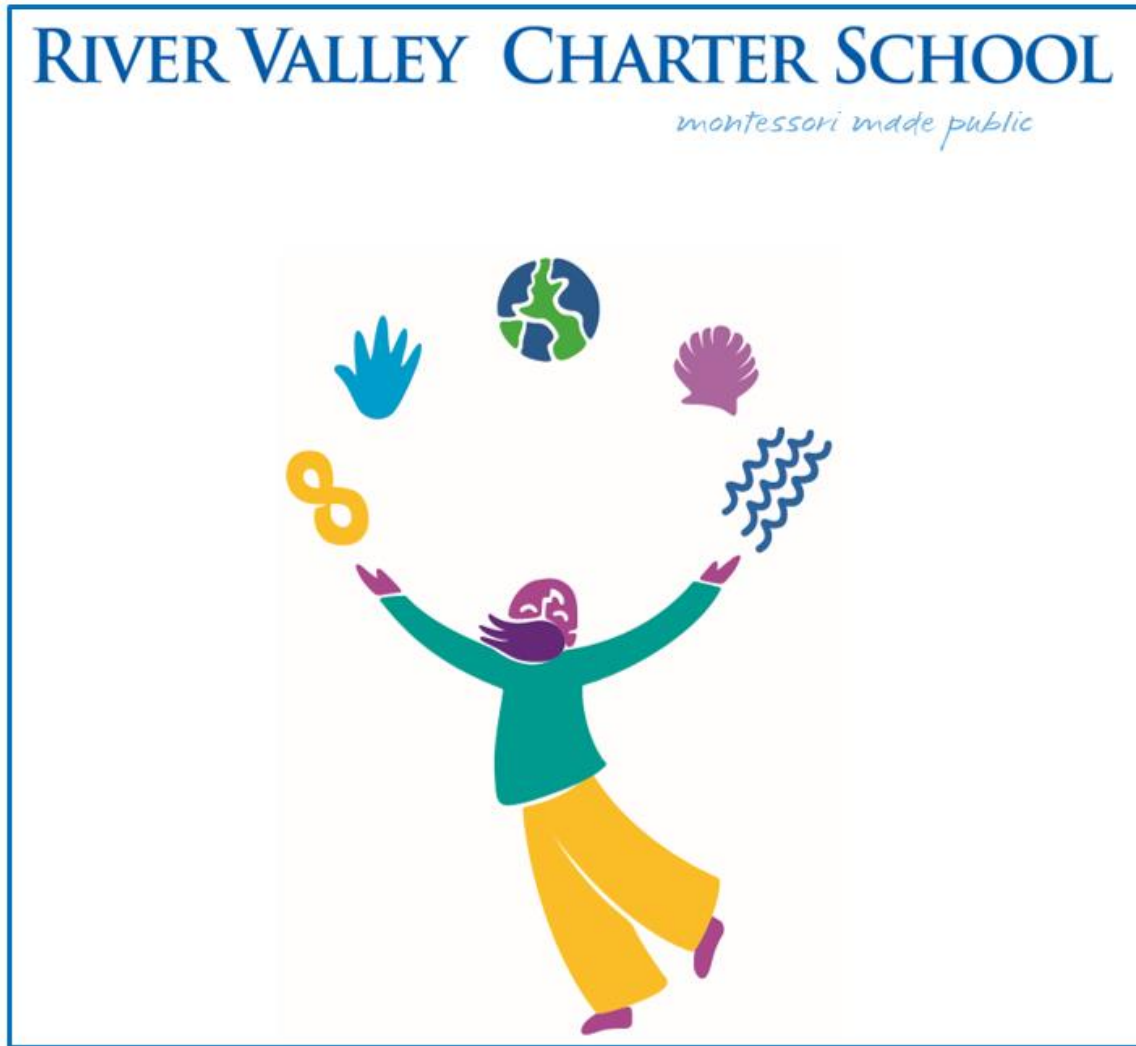


# Annual Report of a Public Charter School 2018-2019



**RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL**

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Head of School: Jonnie Lyn Evans

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Submission Date: July 30, 2019

## LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES' CHAIRPERSON

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July 8, 2018

To the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

On behalf of the River Valley Charter School community, we are pleased to present our Annual Report for the 2018-2019 academic year. As we complete our 19th year of operation, the school continues to provide all of our students with a wonderful environment for learning and exploration. RVCS delivers a rigorous academic program that combines the best elements of public education and the Montessori philosophy while rooting our programming in the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Our north star goal persists - to center our focus upon a whole child approach to education, to help children reach their full potential both academically and personally, and to instill in our students a sense of their place in the world and their responsibilities as productive members of society.

In the 2018-2019 school year River Valley has continued in its quest to modernize Montessori teaching to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The work that began as an aspirational vision five short years ago is now fully realized throughout the school. You can see the changes as you walk into any of our K-8 classrooms, from curriculum maps, to learning goals, to assessment, and 'traveling portfolios' that showcase a child's longitudinal learning over their entire time with us.

We are also pleased with our work to support teachers and staff. This year we were able to realize the benefits of updating our lease agreement and financing structure. This restructure cleared the way for us to start the 2018-2019 school year with lower building costs and a double-digit percentage step-up in teacher salaries. This is a huge gesture of gratitude to our excellent teaching staff and we hope that it will help the school attract and retain highly qualified personnel in a competitive labor market.

This year our Director of six years, Andy Willemsen, announced his pending departure at year end. Andy has provided excellent leadership to our school community. We are grateful for his vision, for his ability to inspire students, teachers, and the parent community, and for his steady hand with school operations. He will be missed. The Board of Trustees undertook a five-month process to select a new Director. After a nationwide search and vetting of finalist candidates, the Board is pleased to welcome Jonnie Lyn Evans as our next Director. Jonnie Lyn is one of the school's founders and has been the Assistant Director of RVCS for the past six years.

The Board of Trustees continues to provide sound governance for the school and maintains proper oversight for the school's policy framework, budget, and fiscal controls. This year the Board is most proud of our latest Charter renewal and we will celebrate our 20th year this fall.

Thank you for taking the time to review the enclosed report. Please reach out if you have any questions.

Best Regards,



Mark Belanger  
Chair, Board of Directors  
River Valley Charter School

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## INTRODUCTION TO RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

<b><i>River Valley Charter School (RVCS)</i></b>			
<b>Type of Charter</b>	Commonwealth	<b>Location of School</b>	Newburyport
<b>Regional or Non-Regional</b>	Regional	<b>Chartered Districts in Region</b>	Amesbury, Newbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, West Newbury
<b>Year Opened</b>	1999	<b>Year(s) Renewed</b>	2003, 2009, 2014, 2019
<b>Maximum Enrollment</b>	288	<b>Enrollment as of</b>	287 as of 6/14/2019
<b>Chartered Grade Span</b>	K-8	<b>Current Grade Span</b>	K-8
<b># of Instructional Days per school year</b>	180	<b>Students on Waitlist</b>	134 on 6/21/2018
<b>School Hours</b>	8:30am – 3:10pm	<b>Age of School as of 2018-2019 School Year</b>	Nineteen years
<b>Mission Statement</b>  The mission of River Valley Charter School is to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant and productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared to succeed in future schools, careers, and civic life.			

## SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

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### ***Faithfulness to the Charter***

#### **Mission and Key Design Elements**

*There were no changes to our mission or key design elements during the 2018-2019 school year.*

The mission of the River Valley Charter School is to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant, productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared to succeed in future schools, careers, and civic life.

Key design elements of the River Valley Charter School program include:

- An educational program based on the Montessori philosophy
- A curriculum rooted in the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley
- A focus on the development of students' critical thinking and problem-solving capabilities.

#### **Montessori Principles**

River Valley Charter School (RVCS) provides a high-quality Montessori program within the public-school arena. The school maintains its commitment to the Montessori pedagogy by hiring Montessori-trained and/or certified teachers in every classroom and by providing full tuition support for accredited Montessori training to meet the school's expectation that all K-6 lead teachers be Montessori trained. RVCS also supports authentic Montessori programming by staying abreast of best practices in the ever-expanding arena of public Montessori programs.

Every classroom in grades K through six has two adults including a full-time lead teacher and a full-time assistant teacher; this configuration is a core component of the Montessori approach. (One Elementary 2 classroom of 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade students had co-lead teachers during this past year.) During the 2018-2019 school year, eleven Lead Teachers were Montessori trained, and nine have Montessori certification. Seven of our nine Assistant Teachers were either Montessori-certified or had received some level of Montessori training. Our classrooms are outfitted with genuine Montessori learning materials and furniture, which are essential to creating a prepared Montessori learning environment. We offer multi-age classrooms, hands-on learning, a project-based curriculum, frequent opportunities for student collaboration and student-directed learning, all hallmarks of the Montessori philosophy.

Montessori education is centered upon a whole-child approach to learning. Our primary goal is to help children reach their full potential both academically and personally, while instilling in them a sense of their place in the world and their responsibilities as productive members of society. The curriculum is designed to develop the social, emotional, physical and cognitive elements of each student, and is based on a belief that children are naturally eager to learn when appropriate conditions exist. Our learning environments operate on the principle of freedom within limits. This contributes to the development of independence and decision-making skills of our students. Lessons

are given in small group settings and are customized to meet the learning needs of each student. With two teachers in every classroom, instruction is individualized to the greatest extent possible. The multi-age classrooms in grades 1-8 enrich the curriculum options by offering students the opportunity to learn from and teach each other. Teachers provide lessons based on both their Montessori training and the guidelines of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

The success of this approach is evident through the skills and characteristics that our students develop. They are remarkably adaptable, they learn to work independently, they bring great creativity to their learning, and their curiosity inspires them to seek answers to their own questions. River Valley students demonstrate excellent collaboration and communication skills and are adept at exchanging ideas both in writing and through discussion. They have extensive experience at public speaking and possess strong presentation skills. Our students are encouraged to make decisions from the earliest grades and learn to make good choices and manage their time well. They also learn that mistakes are part of the learning process and provide important opportunities for self-reflection and growth. The independence and the variety of challenging and authentic learning opportunities children experience at River Valley foster excellent critical thinking and problem-solving skills, not just with paper and pencil exercises, but especially in real world applications.

River Valley staff demonstrate a consistent commitment to the Montessori principles of whole-child education, developing a strong sense of community, emphasizing and providing a climate of genuine collaboration, seeking to develop deep understanding of academic concepts, providing active learning opportunities, and developing a sense of social justice in children. Examples of each of these core principles are provided below.

**Whole-Child Education:** Our staff demonstrates deep concern for and awareness of every student. To begin each day, staff greet every child as they exit their car or the school bus, prior to the student even entering the school building. Our School Counselor welcomes every student at the front door of the school to get a quick glimpse of each student's emotional state as they begin their day. Our

*"Education is not something which the teacher does, but is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child."*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential*

individualized approach to instruction during the school day allows teachers to carefully assess each student's readiness to learn, and to respond to personal, social or emotional concerns directly. Classrooms for our younger students contain "peace

corners," where students can go for a quiet moment to help them feel centered and ready-to-learn, or where two students can speak together to resolve differences. At all levels, lessons are given on "grace and courtesy," a Montessori expression used to help students reflect on and learn how to be respectful and at peace with themselves and with others. Students are physically active during classroom learning periods, allowing kinesthetic learners to access their strengths, and all students to develop independence and remain engaged in their learning.

During the 2018-2019 school year, every classroom continued to implement the RVCS Habits of Learning curriculum which prioritizes and strengthens our whole child approach to education.

**Developing a Strong Sense of Community:** Each classroom at River Valley functions as its own small community. Students are expected to maintain the order and cleanliness of the learning environment, and our multi-age structure provides natural opportunities for students of different ages to assume various roles in this work. Every class, including our middle school, holds regular community meetings. At these meetings students discuss the successes or challenges that their community faces and develop strategies and responses accordingly.

Students in grades four through eight participate in overnight field trips during which place-based learning curriculum and community-building activities are emphasized. These trips allow students to demonstrate their skills and abilities outside of the academic environment, further strengthening each student's standing within the community. Students at all levels eat lunch in their classrooms (with teachers), allowing for informal social time that provides additional personal and community connections. Our Specials schedule for grades 1-6 is arranged so that students from two classrooms are grouped together, by grade, further extending connections across a grade level. In order to develop school-wide community, River Valley holds monthly, whole-school assemblies where both students and staff provide insight into the projects and activities happening throughout the building and beyond. Middle school advisory groups serve as hosts of the school-wide assemblies.

*"It is up to the teacher to arrange that the moral teachings of life emerge from social experiences. Morals have at the same time a practical side, which governs social relations, and a spiritual side, which presides over the awakening of conscience in the individual."*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence*

**Genuine Collaboration:** Much of the learning that happens at River Valley happens *between* students. Though direct instruction in all core academic areas is provided to every student each day, students spend a large portion of the learning time working with each other. Classrooms are furnished with group tables and provide open floor space for group work, and students are encouraged to work together on many assignments. This approach not only fosters collaboration, but also provides students the opportunity to articulate their thinking to others, which helps to deepen their comprehension. Additionally, our commitment to tying the curriculum to the history, culture and

*"...It seems that the capacity of really understanding is connected with discussion, with criticism, or with assent of others. The satisfaction of knowing must be immediately communicated to others, and in this communication, enthusiasm increases."*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, The Erdkinder and the Functions of the University*

ecology of the Merrimack River Valley naturally lends itself to project-based learning. Project work expectations typically

include both reporting and presentation (often multi-media), and our students are responsible for collaborating to assure successful execution of these expectations, modeling the skills required for success beyond the school environment.

**Deep Understanding:** The River Valley curricular approach is one of mastery learning rather than of simply covering concepts. Our curriculum maps articulate learning goals for each level, yet our teachers have the flexibility to present concepts in varying order and manners to suit the learning pace and style of each student. Rather than structuring the day to assign a limited amount of time to each subject area, the Montessori approach provides

*"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence."*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, Spontaneous Activity in Education*



both students and teachers flexibility in the time they choose to devote to any given pursuit. When a student, or group of students, demonstrates an interest in exploring a concept, question, or issue more deeply, the Montessori philosophy calls for teachers to facilitate such interest.

Much of the student work is project-based, and students frequently have a voice in the topics they research. For example, every October our Elementary 1 students (also called Lower Elementary), in grades 1-3, engage in a Mystery History project where each child selects a notable historical figure, researches their life, creates a biography, and formally presents their research to students and parents while dressed in the costume of their historical figure. Our Elementary 2 students (also called Upper Elementary), in grades 4-6, regularly engage in project-based work, exploring topics from the Industrial Revolution to our local ecosystems. Through frequent field trips, students gain opportunities to engage in meaningful and hands-on activities that bring relevance and deeper comprehension to their studies. Nearly all projects culminate in some form of presentation, providing students the opportunity to teach others about their learning, and providing teachers opportunities for authentic assessment.

**Active Learning Opportunities:** Maria Montessori pioneered the now widely accepted principle that the work of the hand informs the learning of the mind. Given this fundamental belief, Montessori classrooms are designed to provide active learning for all students. Montessori manipulative

*“Curiosity is an impulse to investigate. Once the child has felt the fascination of one object, he will become zealous in the conservation of all objects.”*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind*

materials allow students to experience concrete representation of a given concept. Students are free to move about the classroom, providing important kinesthetic opportunities. Students have an

active voice in their learning process, and rarely learn in a sit-and-listen format. Our place-based learning focus allows students multiple opportunities to actively engage in learning experiences outside the school walls. From exploring the wetland ponds on our school site to advocating for the health of the Merrimack River, River Valley students continually experience and learn from the surrounding world in active ways.

**Developing a Sense of Social Justice in Children:** Every classroom community develops a social contract at the beginning of each school year defining the expectations and conditions for a peaceful, respectful, and productive learning environment. This process provides opportunities for students to articulate and deepen their thinking regarding social justice in the school setting and beyond. The concept of social justice in a larger context comes as a natural extension of our efforts to build community within our school. As students come to see themselves as valued members of the classroom and school community, they are poised to see that they have connections to, and a role to play in, their local and global communities.

River Valley students at all levels participate in community service work that provides them with perspectives on larger communities and the issues that people beyond our school walls may face. Our younger students visit facilities for the elderly

*“An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live.”*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, Education and Peace*



and disabled, and learn through experiences as they interact with these communities. Students in grades four through eight frequently engage in formal and informal debates, where topics regularly center on social justice issues. Our E2 students work with a local soup kitchen and are able to reflect upon the challenges faced by this segment of our community. E1 and E2 students frequently design and run fundraising efforts for non-profit organizations, from the local food bank and animal shelter to hospitals and international NGOs. Our middle school students engage with, and fundraise for, a variety of social justice causes. Recently, this has included a multi-year campaign to steward the Merrimack River, which was included on a list of the nation's top ten endangered rivers.

### **Curriculum Rooted in the Merrimack River Valley**

Place-based learning is a central element of the River Valley curriculum. The geographic, historical and cultural resources of the Merrimack River Valley provide outstanding learning opportunities, and the school is committed to integrating these resources into the curriculum for all students. We believe that learning experiences beyond the classroom walls are essential in fostering deeper knowledge and critical thinking. To this end, the River Valley Charter School Foundation, a 501(c)3 dedicated to supporting education at RVCS, provided over \$46,000 in funding support for field trips during the 2018-2019 school year, and has committed \$50,000 for the 2019-2020 school year. These funds are received from private foundations and families, further strengthening the commitment and collaboration of our school community.

During the 2018-2019 school year, River Valley students participated in over 150 field trips resulting in abundant place-based learning projects and experiences. The descriptions below represent only a fraction of the total student outings.

At the middle school level, students received instruction in navigation and rowing during the year and ended their year with a multi-day river rowing experience navigating dories on the Merrimack River. Our E2 students traveled to historical and scientific sites such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Christa McAuliffe Shepard Discovery Center, the Boston Tea Party Museum, the

*"We cannot create observers by saying 'observe', but by giving them the power and the means for this observation and these means are procured through education of the senses."*

*Dr. Maria Montessori*

Harvard Museum of Natural History, and the Spencer-Pierce-Little Farm in Newbury, to study the rich history of our region. Ecological studies were supported through trips to such locations as: Maudslay

State Park, Plum Island National Wildlife Refuge, Nature's Classroom, the Massachusetts Audubon, the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Fletcher Farm and Pawtuckaway State Park. Community service work included weekly trips to St. Paul's Soup Kitchen and service at The Emery House.

E1 and Kinderhaus students studied the history of the Merrimack River Valley through trips to locations such as the Mary Baker Eddy Library, the Spencer-Pierce-Little Farm, and the Museum of Fine Arts. Their study of local ecology was supported through trips to the Parker River Wildlife Refuge, the Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary, the shores of the Merrimack River, the Seacoast Science Center, Yankee Clipper Boat Tours, Wolf Hollow, the Harvard Museum of Natural History and America's Stonehenge. All Elementary I students participated in a year-long project to support the endangered Blandings Turtle, with every class raising two turtles in their classroom, recording and sharing data with Mass Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The project culminated with a release-to-the-wild event in the spring. Community service work also included trips to The Heritage House, Avita Assisted Living Center, and Our Neighbor's Table.

## Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Capabilities

A Montessori classroom inherently provides opportunities for both critical thinking and problem solving. Students are offered freedom within limits, and this freedom requires that they develop their

*“Adaptability- this is the most essential quality; for the progress of the world is continually opening new careers, and at the same time closing or revolutionizing the traditional types of employment.”*

*Dr. Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence*

abilities to make positive and effective choices. The physical structure of our learning environments encourages collaborative work, where students exchange ideas and opinions. Through these two processes, both

critical thinking and problem solving are fostered. Within this framework, our teachers routinely seek to extend these skills by supplementing our core curriculum with additional learning opportunities.

River Valley students are regularly asked to discuss, explain and provide evidence for their thinking. Rather than relying on textbooks, teachers introduce concepts through small group lessons and the use of timelines and Montessori manipulative materials. Students then explore the concept and are encouraged to develop or discover connections with prior knowledge and life experience. The structure of the classrooms allows for extensive student collaboration, and students frequently engage in conversations to refine and extend their comprehension. Teachers understand that effective instruction will emphasize higher order thinking skills and the “why” behind each concept. Project-based learning is a core element of the Montessori philosophy providing students deeper exploration of the topic and the opportunity to extend their thinking beyond simply learning content.

In grades four through six, students regularly engage in formal debates and teachers in grades seven and eight employ the Socratic dialogue technique. Through the examination of an issue and the process of developing and defending a position, students improve their abilities to consider divergent viewpoints, articulate their thinking and consider the implications of policies and decisions. Most debates are scored and discussed by classmates, providing opportunities for all students to engage in higher order thinking on each topic.

Students in grades five and six participated in the Math Olympiad curriculum. Non-routine problems were presented each week, and students were exposed to a variety of problem-solving approaches and encouraged to collaborate to find multiple solutions to each problem.

In the Middle School, students were challenged in all subject areas to engage in abstract and higher order thinking. All middle school teachers expect students to be prepared to provide evidence and explanation as they express their original ideas and positions. Content knowledge, though vital in many situations, is secondary to developing the skills of curiosity, perseverance, and seeing mistakes as learning opportunities.

Beyond classroom work, middle school students also participate in Project Groups that provide significant student leadership opportunities. In previous years, middle school students participated in project groups that used pre-developed programming such as Model United Nations, Destination Imagination and Science Olympiad. A new approach, described below, was adopted in the 2018-2019 school year.

Middle School faculty established broad categories to serve as the basis for Project Groups. The categories included areas such as Visual Arts, Health and Fitness, Dramatic Expression, Woodworking, and Robotics. Students identified the category in which they had the most interest and in weekly three-hour project group time, they worked collaboratively to design relevant curriculum, goals and assessments, with mentor teachers providing oversight and facilitation. The project groups ran for the full school year, culminating in final presentations or competitions that represent durable learning experiences for the students. Though staff initially felt some trepidation about relinquishing full control for learning to the students when this concept was first conceived, the experience validated our belief that adolescents can direct their learning beyond our expectations when they are empowered to do so.

One group produced a theatrical performance of Into the Woods with student directors, actors, set builders and costumers. Another group, the Fitness Project Group, set a goal to hike Mt. Washington during the winter. They spent the year learning about fitness and exercise, body systems, hiking practices, weather, safety, and emergency response. In February, they summited Mt. Washington. Another group, the Visual Arts Project Group created various pieces of art and sold them to raise funds for a local non-profit. They also researched and identified social justice causes they were passionate about and created representative multi-media posters. The posters were professionally copied and sold to raise additional funds. Every project group required collaboration, creativity, and higher order thinking processes.

## Amendments to the Charter

*There were no amendments to the charter during the 2018-2019 school year.*

## Access and Equity: Discipline Data

The most recent, publicly available student discipline data is available at

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ssdr/default.aspx?orgcode=04820050&orgtypecode=6&=04820050&>.

In 2017-2018, the most recent year for which there is publicly available student discipline data, there were no full-day school suspensions in school or out of school and no emergency removals.

2017-18 Student Discipline					
Student Group	Total # of Students	Students Disciplined	% of In-School Suspension	% of Out-of-School Suspension	% of Emergency Removal
All Students	292	5			
EL	0				
Economically Disadvantaged	24	0			
Students with Disabilities	50	3			
High Needs	70	3			
Female	171	2			
Male	121	3			
American Indian or Alaska Native	1				

Asian	8				
African American/Black	2				
Hispanic/Latino	9				
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic/Latino	12				
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0				
White	260	5			

**Behavioral Expectations & Disciplinary Responses**

The Habits of Learning curriculum, combined with Montessori's Grace and Courtesy lessons, serve as the backbone of behavioral expectations for River Valley Charter School students. All behavioral infractions are viewed as opportunities for learning, and natural consequences are utilized over prescribed punishments. River Valley's Code of Conduct highlights the school's individualized approach to discipline. Most often, behavioral issues are handled by the classroom teacher with the support of the School Counselor. When necessary, the Assistant Director becomes involved. Involvement of administrative staff, and the extent of a disciplinary response, is dependent on the significance and/or frequency of behavioral infractions. The more severe, or the more frequent, the more support personnel and/or administration are involved.

Out-of-school suspensions are used as a form of discipline in extremely limited circumstances such as those that would occur if a student were to engage in dangerous, assaultive, or illegal behavior. In-school suspensions are also used infrequently. River Valley Charter School matches its disciplinary response to behavioral infractions using concepts of Restorative Justice and logical behavioral consequences.

## Dissemination Efforts

Best Practice Shared	Vehicle for Dissemination	Who at the school was involved with the dissemination efforts?	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of dissemination
High Quality Public Montessori	Hosted the Second Annual Public Montessori Convening	RVCS Faculty, the School Director, Andy Willemsen and the Assistant Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	Teachers and administrators from northeast region public Montessori schools: Hill View Montessori Charter Public School, John M. Tobin Montessori/Cambridge Public Schools, Mill Falls Charter Public School, Dante Alighieri Montessori/Boston Public Schools	Shared keynote presentation materials and slide deck, as well as unit and curriculum materials with attendees
Place-based Education Project Work	Presentation to graduate students at Tufts University	E2 Teacher, Ali Fields	Tufts University graduate students	Shared unit materials with university professor and her students
Habits of Learning Curriculum and Portfolio system	Presentation	E2 Teacher, Ali Fields and E1 Teacher, Peter McClure	Staff at Hill View Montessori Charter Public School	Shared curriculum materials with the staff
School culture and professional development activities	Onsite Meeting and Observations	School Director, Andy Willemsen	Leaders from Windover School, Windover NH	Shared school policies, portfolios, Clifton Strengths, and specials schedule with school leaders
Curriculum maps and materials	Meetings and ongoing online communication	E2 Teacher, Ali Fields	Kat Cassidy, Lead Teacher from Chewonki Elementary School in Wiscasset, Maine	Ongoing collaboration

Best Practice Shared	Vehicle for Dissemination	Who at the school was involved with the dissemination efforts?	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of dissemination
Parent Education	One movie and three speaker events (nationally-known speakers/authors)	RVCS Parents' Alliance and Assistant Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	Local community of parents and educators	The <i>Navigating the Parent Years Speaker Series</i> is a collaborative effort of the Newburyport Public Schools, The Newburyport Youth Services Commission and River Valley Charter School. In addition to the movie and presentations, books and audio tapes were made available.

## Academic Performance Success

### Student Performance

The most recent, state-based, publicly available student performance data can be accessed at <http://reportcards.doe.mass.edu/2018/04820050>

Overall Classification	Accountability Percentile	Progress Toward Improvement Targets
2018	2018	2018
Not requiring assistance or intervention  Partially meeting targets	74 Percentile  <a href="http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/accountability/report/district.aspx?orgtypecode=5&amp;linkid=30&amp;fycode=2018&amp;orgcode=04820000">http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/accountability/report/district.aspx?orgtypecode=5&amp;linkid=30&amp;fycode=2018&amp;orgcode=04820000</a>	Meeting 74 percent of Improvement Targets

An analysis of River Valley's performance on the state MCAS exams demonstrates that River Valley students performed better than our sending districts in seven out of fourteen of the assessment areas (i.e., grades 3-8 taking ELA and math and grades five and eight taking the STEM examination, for a total of fourteen MCAS test administrations). Of note, a greater percentage of River Valley students perform above the sending districts in our upper grades. We believe this correlates to the fact that students in our earlier grades are still developing skills using manipulative materials that provide concrete representation of abstract concepts and serve as tools to support skill development. In the upper grades, we believe that students have further assimilated their learning into abstract reasoning.

**Sending Districts to River Valley: MCAS Score Comparison - Spring 2018 Results**

Grade & Subject	% of Students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations				
	District A	District B	District C	District D	RVCS
GRADE 03 - ELA	48	68	61	38	53
GRADE 03 - MATH	46	65	42	36	41
GRADE 04 - ELA	63	53	55	59	56
GRADE 04 - MATH	48	38	39	48	22
GRADE 05 - ELA	39	60	41	56	58
GRADE 05 - MATH	30	51	25	40	42
GRADE 05 - STEM	50	45	44	44	60
GRADE 06 - ELA	46	62	50	65	68
GRADE 06 - MATH	35	48	38	55	39
GRADE 07 - ELA	36	57	39	46	69
GRADE 07 - MATH	43	58	43	44	80
GRADE 08 - ELA	49	58	53	56	87
GRADE 08 - MATH	55	59	43	47	80
GRADE 08 - STEM	32	41	38	39	43



## Other Performance Data

In previous years, the school collected Learning Goal data derived from student progress reports. The data was aggregated and shared with the Accountability Committee of the Board of Trustees as indication of student progress towards benchmarks.

During the 2018-2019 school year, River Valley redesigned its K-6 progress reports and adopted an automated system to collect progress report grades and to generate the reports. The new system underwent several revisions during the school year and at yearend, we settled on a final version for grades K-6. The grade 7 and 8 progress report will be updated in 2019-2020 so that we use the same collection system and report generator for our middle school progress reports as well. The new system centralizes the data in one system, as well as allows system administrators access for printing, emailing, etc. (Previously the school's technology coordinator was the sole programmer and administrator of the entire progress report infrastructure, exposing River Valley to unnecessary risk.) The progress report redesign has provided risk mitigation as well as administrative benefits.

In 2018-2019 we piloted a system of Universal Screeners in multiple K-6 classrooms (more information about the implementation of Universal Screeners is below in the Program Delivery section). It is anticipated that screening data, when implemented more consistently, will be used to track student progress going forward.

## Program Delivery

### Habits of Learning Curriculum/Student Portfolios

During the 2018-2019 school year, all levels continued to implement and further refine our Habits of Learning curriculum. The Habits of Learning, also called the Eight Cs for Curiosity, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Commitment, Communication, Citizenship, and Compassion, were identified as expected outcomes of the RVCS Peace Education Curriculum Map and represent Dr. Montessori's vision of education as a tool to promote peace.

Students in grades K-6 created portfolios that, rather than reflect a collection of best practices, included work samples and reflections based on the Eight Cs. In grade eight, expectations for students' Celebrations of Learning (COLs) were adjusted to also reflect the Habits of Learning. Eighth grade students' COL presentations and portfolio documentation were assessed on the student's ability to incorporate and relate the Habits of Learning to their tenured experience at River Valley. [A sample of the COL rubric is included in the appendix.](#)

### Universal Screeners

During the 2018-2019 school year, and as a result of the previous year's work with the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association's (MCPSA) Model Demonstration School Program, River Valley piloted a number of academic screeners including the Quick Phonics Screener (grades K-3), the Acadience Math Screener (grades K-6), and the SAEBRS behavioral screener (grades K-6).

The Quick Phonics Screener provided faculty with pre-reading/reading skill data. Teachers, working in conjunction with a Literacy Consultant/Coach (described below), used the data to create instructional groupings as well as to identify areas where teachers needed support with their instructional practices. The Literacy Coach modeled lessons, and then observed the teachers implementing the lessons themselves. From this work, the Literacy Coach identified the need for additional training specifically for struggling learners. As a result, several teachers were selected to

be trained in Lively Letters, a literacy program that can be especially useful for young visual learners. Seven teachers were trained and three went on to be certified in the Lively Letters program during 2018-2019.

The Acadience Math Screener, also adopted this year, was administered three times during the year in most K-3 classes and in one Elementary 2 classroom. Next year we will require every K-6 classroom to administer the screener three times per year. We are purchasing the online scoring and reporting system as soon as it is made available so that teachers can input their own data and generate relevant reports to support their lesson planning and instructional practices. School-based reports will help identify curricular areas in which teachers may need additional curricular materials or continued professional development.

The SAEBRS screener, which stands for Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavioral Rating Scale, was also administered for the first time in grades K-6 during 2018-2019. The data from this screener was used to verify that students with social/emotional needs were getting support services from the school counselor. The usefulness of this screener is still being determined; it is unclear if the data generated from this screener can function as more than a diagnostic tool for the identification of students with social, academic or emotional behavioral deficits.

Overall, screening data has proven useful as part of our Response to Intervention program and will continue to support this process. As hoped, we are seeing a better distribution of RtI resources, more consistency across classrooms, and most importantly, increased capacity within the general education classroom.

## **Coaching**

River Valley began 2018-2019 with a plan for three different coaching initiatives: literacy coaching for grades K-6, Montessori coaching for Kinderhaus and Lower Elementary, and general coaching for Upper Elementary and Middle School.

The school entered into a yearlong contract with a Literacy Consultant/Coach to support grade K-3 teachers in implementing explicit, systematic literacy instruction. Ben Scherz, the Literacy Consultant/Coach, worked with our teachers to analyze, augment, and implement a literacy program that would align with our Montessori pedagogical approach. Teachers increased their capacity to teach reading through their participation in bi-weekly professional development with the literacy consultant/coach. In total, Ben worked with fifteen faculty members at the grade K-3 levels including classroom teachers and assistants, a literacy interventionist, and instructional assistants. The goal of this work was to create common language, curriculum, and approach for a balanced literacy program. We will continue working with Ben in the 2019-2020 school year.

River Valley also worked with a Montessori consultant/coach for a portion of the 2018-2019 school year. Elizabeth Slade, of the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, spent time with our grade K-3 lead and assistant teachers working on curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as modeling a Lesson Study protocol. This work has been extremely useful for teachers who plan to carry the lesson study protocol into the 2019-2020 school year as well.

The third coaching initiative was focused on the upper grades, with the goal of providing feedback on curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom management, etc. for grade 4-8 teachers who requested the 1:1 coaching. Unfortunately, the RVCS-based coach did not finish out the school year

at River Valley and the program was discontinued in early January 2019. The new Director and Assistant Director will be attending a week-long Montessori conference during the summer of 2019, which will include a two-day training opportunity centered on coaching. With additional insight into the Montessori coaching model, the new Director plans to provide Montessori coaching in the new school year. This will be piloted and assessed during 2019-2020.

### **Student Teachers**

During the 2018-2019 school year, River Valley partnered with Salem State University to serve as a site for two student interns: one at the Elementary 2 level and one at the Middle School level. The student teachers were welcomed and utilized as if they were regular staff members. They provided classroom support, participated in school duties, and received professional development alongside RVCS peers. One of the teachers is returning as an Assistant Teacher in an Upper Elementary classroom next year.

### **Progress Reports**

New grade K-6 progress reports were created during the 2018-2019 school year. The new reports feature a page for our Habits of Learning curriculum in addition to a page for each of the academic areas. The academic areas have fewer measures than our previous progress reports and include an Engagement Score to indicate a child's interest and commitment to working in that academic area. For each academic area, the student's strength in that area is highlighted as well as a goal for future growth. New progress reports for grades seven and eight will be created during the upcoming school year.

### **Supports for All Learners**

*The school's approach to supporting students with diverse learning needs did not change during the 2018-2019 school year.*

During the 2018-2019 school year, River Valley hired a Literacy Interventionist to support teachers and students in grades K-6. River Valley also added an additional 1:1 staff member, raising the number of 1:1 support staff to two. A Board-Certified Behavior Analyst from one of our local sending districts was contracted to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment. This initiated a partnership with one of our local sending district that we hope will continue going forward.

The school's total special education staff included to nine dedicated staff (three special education teachers, a literacy interventionist, two 1:1 instructional assistants, a speech and language pathologist, and two learning assistants). River Valley has a full-time school counselor and a part time school psychologist and subcontracts for occupational therapy and physical therapy.

### **Looking Ahead**

River Valley is in the initial stages of planning for the creation of a dashboard to be implemented in the 2019-2020 school year. The purpose of the dashboard is to highlight information relevant to student learning, and to provide insight into school-based areas in need of additional focus. The dashboard will include student performance data indicators as well other indicators to support the accountability committee in their work, the board in their governance work, as well as serve as a vehicle to share information about the school with the greater community.

## **Organizational Viability**

### **Organizational Structure of the School**

*There were no changes to the organizational structure of the school during the 2018-2019 school year.*

Level Coordinators finished an inaugural year serving on a team, called the Coordination Team, that met weekly with administration. The purpose of the Coordination Team was to provide representation from staff about their perspective and needs, and to assure open and continuous communications. Level Coordinators shared information about ongoing initiatives with their peers, facilitated level meetings, and provided support for some level-related administrative functions. The level coordinator positions will continue into the 2019-2020 school year.

### **Organizational Changes in the Upcoming Year**

In November of the 2018-2019 school year, Andy Willemsen gave notice to the Board of Trustees that this, his sixth year as the School Director, would be his last at River Valley. Andy had been involved with River Valley in one way or another since the school's inception in 1999 when he joined the school's Board of Trustees. He had also served as an Upper Elementary teacher at River Valley.

The Board of Trustees immediately created a search committee and hired Edgility Consulting Group to help with a national search. The search process included the use of focus groups, surveys, and in-person meetings. In March, the Board interviewed three final candidates and ultimately hired Jonnie Lyn Evans, the school's Assistant Director and a co-founder of River Valley, to assume the Director's position beginning July 1, 2019.

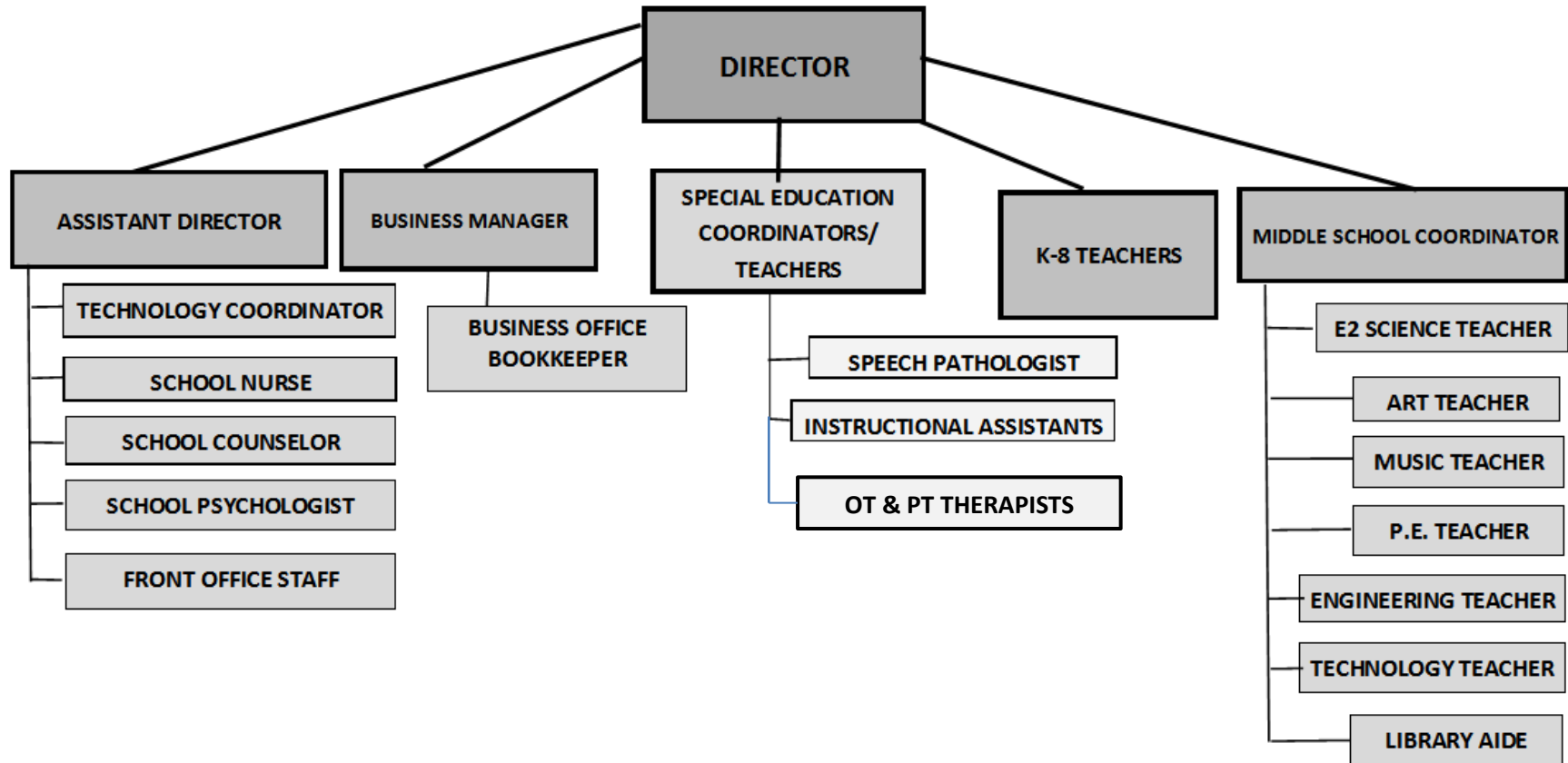
Later in the spring, a search for a new Assistant Director was initiated. Dan Bouchard, an educational leader from the parochial sector, was hired as Assistant Director and began on July 1, 2019.

An updated Organizational Chart is included on the following page.

### **Teacher Evaluation**

*There were no changes to the school's system for teacher evaluation.*

## Organizational Chart



## Budget and Finance

### FY19 Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Change in Net Assets

Unaudited, at FY19 Year End

<b>OPERATING REVENUE</b>	
Per-pupil tuition	\$ 4,164,095
In-kind MTRS pension	548,785
Program specific private grants and contributions	129,665
Program Fees	126,413
Government grants	75,126
In-kind transportation	33,264
<b>Total operating revenue</b>	<b>5,077,348</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	
<b>Personnel and related</b>	
Salaries and wages	3,003,559
In-kind MTRS pension	548,785
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits	422,279
Professional development	41,358
<b>Total personnel and related</b>	<b>4,015,981</b>
<b>Occupancy</b>	
Repairs and maintenance	111,672
Lease Liability	93,840
Utilities	44,872
Interest Expense	26,470
Insurance	13,417
Taxes, sewer betterment	2,890
<b>Total occupancy</b>	<b>293,161</b>
<b>Direct student costs</b>	
Program expenses	115,227
Consultants and service contractors	100,111
Instructional materials	67,402
In-kind transportation	33,844
Technology and equipment	21,605
Testing and assessment	1,916
<b>Total direct student costs</b>	<b>340,105</b>
<b>Other operating costs</b>	
Professional fees	46,571
Insurance	42,178
Technology and equipment	29,144
Office supplies	21,589
Dues and subscriptions	15,996
Travel	9,027
Miscellaneous	7,928
Equipment leases	6,997
Minor equipment	6,560
Telephone	4,118
Printing and postage	2,413
Advertising and recruitment	1,709
Bad debt expense	300
<b>Total other operating costs</b>	<b>194,530</b>
<b>Depreciation and amortization</b>	<b>222,822</b>
<b>Total operating expenses</b>	<b>5,066,599</b>

(continued next page)

<b>CHANGES IN NET POSITION FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b><u>10,749</u></b>
<b>GENERAL REVENUE (EXPENSE)</b>	
Interest and other income	6,912
Contributions	1,923
Community building events	(1,773)
<b>Total general revenue</b>	<b><u>7,062</u></b>
<b>CHANGES IN NET POSITION</b>	<b><u>17,811</u></b>
<b>NET POSITION:</b>	
<b>Beginning of year, as restated</b>	<b><u>1,673,216</u></b>
<b>End of Year</b>	<b><u><u>\$ 1,691,027</u></u></b>

**Note:** Net position, beginning of year was restated to adopt the GASB 87 Lease accounting standard as of July 1, 2018



## Unaudited Statement of Net Assets for FY19 Year End

### ASSETS

#### **CURRENT ASSETS**

Cash and cash equivalents	\$	704,174
Accounts and grants receivable		341,024
Prepaid expenses and other		14,321
Total current assets		1,059,519

#### **RESTRICTED CASH**

66,323

#### **RIGHT TO USE LEASE ASSET, NET CAPITAL ASSETS, NET**

3,301,283

884,404

#### **Total assets**

**\$ 5,311,529**

### LIABILITIES AND NET POSITION

#### **CURRENT LIABILITIES**

Accrued payroll	\$	289,694
Lease liability, current portion		85,071
Accrued expenses		14,925
Accounts payable		6,131
Total current liabilities		395,821

#### **LONG TERM LIABILITIES**

Lease liability, long term		3,224,681
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#### **Total liabilities**

**3,620,502**

#### **NET POSITION**

Unrestricted:		
Operating		815,092
Invested in capital		875,935

Total unrestricted 1,691,027

#### **Total net position**

**1,691,027**

#### **Total liabilities and net position**

**\$ 5,311,529**

**FY20 Approved School Budget****Approved by the Board of Trustees on June 18, 2019 for the Year Ending June 30, 2020****OPERATING REVENUE**

Per-pupil tuition	\$	4,336,250
Program specific private grants and contributions		75,000
Government grants		70,000
Program Fees		52,500
<b>Total operating revenue</b>		<b>4,533,750</b>

**OPERATING EXPENSES****Personnel and related**

Salaries and wages	3,036,000
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits	486,000
Professional development	52,000
<b>Total personnel and related</b>	<b>3,574,000</b>

**Occupancy**

Interest Expense	123,047
Repairs and maintenance	128,300
Utilities	50,000
Insurance	14,500
Taxes, sewer betterment	3,500
Vehicle Expenses	1,250
<b>Total occupancy</b>	<b>320,597</b>

**Direct student costs**

Consultants and service contractors	105,000
Instructional materials	62,500
Technology and equipment	22,500
Program expenses (RVCS)	13,500
Testing and assessment	2,000
Transportation Services	500
<b>Total direct student costs</b>	<b>206,000</b>

**Other operating costs**

Professional fees	52,600
Insurance	45,500
Technology and equipment	36,000
Office supplies	23,000
Dues and subscriptions	18,000
Minor equipment	17,250
Miscellaneous	6,500
Travel	12,500
Equipment leases	7,000
Printing and postage	5,000
Telephone	4,500
Advertising and recruitment	2,350
<b>Total other operating costs</b>	<b>230,200</b>

**Depreciation and amortization****245,000****Total operating expenses****4,575,797***(continued on next page)*

**OTHER REVENUE (EXPENSES)**

Community Building Events	1,500
Contingency-Board of Trustees	3,653
<b>Total other revenue (expenses)</b>	<b>5,153</b>

<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>4,580,950</b>
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<b>CHANGES IN NET POSITION FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b>(47,200)</b>
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**GENERAL REVENUE**

Interest and other income	7,200
<b>Total general revenue</b>	<b>7,200</b>

<b>CHANGES IN NET POSITION</b>	<b>(40,000)</b>
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<b>NET POSITION, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>1,691,027</b>
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<b>NET POSITION, END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 1,651,027</b>
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## **FY20 Capital Plan**

The River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees has committed to funding a restricted Capital Reserve Fund for future infrastructure needs. Trustees have allocated \$40,000 per year to this fund over the last six years, and the fund balance as of June 30, 2018 is \$66,323. These funds will be available for any urgent facility or site needs, as well as any planned infrastructure expenses. Through careful fiscal planning, the Trustees expect to position the school to absorb any unforeseen infrastructure costs without significant impact on annual operations.

During the fiscal year 2019-2020, RVCS will have funds available for a potential replacement of an aging rooftop HVAC Unit with a unit replacement value of approximately \$15,000. RVCS will also investigate the costly maintenance of the stormwater ponds to preserve its intended function of flood control and pollution prevention. The stormwater ponds are designed to suppress flooding from surface roads, parking lots, rooftops, etc. These stormwater ponds are an engineered device that requires regular maintenance and the costly maintenance will need to be addressed due to parking lot flooding and playground drainage issues. An engineer will need to develop a plan for these stormwater ponds.

During the fiscal year 2018-2019, RVCS completed capital improvements to the school building and site, with total expenditures as follows:

- Leasehold improvements that included interior alterations and renovations for a total investment of \$15,927.
- Investment in capital equipment for an outside storage shed for a total investment of \$5,269.
- Investment in replacement windows due to seal failure for the solarium for a total investment of \$12,275.

The beginning balance for fiscal year 2018-2019 of the Capital Reserve Fund was \$59,767. Total expenditures on capital improvements for the fiscal year 2018-2019 was \$33,471. All of these funds came from the Capital Reserve Fund. The School Board of Trustees voted to fund \$40,000 for fiscal year 2018-2019, in June 2019, for an ending balance for fiscal year 2018-2019 of \$66,323.

The School Board, in conjunction with the RVCS Foundation Board, refinanced the school's mortgage debt as of September 12, 2018. The RVCS Foundation locked in a 15-year fixed rate of 3.7% to limit market risk and reduce the school's facility costs.

With the school's current Capital Reserve Fund approach, as well as the Board's efforts to secure a low interest rate on the mortgage debt for an extended period, River Valley has taken a conservative and visionary approach to the future needs and financial stability of the school.

## Additional Information

### Accountability Plan Performance for 2018-2019

#### Faithfulness to Charter

2018-2019 Performance	Evidence
<b>Objective 1: River Valley Charter School will provide a high-quality Montessori learning environment for all students.</b>	
<p><b>Measure 1A:</b> River Valley will alternate internal and external audits of its Montessori program every year. Both audits will assess the school’s Montessori programming against the American Montessori Society’s (AMS) “Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector”. (A summary of “Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector” is included as <a href="#"><u>Accountability Attachment for 1A: Essential Elements.</u></a>)</p>	<p>River Valley administration conducted an internal audit during December of 2018. The audit included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of school policies, protocols, and documents</li> <li>• Evaluation of the school against the American Montessori Society’s “Essential Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector” “guidelines</li> <li>• Classroom observations</li> <li>• Work engagement observations</li> <li>• Panel discussions with Kinderhaus and elementary teachers, Middle School Teachers, specialists, and students.</li> </ul> <p>A report summarizing the audit is on file at the school.</p>
<p><b>Measure 1B:</b> Annually, River Valley will be found to be in compliance with a minimum of 18 of the 20 applicable American Montessori Society’s (AMS) “Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector” *.</p> <p><i>* Exception: The document contains 22 elements. Two elements require a 2.5-6-year-old multi-age grouping that is not possible due to MA public school design limitations. RVCS excludes these two elements from the measurement.</i></p>	<p>RVCS met all 18 applicable elements during the 2018-2019 audit.</p> <p>One element, related to age groupings, and the other, related to program entry at 2.5 years old, are not possible within our public charter program. RVCS does satisfy the remainder of components of these elements.</p> <p>A table summarizing RVCS’ performance against the elements is included as <a href="#"><u>Accountability Attachment for 1B: RVCS Measured on the Essential Elements.</u></a></p>

<p><b>Measure 1C:</b> At the end of each academic year, at least 90% of lead teachers in grades K-6 will be Montessori trained by an accredited training institution.</p>	<p><b>Met</b></p>	<p>All K-6 (eleven) lead/co-lead teachers are Montessori trained. Additionally, seven of nine assistant teachers in our K-6 classrooms are Montessori trained or certified.</p> <p>Credential information is stored in the school's Student/Staff Information Management System.</p>
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<p><b>Objective 2: Every River Valley Charter School student will demonstrate their learning about the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.</b></p>		
<p><b>Measure 2A:</b> Annually, every class will engage in a minimum of three place-based learning experiences about the history, culture or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.</p>	<p><b>Met</b></p>	<p>RVCS students participated in over 150 field trips during the school year. Supporting evidence summarizing every classroom's place-based learning experiences is on file at the school.</p>
<p><b>Measure 2B:</b> Annually, every student in grades 3 through 8 will demonstrate their place-based knowledge to a group of peers and adults through written, oral or multi-media presentations. A minimum of 85% of students at each grade level will earn a score of 3 or better, on a 1 to 4 scale, on an assessment rated against a standardized place-based learning rubric for their grade level. Rubrics will include specific language designed to assess the level of student learning about the history, culture or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.</p>	<p><b>Partially Met</b></p>	<p>Every student in all grades, with the exception of grade four, met the measure (85%+ of students demonstrating their place-based knowledge with an average score of 3 or better on a place-based rubric). The percentage of students at each grade level who scored 3 or better follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 97% of third year students</li> <li>✓ 82% of fourth year students</li> <li>✓ 91% of fifth year students</li> <li>✓ 90% of sixth year students</li> <li>✓ 88% of seventh year students</li> <li>✓ 93% of eighth year students</li> </ul> <p>A graph of the percentage of student scores on their place-based rubric is included as <u><b>Accountability Attachment for 2B: Place-Based Learning Assessment Results.</b></u></p>

<b>Objective 3: Every graduating student will demonstrate the ability to critically self-reflect and to assess their academic strengths and challenges.</b>		
<p><b>Measure 3A:</b> Annually, 100% of graduating students will successfully create and deliver a River Valley Celebration of Learning (COL). Every COL will include a portfolio of student work with corresponding reflections for selected artifacts, as well as a formal presentation to peers and adults.</p>	<p><b>Met</b></p>	<p>All 28 graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade students created and delivered their Celebration of Learning, which included a formal presentation as well as a portfolio of their work. This year the Celebration of Learning requirements were updated to include reflections from the Habits of Learning.</p> <p>The schedule of COL presentations, as well as project guidelines (summarizing the required contents of the COL), are on file at the school.</p>
<p><b>Measure 3B:</b> 90% of graduating students will earn a final score of 3 or better, on a 1 to 4 scale, on rubrics specifically designed to assess the student's ability to critically self-reflect. Rubrics will be completed by a minimum of four jurors, including both internal RVCS staff and external, non-RVCS jurors.</p>	<p><b>Met</b></p>	<p>100% (30 students) received a final score of 3 or better on their COL rubric. 36% of students received a perfect score of 4. The average score for all 28 8<sup>th</sup> grade students was 3.8 overall.</p> <p>A graph of COL scores is included as <u><b>Accountability Attachment for 3B: 8th Grade Celebration of Learning Scores.</b></u></p> <p>A binder containing completed rubrics for each student is on file at the school.</p>



Dissemination

<b>Objective 4: RVCS will share its Montessori curriculum with other schools in Massachusetts over the course of its charter term.</b>		
<b>Measure 4A:</b> By the end of this charter term, RVCS staff will lead at least ten workshops or presentations for non-RVCS teachers to disseminate best practices in public Montessori education. RVCS staff will average two workshops or presentations per year toward this objective.	<b>Met</b>	<p>RVCS hosted the second annual Public Montessori Convening to bring together public Montessori schools located in the Northeast for collaboration and sharing of best practices. Approximately 70 individuals attended the half day event where RVCS staff led workshops on multiple topics relevant to public Montessori programming.</p> <p>Presentation information is on file at the school. Total presentations during this charter term is fourteen.</p>

## Recruitment and Retention Plan

### Recruitment Plan

2019-2020

School Name: **RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL**

#### 2018-2019 Implementation Summary

River Valley Charter School implemented its recruitment strategies as laid out in the 2018-2019 Recruitment Plan and received 194 applications, representing successful recruitment efforts for the school. 99 of the new applications were for kindergarten where most spots were available. This compares to 72 applications for kindergarten last year.

The kindergarten roster of 32 students who began attending River Valley Charter School in the 2018-2019 school year included five students who were subsequently identified in need of financial assistance after enrollment. Additionally, four kindergarten students were on individualized educational programs (IEPs) by the end of the 2018-2019 school year.

Like previous years, a number of open Kinderhaus spots are taken by siblings of currently enrolled students. In 2019-2020, eighteen of the 32 spots will be filled with siblings. Given this influence, our incoming class of Kinderhaus students will probably not alter our enrollment statistics significantly despite our recruitment efforts, i.e., we will not meet the comparison index or gap narrowing targets.

#### General Recruitment Activities for 2019-2020

General recruitment activities include print and electronic media advertising as well as an ongoing partnership with the Greater Newburyport Mothers' and Families' Club where we present at the annual Early Education Information Night. We also reach out to local preschools and day care facilities. Additional general recruitment activities include advertising efforts via:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Local newspaper press releases
- Advertisements in the local newspaper and at libraries
- Public service announcements on the local cable television network
- Flyer distribution to schools (guidance counselors, ELL coordinators, etc.)
- Enrollment Information Sessions (offered at night and on weekends)
- Website posts

Recruitment Plan – 2019-2020 Strategies	
Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities	
<p><b>CHART data</b></p> <p><b>School percentage:</b> 16.7%</p> <p><b>GNT percentage:</b> NA%</p> <p><b>CI percentage:</b> 13.1%</p> <p>The school is <u>above</u> CI percentages</p>	<p><b><i>Continued 2018-2019 Strategies:</i></b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Met GNT/CI: no enhanced/additional strategies needed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute informational flyers to the special education departments of each of our sending districts.</li> <li>• Connect with local school SEPACs.</li> </ul>

Limited English-proficient Students/English Learners	
<p><b>CHART data</b></p> <p><b>School percentage:</b> 0%</p> <p><b>GNT percentage:</b> .3%</p> <p><b>CI percentage:</b> .5%</p> <p>The school is <u>below</u> both GNT percentages and CI percentages</p>	<p><b><i>Continued 2018-2019 Strategies:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute informational flyers to ELL coordinators of each of our sending districts.</li> <li>• Publish enrollment materials with a banner/footer indicating that translation and interpreter services are available if needed.</li> <li>• Make the Montessori Enrollment Session video available to all attendees in Spanish.</li> <li>• Have bilingual (Spanish-speaking) parents available at Enrollment Sessions.</li> <li>• Ask Spanish-speaking parents to share enrollment information in their multicultural communities.</li> <li>• Distribute flyers to local Rec Departments where there may be increased incidence of minority populations</li> <li>• Make a Spanish version of the application available on the school's website.</li> <li>• Place a sticker advertisement in Spanish in the local newspaper. The sticker adheres to the front page, top of the fold, and is visible to all readers, as well as to customers in any retail establishment that sells newspapers regardless of whether the paper is purchased.</li> <li>• Partner with the local the Chamber of Commerce to share recruitment information with agencies that support diverse communities. RVCS will ask to be included in events these agencies hold where there is a population of non-English speaking families and local resources are being presented.</li> <li>• Connect with the Newburyport Human Rights Commission, and individuals working on Sanctuary City status, to establish relationships with organizations who work with immigrants.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>2019-2020 Additional Strategy(ies):</i></b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Did not meet GNT/CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies below:</i></p>

	<p>River Valley enrolled one English Language Learner during the 2018-2019 school year and provided EL services to the student. The student was later designated as Formally Limited English Proficient when he placed out on the WIDA ACCESS assessment. New strategies to recruit Limited English-proficient students/English learners in 2019-2020 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure faculty members have the skills to work with English Language Learners, the school will contract with SEEM Collaborative to provide Sheltered English Immersion training to all relevant teaching staff at no cost</li> <li>• Advertise in North Shore Kid, an online resource for parents, visited by 300,000 individuals/month. This is a “go-to” resource for local families looking for events, schools, and other child-related information.</li> <li>• Submit an Eye Opener video providing information about the lottery and enrollment; aired during WCVB’s Good Morning programming.</li> <li>• Provide coffee sleeves to coffee shops located in our sending districts with information about the school and lottery.</li> <li>• Provide an afterschool Spanish enrichment program.</li> </ul> <p>All strategies will be implemented annually. RVCS anticipates 2-3 years to see GNT/CI changes.</p>
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Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (Low Income/Economically Disadvantaged)	
<p><b>CHART data</b></p> <p><b>School percentage:</b> 8.7%</p> <p><b>GNT percentage:</b> 10.2%</p> <p><b>CI percentage:</b> 12.5%</p> <p>The school is <u>below</u> CI percentages</p>	<p><b><i>Continued 2019-2020 Strategies:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute flyers to community service agencies (Head Start, Hugh Doyle Resource Center, Salvation Army, Pettengill House, SNAP, WIC)</li> <li>• Distribute flyers to the low-income housing developments in our sending towns/speak at low-income housing development events.</li> <li>• Provide economically disadvantaged students reduced rates or free access to before and after school childcare for working parents/guardians.</li> <li>• Continue collaborative relationships with Nourishing the North Shore to bridge connections with low income families in the area.</li> <li>• Post enrollment information at local soup kitchens (Salvation Army, Among Friends, Our Neighbor’s Table) and food pantry with whom the school has a collaborative relationship.</li> <li>• Conspicuously post a banner advertising free, full day kindergarten.</li> <li>• Work with Suzanne Dubus, CEO of the Jeanne Geiger Center, to identify and connect with clients served by this agency.</li> <li>• Conduct a fall outreach and a secondary outreach closer to the time of the lottery at low income residential areas in our region.</li> <li>• Working through Nancy Earls, the Director of the Newburyport Learning Enrichment Center, invite the tenant leadership group to visit RVCS so</li> </ul>

	<p>that they can reinforce flyer information we share with residents of the park.</p>
	<p><b>2019-2020 Additional Strategy(ies):</b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Did not meet CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies below:</p> <p>The trend for enrolling Economically Disadvantaged students has been increasing over the last five years, from 1.0% in 2014 to 8.7% in 2019. RVCS believes it will continue to see increased numbers of economically disadvantaged students as it continues to increase targeted recruitment efforts.</p> <p>New strategies to implement in the 2019-2020 school year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amplify the relationship with Our Neighbors' Table, a food pantry that serves 3,500 guests/year, to include presence at their events.</li> <li>• Connect with all of the Tenant Leadership Councils at each of our sending district's low-income housing areas to provide print marketing information about our public school programming. Follow up with live visits at Tenant meetings where available.</li> <li>• Partner with Newburyport Youth Services to increase after school opportunities for older students (grades 6-8) by providing transportation to their after-school facility.</li> <li>• Host summer Camp Invention program for the greater Newburyport area. The camp is staffed by RVCS Montessori teachers and includes a limited number of scholarships for free attendance. Follow up after the camp ends with information about the school and enrollment.</li> </ul> <p>All strategies will be implemented annually. RVCS anticipates 1-2 years to see GNT/CI changes.</p>
<u>Students who are sub-proficient</u>	<p><b>2019-2020 Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute flyers to local tutoring agencies.</li> </ul>
<u>Students at risk of dropping out of school</u>	<p><b>2019-2020 Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RVCS' summer school programming and drop-in sessions for middle school students are attractive to families who may have students at risk of dropping out of school.</li> </ul>
<u>Students who have dropped out of school</u>	<p><b>2019-2020 Strategies</b></p> <p>NA</p>

## Retention Plan 2019-2020

### 2018-2019 Implementation Successes and Challenges:

Our attrition rate for the 2018-2019 school year was more stable than the previous year, with 5.8% of students withdrawing overall. As such, River Valley met its 92% goal. The school's retention rate was 94.2%.

An analysis of the 2018-2019 withdrawals/transfers provided the following information:

- Four students transferred to private school; this is a trend we have noted for students whose families believe it will improve their child's potential for acceptance in private high school.
- Ten students returned to the district school; six were part of a group of boys who transferred so they could attend the district school together. Of the remaining students, one returned to the district school after one year as a middle school student at River Valley, two returned so that all family members were in the same district, and one was looking for greater social opportunities.
- One student took a placement test to skip a grade, effectively graduating one year early from River Valley

We continue to identify ways to increase retention rates by sharing information about our middle school with parents of younger students, by fostering greater social connections between classrooms, and by seeking to continuously improve programming.

Overall Student Retention Goal	
Annual goal for student retention (percentage):	92%

Retention Plan –2019-2020 Strategies	
Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities	
<p><u>CHART data</u></p> <p><b>School percentage:</b> 0%</p> <p><b>Third Quartile:</b> 8.2%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is <u>below</u> third quartile percentages.</p>	<p><b><i>Continued 2019-2020 Strategies:</i></b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Below the third quartile: no additional and/or enhanced strategies required.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a strong special education program staffed by qualified professionals.</li> <li>• Offer summer sessions to qualifying students.</li> <li>• Maintain a Response to Intervention program/Student Support Team.</li> <li>• Offer afterschool enrichment programs where less emphasis is placed on academics.</li> <li>• Offer additional support services before and after school to middle school students.</li> <li>• Train at least one staff member in Positive Behavioral Intervention practices to better support students with extensive behavioral needs.</li> <li>• Revamp the school's Student Support Team protocol to improve classroom teachers' ability to support students with diverse learning needs.</li> <li>• Hire a Literacy Consultant to support teachers in increasing their capacity to support students with disabilities.</li> </ul>



Limited English-proficient Students/English Learners	
<p><b><u>CHART data</u></b></p> <p><b>School percentage:</b> NA%</p> <p><b>Third Quartile:</b> 0%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is <u>below</u> third quartile percentages.</p>	<p><b><i>Continued 2019-2020 Strategies:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a relationship with an ELL service provider.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate number of teaching staff are SEI-endorsed.</li> <li>• Maintain SEI endorsement of at least one member of the administrative team and increasing numbers of the teaching staff.</li> <li>• Provide extra services (by an ELL service provider) to students who are not qualified ESL learners but whose backgrounds suggest that they are struggling due to English language learning (e.g., parents speak non-English at home, etc.)</li> <li>• Ensure current families are aware that RVCS offers ELL services. Offer all families an afterschool foreign language program to allow Spanish-speaking families opportunities to share their culture within the community.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>2019-2020 Additional Strategy(ies), if needed</i></b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>No ELs were enrolled during the 2018-2019 school year. No retention strategies needed. (Technically, an EL was enrolled but the student placed out via the WIDA assessment.)</i></p>

Students eligible for free or reduced lunch (low income/economically disadvantaged)	
<p><b><u>CHART data</u></b></p> <p><b>School percentage:</b> 5.6%</p> <p><b>Third Quartile:</b> 12.0%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is <u>below</u> third quartile percentages.</p>	<p><b><i>Continued 2019-2020 Strategies</i></b></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Below median and third quartile: no enhanced/additional strategies needed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access to school-based counselor to identify additional services available in the area.</li> <li>• Provide a high quality free or reduced-price lunch program to qualifying students.</li> <li>• Provide reduced cost before and after care program to qualifying students.</li> <li>• Provide reduced cost enrichment programming to qualifying students.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>2019-2020 Strategies</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide summer sessions to qualifying students.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>2019-2020 Strategies</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide drop-in summer sessions for Middle School student</li> </ul>
	<p><b><i>2019-2020 Strategies</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NA</li> </ul>

## School and Student Data Tables (Appendix C)

River Valley Charter School's student demographic enrollment data can be found on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's website at

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=04820000&orgtypecode=5&>

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND SUBGROUP INFORMATION		
Race/Ethnicity	# of students	% of entire student body
African-American	2	.7
Asian	8	3.1
Hispanic	7	3.8
Native American	1	.3
White	258	88.2
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	0
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	12	3.8
Special education	41	14.2
Limited English proficient	0	0
Economically Disadvantaged	22	7.6

ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR			
Name, Title	Brief Job Description	Start date	End date
Andrew Willemsen Director	Serves as the organization's Chief Executive Officer providing organizational and academic leadership. Supervises all K-8 faculty.	07/01/2013 *	06/30/2019
Jonnie Lyn Evans Assistant Director	Serves as the organization's Chief Operations Officer overseeing marketing, accountability, human resources and operations/systems. Additionally, supervises all Student Support Services program staff.	07/01/2013 *	
Lisa Kelley & Patricia Innes Special Education Co-Coordinators	Supervise special education programs at the K-grade 3 and grade 4-8 levels, respectively.	08/01/2015 *	NA
Colin Vandenburg Middle School Coordinator	Oversees the middle school curriculum and supervises all Specialists faculty.	09/01/2014 *	NA
Pamela Dawe Jones Technology Coordinator	Oversees the technological infrastructure of the school.	11/01/2011	NA

ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR			
Deb McCrevan Business Manager	Provides financial and facility management.	01/01/2000	NA
<i>* date represents the member's start date for this position; member was previously an RVCS employee</i>			

TEACHERS AND STAFF ATTRITION FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR				
	Number as of the last day of the 2018-2019 school year	Departures during the 2018-2019 school year	Departures at the end of the school year	Reason(s) for Departure
Teachers		3	8	3 terminated/non-renewal 3 were covering temporary posts 5 chose not to return
Other Staff		0	1	1 employee chose not to return

BOARD MEMBER INFORMATION	
Number of commissioner-approved board members as of August 1, 2018	16
Minimum number of board members in approved by-laws	11
Maximum number of board members in approved by-laws	20
Number of board committee members who are neither trustees nor school employees during 2018-2019 school year.	8

BOARD MEMBERSHIP FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR				
Name	Position on the Board	Committee affiliation(s)	Number of terms served	Length of each term Terms begin July 1 and end June 30
Amber Hewett	Trustee	Development	First term in progress	2017-2020
Todd Atanasoff	Trustee	Development	First term in progress	2018-2021
Nina Keery	Trustee	Accountability	First term in progress	2017-2020
Pam Brockmeier Armstrong	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term in progress	2017-2020

BOARD MEMBERSHIP FOR THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR				
Mason Mitchell-Daniels	Trustee Treasurer	Finance	Completed first term	2016-2019
Catherine Martin	Trustee	NA	First term in progress	2018-2021
Karina Moltz	Trustee	Accountability	First term in progress	2018-2021
John Siegfried	Trustee Vice Chair	Executive Committee on Trustees	Completed first term Left at end of second year of second term	2015-2018 2018-2021
Peter Zetlan	Trustee	NA	Completed first term	2015-2018
Nat Coughlin	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	Completed first and second terms	2013-2016 2016-2019
Mark Belanger	Trustee Chairperson	Executive	Completed first term, extending into second term	2014 2015-2018 2018-2020
Jennifer McCormick	Trustee	Development Chair	Completed first term Second term in progress	2014-2017 2017-2020
Alfred Link	Trustee	Accountability Finance	First term in progress *returning board member	2017-2020
Suzanne Cameron	Trustee	Development	Left during first year of first term	2018-2021
Katherine Brown	Trustee Secretary	Executive	Completed first term, extending into second term	2016-2019 2019-2022
Josh Porter	Trustee	Development	Completed first term, extending into second term	2016-2019 2019-2022
Jane Patterson	Ex officio Staff Representative	NA	Completed one-year term	2018-2019

## Additional Required Information

Key Leadership Changes		
Position	Name	No Change/ New/Open Position
Board of Trustees Chairperson	Pam Brockmeier Armstrong	New
Charter School Leader	Jonnie Lyn Evans	New
Assistant Charter School Leader	Dan Bouchard	New
Special Education Directors	Patricia Innes and Lisa Kelley	No change
MCAS Test Coordinator	Dan Bouchard	New
SIMS Coordinator	Dan Bouchard	New
English Language Learner Director	Dan Bouchard	New
School Business Official	Deb McCrevan	No change
SIMS Contact	Patricia O'Leary	Partial change

Enrollment Information	
Action	2018-2019 School Year Date(s)
Student Application Deadline	Tuesday February 26, 2019
Lottery	Thursday February 28, 2019

## Anticipated Board Meeting Schedule for 2019-2020

Tuesday August 13, 2019	Tuesday September 10, 2019
Tuesday October 22, 2019	Tuesday November 12, 2019
No December meeting	Tuesday January 14, 2020
Tuesday February 25, 2020	Tuesday March 17, 2020
Tuesday April 14, 2020	Tuesday May 12, 2020
Tuesday June 16, 2020	

## Accountability Attachment for 1A: Essential Elements



**AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY**  
education that transforms lives

### **Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public School Sector**

#### **Montessori Teachers**

- Employ Montessori teachers who have Montessori credentials for the levels they teach.
- Maintain an active and open recruitment for Montessori credentialed teachers.
- Budget for future Montessori teacher education for non Montessori-credentialed teachers.
- Provide professional Montessori in-service by experienced credentialed Montessori educators.
- Contract for on-going internal and periodic external Montessori consultation and/or professional support as a follow up to Montessori teacher education.
- Employ one paraprofessional per classroom, each having received Montessori orientation for that role.

#### **Administration**

- Employ an experienced Montessori teacher to serve as curriculum coordinator.
- Employ a building principal/educational leader who has knowledge of Montessori principles and curriculum through Montessori coursework, Montessori Administrator Credential and/or annual conference exposure.
- Maintain commitment to the core Montessori curriculum and instruction even with changes in administrative staff.
- Sustain the support of the central administration through high profile communications about program development.
- Recognize that the best implementation process is to begin with the 2.5-6 age group and add one age at a time for a gradual progression.

#### **Recruitment/Parent Education**

- Provide Montessori parent education programs that promote understanding of Montessori principles and curriculum.
- Develop an admission process that informs parents about the nature of Montessori and seeks the necessary commitment to the program.

### **Curriculum/Environment**

- Offer a full complement of Montessori materials purchased from Montessori dealers.
- Develop a classroom design that is compatible with Montessori "prepared environment" principles.
- Create uninterrupted daily work periods of 90 minutes to 3-hours, considering the 3-hour work cycle as ideal.
- Integrate specialty programs (music, art, physical education, etc.) around the uninterrupted work periods.
- Apply the appropriate multi-age groupings: 2.5-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-15, 15-18 necessary for the diversity, flexibility, and reduced competition integral to Montessori.

### **Assessment**

- Use a process of reporting student progress that is compatible with Montessori and includes parent conferences and authentic assessment tools such as observation, portfolio, performance assessment with rubric, etc.
- Implement state mandated assessments in such a way that the character of the Montessori program is not compromised.

### **Professional Development**

- Budget for continuing education through Montessori workshops and conferences.
- Maintain membership with one or more of the professional Montessori organizations and seek Montessori accreditation to assure consistent quality.

*This document was drafted and endorsed in the late 1990s by several Montessori organizations\* wishing to help guide the growth of public school Montessori. It has been presented at a number of Montessori conferences since then and used by various school districts preparing to offer a Montessori option.*

*\*The American Montessori Society, the Association Montessori Internationale, the North American Montessori Teachers' Association, Montessori Educational Programs International, and the Southwestern Montessori Training Center.*

## Accountability Attachment for 1B: RVCS Measured on the Essential Elements

*\*Essential Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector, the American Montessori Society*

Area & Number	Component	✓	Notes
1 Montessori Teachers	Employ Montessori teachers who have Montessori credentials for the levels they teach.	✓	All K-6 lead teachers are Montessori trained or certified. Additionally, in 8 of the 10 K-6 classrooms, the assistant teachers are also Montessori trained or certified. Middle school faculty has strong knowledge of the Montessori Method for adolescents and expertise in specific content areas. The Middle School Coordinator is AMS certified in Elementary I and II.
2 Recruitment	Maintain an active and open recruitment for Montessori credentialed teachers.	✓	All classroom teacher openings are posted on various education websites, including common Montessori websites and the school's website.
3 Training Budget	Budget for future Montessori teacher education for non-Montessori credentialed teachers.	✓	The school's budget annually includes a line item for Montessori training. The school fully funds Montessori certification training for all teachers. One Kinderhaus teacher is currently receiving training funded by the school. One E1 Teacher is currently in training for the 3-6 certification.
4 Professional Development	Provide professional Montessori in-service by experienced credentialed Montessori educators.	✓	The school has contracted with the NCMPS to host a trained Montessori coach for the 2018-2019 school year. The school is an active participant in local and national conferences. Additionally, credentialed in-house administrators and teachers are guiding professional development initiatives during the current school year.
5 Ongoing Consultation	Contract for on-going internal and periodic external Montessori consultation and/or professional support as a follow up to Montessori teacher education.	✓	As mentioned in Element #4, an NCMPS Montessori coach/consultant is on-site every month during the school year. This audit represents the bi-annual internal Montessori review conducted by River Valley administrators. Professional support as follow up to this audit and Montessori training are provided in-house by the Director, a certified Montessori educator. Montessori professionals conduct the bi-annual External Montessori Audits.
6 Assistants	Employ one paraprofessional per classroom, each having received Montessori orientation for that role.	✓	All K-6 classrooms have either a lead teacher and an assistant teacher or co-lead teachers. Seven of nine assistant teachers are either Montessori trained or have received Montessori orientation.
7 Curriculum Coordinator	Employ an experienced Montessori teacher to serve as curriculum coordinator.	✓	River Valley's Director and Middle School Coordinator are experienced and credentialed Montessori teachers. The school's Assistant Director has one year of Montessori classroom experience.
8 Administration	Employ a building principal/educational leader who has knowledge of Montessori principles and curriculum through Montessori coursework, Montessori Administrator	✓	The RVCS Director is a credentialed and experienced Montessori teacher. The Assistant Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans, has over twelve years of Montessori administrative service, as well as one year of Montessori classroom teaching. The Director presented at the 2018 AMS National Conference.

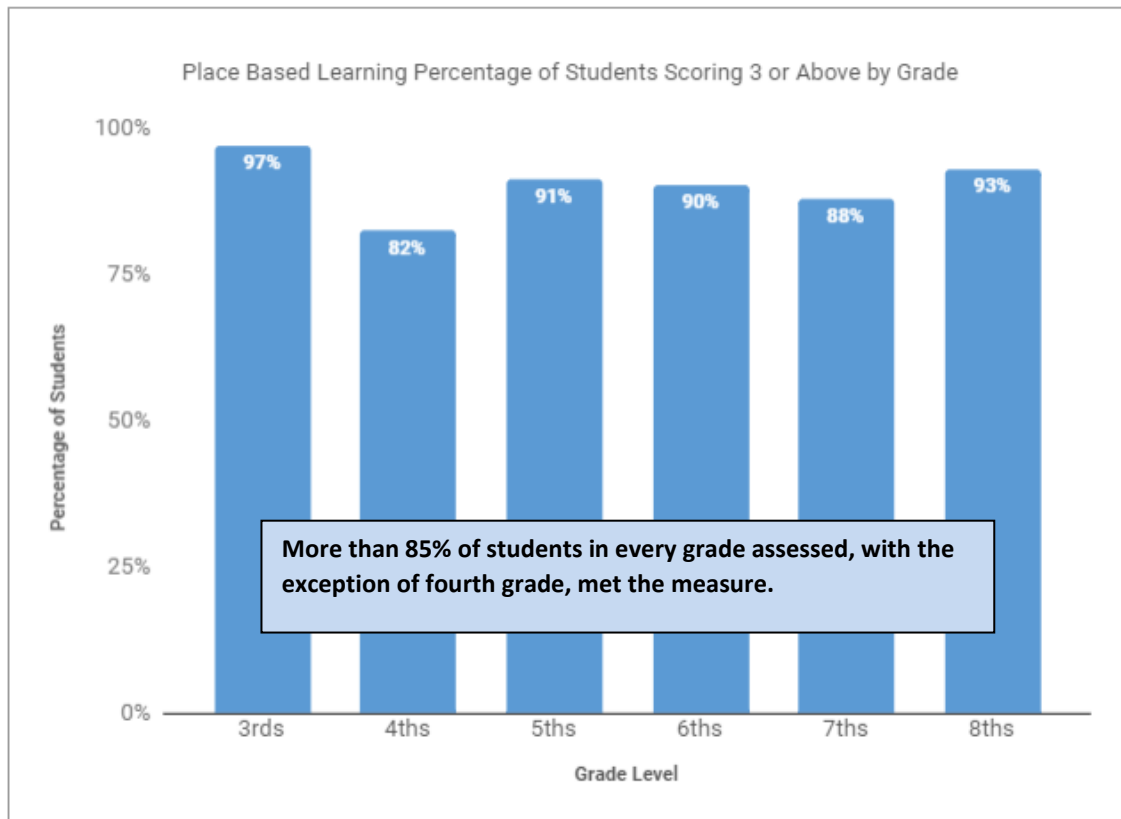


	Credential and/or annual conference exposure.		
9 Curricular Commitment	Maintain commitment to the core Montessori curriculum and instruction even with changes in administrative staff.	✓	All key administrators have Montessori experience. The Academic Program Coordinator position was eliminated, but the person holding this role is currently a classroom Lead Teacher. The school is working with the NCMPS coach/consultant to maintain its commitment to the core Montessori curriculum.
10 Communication	Sustain the support of the central administration through high profile communications about program development.	✓	As a Commonwealth Charter School, RVCS is its own school district, and reports to the state Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (OCCSR). The OCCSR conducted its charter renewal site visit in September, and the Commissioner of Education has recommended an unconditional renewal of the school's charter for another five-year term. Additionally, the OCCSR approved the school's Annual Report and results for the RVCS Accountability Plan.
11 2.5-6 Age Range	Recognize that the best implementation process is to begin with the 2.5-6 age group and add one age at a time for a gradual progression.	n/a	While the recognition of the importance of the multi-age program exists, limitations and restrictions on town and state funding for early childhood programs prevent RVCS from offering enrollment to pre-school aged students. The existing Kinderhaus classrooms are excellent examples of high-quality Montessori environments.
12 Parent Education	Provide Montessori parent education programs that promote understanding of Montessori principles and curriculum.	✓	Prospective and new parent orientation sessions, as well as parent nights in each classroom provide essential information regarding the Montessori Method. In addition, the Director offers monthly morning meetings with parents as well as sending home 'Director's Notes' weekly, which frequently outline key aspects of Montessori education. K-6 classroom teachers send home weekly emails to families, updating them on the work of the children, and the Middle School Coordinator publishes a monthly newsletter that is distributed to the entire school community.
13 Admissions	Develop an admission process that informs parents about the nature of Montessori and seeks the necessary commitment to the program	✓	This process is well established from the first contact at the Enrollment Information Sessions through Kinderhaus screening and New Parent Orientation. The Assistant Director holds multiple information sessions for prospective families and offers additional Montessori education sessions for parents during Kinderhaus screening days.
14 Montessori Materials	Offer a full complement of Montessori materials purchased from Montessori dealers.	✓	All K-6 classrooms are equipped with a wide array of Montessori materials. The RVCS Foundation funds a \$5,000 annual grant to assure the ongoing acquisition of Montessori materials for all levels. Materials and classroom furniture are sourced from high quality Montessori vendors.
15 Prepared Environment	Develop a classroom design that is compatible with Montessori "prepared environment" principles	✓	The overall beauty of K-6 classrooms was impressive, with materials thoughtfully presented and kept in good condition. Furniture is purchased from Montessori distributors, and suits the developmental needs of the children. All K-6 classrooms have tiled and carpeted areas for student learning, as well as in-class water sources and dedicated bathrooms. Large group, small group, and individual learning areas exist in all K-6 rooms. Plants are present in all rooms, and animals in many. E1 rooms provided peace corners, and E2 rooms all offered upholstered seating options. Middle school classrooms provide flexible environments that foster both group and individual learning spaces.

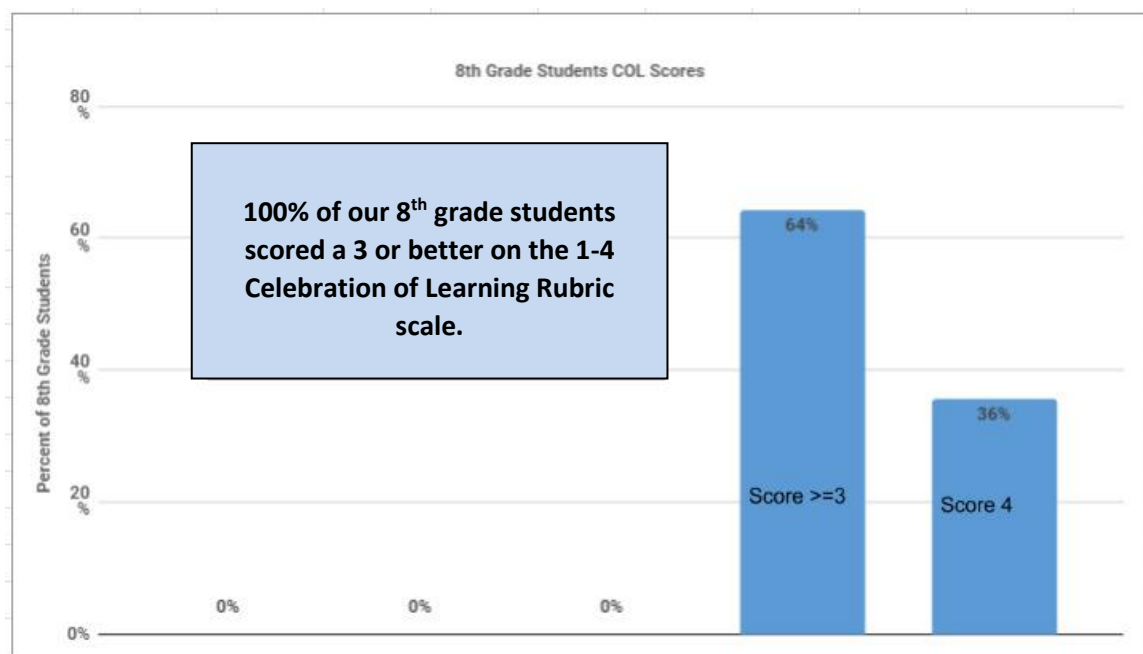
16 Work Periods	Create uninterrupted daily work periods of 90 minutes to 3-hours, considering the 3-hour work cycle as ideal.	✓	All K-6 classroom have uninterrupted work blocks of at least 90 minutes scheduled every day, and most have 3-hour work blocks at least 4 days per week. The current schedule for specials and instrumental lessons has put pressure on the continuity of the work period, with increased interruptions to the three-hour work cycle. There is broad consensus that the specials programs are of high quality and offering meaningful learning to all students, yet teachers are feeling the stress of the tight scheduling and the many demands on student's time. The middle school schedule includes 120-minute learning blocks for science and humanities classes, and a minimum of 60-minute classes for mathematics and language arts classes. The specials schedule is working well for the middle school program.
17 Integrated Specials	Integrate specialty programs (music, art, physical education, etc.) around the uninterrupted work periods.	✓	As mentioned above, the breadth of enrichment classes included in the RVCS curriculum presents ongoing scheduling challenges. Great care and planning are invested in minimizing the impact on the morning work periods, so that all classrooms have four days with a three-hour work period, and work periods of at least 90 minutes on other days.
18 Age Groupings	Apply the appropriate multi-age groupings: 2.5-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-15, 15-18 necessary for the diversity, flexibility, and reduced competition integral to Montessori.	n/a	RVCS recognizes the importance of these multi-age groupings, but is unable to offer a 2.5-6 program due to limitations and restrictions on town and state funding for early childhood programs
19 Progress Reporting	Use a process of reporting student progress that is compatible with Montessori and includes parent conferences and authentic assessment tools such as observation, portfolio, performance assessment with rubric, etc.	✓	RVCS progress reports have been updated to align with Montessori curriculum and reflect student progress toward learning goals. Both faculty and parents report positive feedback from this effort. Additional emphasis has been placed on parent conferences, which occur three times annually. Performance assessment data is reflected in progress reports. Teachers at all levels have implemented an innovative approach to portfolio assessments centered on the school's Habits of Learning curriculum, and parent feedback has been positive. All teachers have committed to increasing their classroom observation practices. Both exiting E2 students and Middle School students engage in gateway performance assessment projects.
20 Assessment	Implement state mandated assessments in such a way that the character of the Montessori program is not compromised.	✓	RVCS uses the MCAS as its state mandated assessment tool. Though these remain high-stakes tests, the current administration has attempted to reduce the impact of these tests on daily school culture. The faculty also use a variety of internal assessments to assist in progress report data. Teachers and administration continue to develop assessment tools that align with the Montessori philosophy.
21 Professional Development	Budget for continuing education through Montessori workshops and conferences.	✓	The budget continues to reflect an investment in Montessori workshops and conferences. Three staff will be attending the National AMS Conference in Washington, D.C. this March.
22 Memberships	Maintain membership with one or more of the professional Montessori	✓	RVCS is a member of the American Montessori Society and the Montessori Schools of Massachusetts.

	organizations and seek Montessori accreditation to assure consistent quality.		
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## Accountability Attachment for 2B: Place-Based Learning Assessment Results




## Accountability Attachment for 3B: 8th Grade Celebration of Learning Scores



## ATTACHMENT 1: Celebration of Learning Rubric

START TIME \_\_\_\_\_ RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL END TIME \_\_\_\_\_  
 RUBRIC FOR CELEBRATIONS OF LEARNING PRESENTATION

PRESENTER \_\_\_\_\_ PANELIST'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Content Strand	Basic 1	Working 2	Proficient 3	Applied 4	Score 1-4	Feedback to Student
Organization and Development of <b>Story of Self</b>	Story not ordered or fully developed	Story needs improvement in organization and development; lacks student's voice	Story has logical flow, is unique to the student; personal voice is evident	Story is easy to follow; includes meaningful and <b>complex</b> insights, is infused with student's distinct voice throughout		
Integration of <b>Evidence of Learning</b> and Examples into Story of Self	No evidence of examples 	Examples are weak or do not strongly connect to story and/or <b>Habits of Learning</b>	Examples are clearly developed and make strong connections to the story and/or <b>Habits of Learning</b>	<u>At least 5 examples are shared and discussed</u> and make connections to story and/or <b>Habits of Learning</b> are complex and robust and		

Presentation Strand	Basic 1	Working 2	Proficient 3	Applied 4	Score 1-4	Feedback to Student
Comfort, poise, grace and eye contact before the audience	Student's body language detracts from presentation (paces, fidgets, plays with paper/notes)	Student appears comfortable at times but displays some distracting body language	Student is comfortable before the audience and gestures when appropriate	Student <b>exudes confidence</b> throughout the entire presentation and gestures <b>enhance</b> the presentation. Strong eye contact helps presenter <b>connect</b> to audience		
Volume, Cadence, Tone, Inflection	Student speaks too quietly for audience to hear; student mumbles	Student's voice is low and does not project to entire audience	Student's voice is clear; audience members can hear presentation	Student projects and uses variations of voice in a way that <b>engages the audience</b>		
Response to questions	Does not respond or responds with "I don't know"	Student makes an attempt at answering the questions but does not fully address the questions	Student responds to questions with understanding and gives well reasoned answers	Student <b>engages</b> with audience; displays <b>openness</b> ; gives carefully thought out answers		

Average: \_\_\_\_\_

Panelist's Personal Comments to Presenter: