

Small School's New Leader Has Big Plans

Alternative Oliverian School Seeks to Serve More Students

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The Oliverian School, located in the tiny North Country hamlet of Pike, N.H., has come a long way since its founding in 2004, and new Headmaster Randy Richardson promises to take the school even further.

A former consultant for the Breakthrough Collaborative, a national alternative education program, Richardson assumed the helm of the school on July 1, taking over the reins from Barclay MacKinnon, who now serves as the school's director of admissions. Oliverian specializes in alternative education for students who have struggled in traditional school settings.

Richardson has served as a teacher, coach and administrator at a number of regional independent schools, including a seven-year stint as the head of school at The Derryfield School in Manchester. But he said that Oliverian's mission has special meaning for him, as the father of a daughter who faced emotional challenges during middle and high school, and who attended an alternative school similar to Oliverian in Concord.



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"We had great support for her on a variety of levels, including a school that was local to us," said Richardson. "Most families don't have that luxury of having a school for their kid that is nearby their home."

Richardson said that many schools that cater to alternative-minded students are often labeled as "therapeutic schools. The beauty of Oliverian, he said, is that its "hybrid" focus on both reforming current schools and college preparatory academics.

"We deliberately put ourselves somewhere in between, where we can help kids who need extra support, but also allow them to be students at a school that is more of a traditional school," he said.

Oliverian is now home to 40 students, each of whom is paired with a counselor and receives an individualized academic plan. Richardson believes that number could grow to as many 60 students with proper preparation, even though the school is still very young.

"In a lot of ways, we have a pretty clear definition of who we are, but we're still developing as a school," he said.