERITAS PREP SCHOLARS



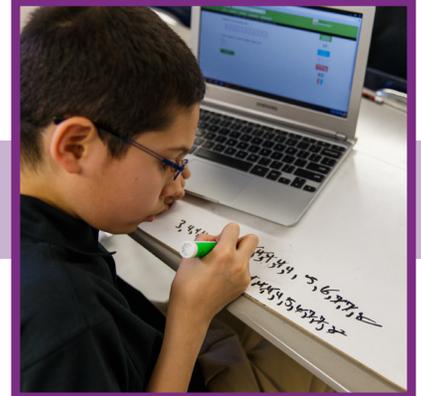
## 7:15 AM ARRIVAL

Arriving students are greeted at the door with a handshake from a school leader and a quick inspection of the student's uniform. They have breakfast and start their morning work.



## 7:50 AM TUTORING

All scholars are provided with individualized support and intervention that meets their needs on a daily basis.



## 8:30 AM PROBLEM SOLVING

Scholars engage in an inquiry-based math problem solving lesson where they grapple with meaty problems on their individual white boards and then share and discuss their solutions as a class.



## 12:40 PM SCIENCE

Scholars head back to their advisory for science class. 5th grade scholars take a survey course which teaches a variety of topics, 6th grade scholars learn about Earth and Environmental Science, 7th grade scholars learn about Life Science and 8th grade scholars learn about Physical Science.



## 1:30 PM MATH

Scholars engage in a fast-paced math class where they practice skills and procedures to build their skills and fluency in mathematics.



## 2:10 PM AFTERNOON BREAK

Afternoon break is a time for scholars to enjoy a snack and get organized for their upcoming classes.



## 2:20 PM SOCIAL STUDIES

5th grade scholars study Humans and their Environment, 6th grade scholars study World Religion, 7th grade scholars study Government and 8th grade scholars study U.S. and World History.



**9:30 AM  
ENRICHMENT**

Scholars are provided with music and fitness instruction twice per week.



**10:20 AM  
MORNING BREAK**

Even the most DRIVEN of scholars need a break to use the restroom, socialize with friends and get their materials for the upcoming classes.



**10:30 AM  
LITERATURE &  
COMPOSITION**

Scholars read a high-quality novel as a class and engage in rigorous discussion before writing about what they've read. Teachers provide explicit writing instruction to help scholars develop their composition skills.



**11:45 AM  
LUNCH**

Scholars are provided a healthy and delicious lunch with time to relax and enjoy it.



**3:05 PM  
READING WORKSHOP**

Scholars engage in a skill-based reading lesson followed by independent practice with their own books.



**4:05 PM  
ADVISOR MEETING**

Scholars have a short character lesson or discussion with their advisors to wrap up the day.



**4:30PM  
DISMISSAL**

Scholars are dismissed from school and many stay after to participate in a variety of clubs and activities because we have the most dedicated teachers on the planet!

## SPOTLIGHT ON MS. MAXWELL

### MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHER, GRADE 5



Keshia Maxwell knows full well the struggles facing Springfield scholars, having grown up in the city while attending “a crazy middle school” where she saw firsthand how frustrating it was to “not learn anything.” Though she did make it through Putnam HS and into UMass, in retrospect she can see how underprepared she was for college. With the clarity of hindsight, she can see that she “wasn’t taught study skills,” but credits her family for setting the expectation of a college education early on and pushing her to succeed.

Ms. Maxwell brings to Veritas not only a home-grown understanding of the area and its people, but also some cultural perspective. Her travels have taken her to Japan and back, and all over the country on assignments for her job in the National Guard (she was also in the Army Reserve Corp. while attending UMass). She likes to think that all of her far-flung experiences contribute to making her a successful teacher, which requires a dynamic skill set, self-discipline, and a resolute nature that keeps her comfortable in challenging situations.

When asked why she has stuck with the school despite long hours and demanding expectations, Ms. Maxwell points out that Veritas “offers a different promise” and allows her to “give something back to the kids in Springfield.” Her scholars may not be standing on the shoulders of a giant (“[My former students] are all taller than me now!”), but Ms. Maxwell is certainly giving them a valuable leg-up in life. She is in her third year at VPCS.



High quality teachers  
get results.



## A STUDENT'S STORY

### NAZIER RODRIGUEZ, GRADE 7



When asked to describe himself, Nazier responds with a humble shrug, a bashful smile... and then, with a clear look straight in your eye, says, "Competitive. I'm very competitive." Nazier set the tone early, on Mountain Day back in September, when all of Veritas was brought to Mt. Monadnock, one of the tallest mountains in New England, a symbol of their challenge as Springfield scholars. Predictably, Nazier was one of only a handful of kids to reach the summit. Already this year he's earned the highest grade in his advisory on two Social Studies tests, one Literature test, and tied for second-highest in the grade on the first ANET standardized test (he's steaming, reading this now, I assure you). His competitive spirit has always driven him to be the best, but his mother, Jarrell, says that Veritas' standards-based grading has "pushed him to an even higher standard," because it allows him to "find his weak points" and improve on them.

Another thing motivating Nazier is his drive to get to college (he's thinking about UMass—Amherst already), which his family vigorously supports. His father, Heriberto, told me that the most important thing for him as a parent is that Nazier "get a college education," and that "he's exceeding our expectations." Nazier will be part of the first generation in his family to go to college. In the meantime, Nazier is indulging in his love of Social Studies. Specifically, he says that he likes "taking things into perspective, from the past, and learning about what's going on [in the world]." He's thinking that one day he might pursue a career in journalism in order to gather that perspective first-hand. "Plus," he says, "I really like writing."

Nazier came to Veritas because his parents were "looking for something different" and "didn't want a regular middle school." Jarrell was particularly impressed by the school's structured expectations, and the strictness upheld in order to meet them. They also feel that the frequent contact with Nazier's teachers has allowed them to stay connected and support him as he grows. As he looks to the future, Nazier hopes that he's able to find a high school that has a strong "balance of sports and academics," because, while he did admit to being interested in Social Studies, his first answer was short and simple: "Soccer."



Our scholars are defying expectations in a city where only 1 in 2 children are expected to graduate from high school.



# BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Louis Abbate** is the former CEO of The Willie Ross School for the Deaf in Longmeadow where he led for 28 years. But his start in education was in 1974 as a special education director and guidance counselor at Frontier Regional School District, the first job of its kind, after the special education law had just been passed. He was also director of the school psychology department at American International College, and established the curriculum for AIC's new department. Then in 1985, he became executive director of Willie Ross School, a nationally renowned school whose curriculum and programming have been modeled across the country.

**Susan Alston** is an innovative leader and manager with skills in strategic fundraising, donor, and relationship management, and, most currently the Vice President and Director of Development for the Center for Human Development in Springfield. She often exceeds fundraising goals of the organizations she works with, including CHD, the VNA Healthcare Foundation in Hartford, Ct, UMASS College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA. She received her Bachelor of Science at UMASS, and her Master's Degree in Strategic Fundraising and Philanthropy at Bay Path College, Longmeadow, MA.

**Lisa Doherty**, Secretary, is the Founder and CEO of Business Risk Partners (BRP), a national program administrator providing specialty insurance coverage to businesses. BRP underwrites on behalf of several major carriers, providing specialty insurance products including E&O, D&O, EPLI and fidelity coverage. Since its inception in 2000, Ms. Doherty has led BRP in the development of an extensive, distribution network, including national endorsements within industry associations. Ms. Doherty began her insurance career as a Specialty Insurance Underwriter with AIG in New York City, then spent several years as a D&O Underwriter at Executive Risk and moved west to run the Pacific Northwest FINPRO practice of Marsh. She returned to the east coast to develop Executive Risk's international operations. She left Executive Risk, to start BRP. Ms. Doherty has a BA from Brown University with a dual concentration in International Relations and Economics.

**David Fuller** is a recently-retired justice of the Hampden County Probate and Family Court where he served from 1993. Previously he was an attorney practicing with the Springfield firm of Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinas. Mr. Fuller received his undergraduate degree from Harvard College in 1966 and his J.D. from the Catholic University School of Law in 1973.

**Anthony Gabinetti**, Treasurer, is Senior Manager in Audit and Accounting at Meyers Brothers Kalicka, P.C. in Holyoke, MA. Mr. Gabinetti, who has been with MBK since 2006, focuses on for-profit audits, compilation and review. A CPA licensed in Massachusetts, he is a member of the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Mr. Gabinetti holds a B.S. in Business Administration from Fordham University.

**Ryan Holmes** is a Principal at Match Middle School in Boston, MA. Mr. Holmes graduated from U-Mass, Amherst and was a member of MATCH Corps in 2005-06. He then worked as a community organizer for the Boston Charter School Alliance. From 2008 - 2013, Mr. Holmes worked as a 7th grade math teacher for Excel Academy Charter School. Most recently, he served as Math Director and Master Teacher at Match Next.

**Ashley Martin** is a Principal in Residence with UP Education Network and looks forward to founding their Springfield school in 2016. From 2010-2015 she worked for the Achievement Network as Managing Director of School Support for Western Massachusetts. She coached school leaders and teachers with planning and tools to effectively use interim assessments to drive student achievement. She holds a National Board Certified Teacher in Adolescent/Young Adult English Language Arts, has over twelve years ELA teaching experiences in middle school, high school, and college. Ms. Martin brings a deep understanding of the educational challenges and opportunities that exist in the City of Springfield. Ms. Martin earned a BA in English from Birmingham-Southern College, a MA in English from The University of Alabama, and a MA in Secondary English Education from Wake Forest University.

**Aaron Mendelson**, Chair, has been a Financial Advisor with Northwestern Mutual Financial Network in Springfield for over twenty years. Mr. Mendelson is deeply committed to serving his community and contributes his entrepreneurial and financial skills to the community in a variety of ways. He served on the Board of Directors for the Children's Study Home in Springfield. He also served on the Board of Directors and the Loan Review Committee for the Community Savings Bank in Springfield. Mr. Mendelson was a member of the Audit Committee for Baystate Medical Center and is currently a member of the Springfield Business Leaders for Education group. Mr. Mendelson holds a BA from Brown University.

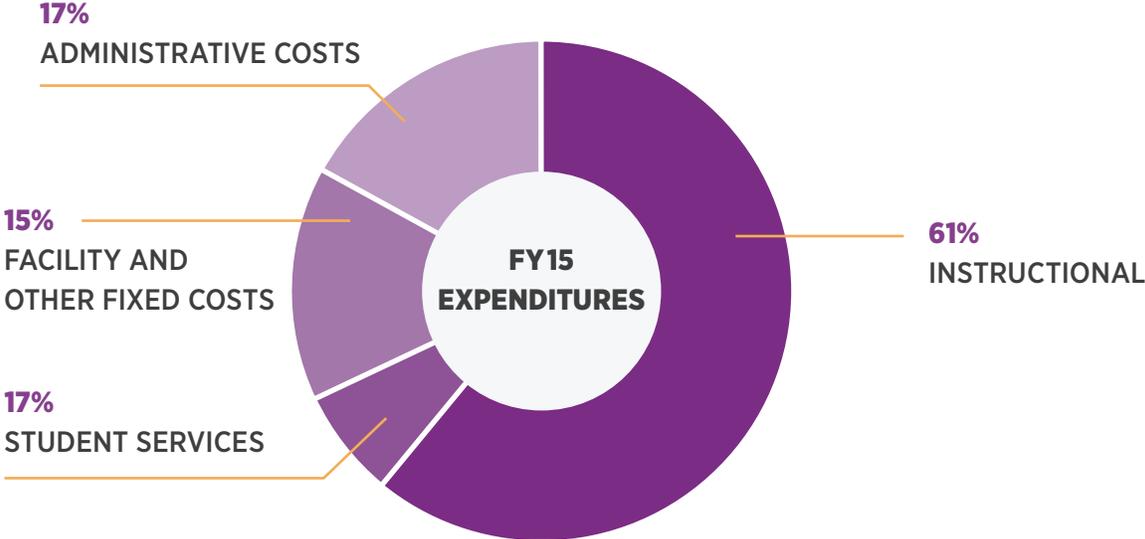
**Greg Moody** is an Assistant Director of Admission/Admission Counselor with Northfield Mount Hermon School, Gill, MA. He earned a BA, cum laude in Music and Creative Writing at Colby College and a MS in Public Relations at Syracuse University.

**Michael Sweet**, Vice Chair, is an attorney with Doherty, Wallace, Pillsbury and Murphy in Springfield, where he has been a member since 1996. Prior to joining Doherty, Wallace, Pillsbury and Murphy, Mr. Sweet practiced law with the Wall Street-based firm Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts. His general business law practice includes corporate transactions, debt and equity financings, business organizations and commercial real estate. He is also a member of the Connecticut Bar. He is a member of the board of directors of a neighborhood-based charitable organization in the North End of Springfield where he recently completed a term as chair of the board. Mr. Sweet is a graduate of Brown University and holds a J.D. from Boston University School of Law.

**Anthony I. Wilson** is an Associate City Solicitor, Litigation, whose responsibility is to defend the city of Springfield in civil suits in both state and federal courts, including claims for personal injuries or property damages or federal suits where a city official may have violated the civil rights of a Springfield citizen. He received a B.A. in Journalism from Clark Atlanta University and a J.D. from Suffolk University Law School.

**Carl Wistreich**, has a broad professional background, including serving as a corporate lawyer for a major international law firm, a senior executive in business development, mergers and acquisitions, legal affairs, operations and human resources for a \$20 billion privately-held company, and as an entrepreneur and CEO of his own business. Mr. Wistreich is the former owner and chief executive of L&B Truck Services, a distributor, maintenance, and repair services company for heavy-duty trucks and replacement parts in the northeast. Prior to purchasing the company, Mr. Wistreich was a Senior Vice President at C&S Wholesale, the largest distributor of food and related products to grocery stores in the U.S. Mr. Wistreich has also worked for the U.S. government in Washington D.C for a United States Senator and serving as a law clerk for a federal judge following law school. Mr. Wistreich holds a J.D. degree from New York Law School, graduating magna cum laude, and a B.A. from Colgate University.

# FINANCIALS



BALANCE SHEET	
<b>ASSETS</b>	
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	\$793,960
ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE	\$25,358
PREPAID EXPENSES	\$36,787
FIXED ASSETS	\$44,444
DUE FROM RELATED PARTIES	\$1,350
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$901,900</b>

INCOME STATEMENT	
<b>INCOME</b>	
TUITION	\$2,900,885
GOVERNMENT GRANTS & FUNDING	\$225,385
NUTRITION FUNDING	\$152,091
PRIVATE SUPPORT FUNDING	\$143,608
STUDENT PROGRAMS & MISC. INCOME	\$5,855
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$3,427,825</b>

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	\$47,338
ACCRUED EXPENSES/ ACCRUED PAYROLL	\$145,154
DUE TO RELATED PARTIES	\$38,132
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$230,623</b>

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
<b>EXPENSE</b>	
PERSONNEL COSTS	\$1,916,912
ADMINISTRATION COSTS	\$213,531
INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES	\$460,088
STUDENT SERVICES	\$173,277
OPERATION & MAINT OF PLANT	\$420,734
FIXED CHARGES & MISC. EXPENSE	\$51,083
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$3,235,625</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$192,200</b>

<b>CURRENT EQUITY</b>	
UNRESTRICTED EQUITY	\$626,832
INVESTMENT IN CAPITAL ASSETS	\$44,444
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>\$671,276</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>\$901,900</b>

# WITH DEEP GRATITUDE

Thank you to the following individuals, organizations, and foundations that have generously supported The Friends of Veritas Preparatory School, Inc. in the 2014-15 fiscal year:

## Individual Donors

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Design by The Sketchy Pixel  
thesketchypixel.com

Spotlights written by James Bress,  
7th grade Literacy and Social Studies teacher

