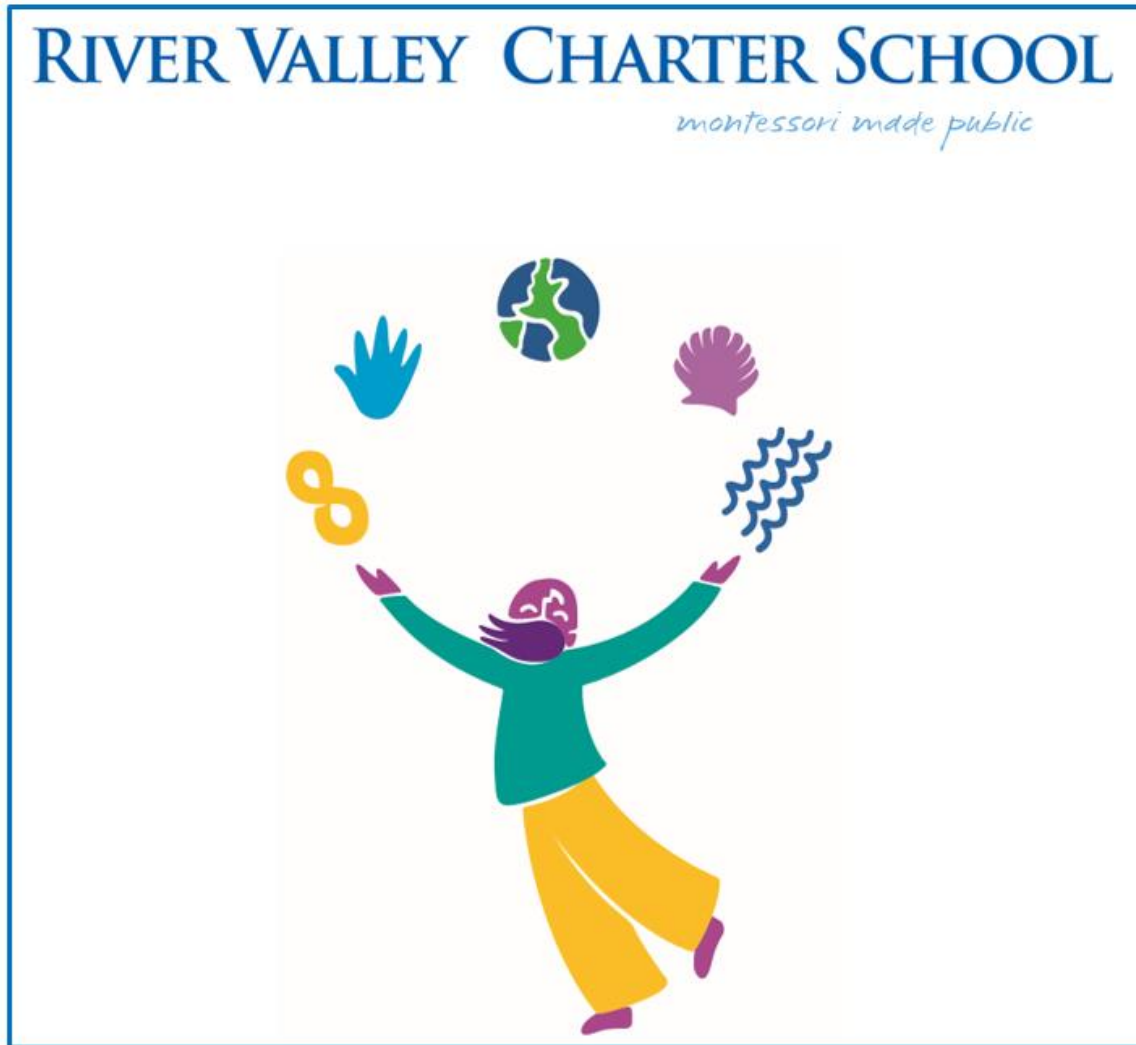


Annual Report of a Public Charter School 2021-2022



RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION TO RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

<i>River Valley Charter School (RVCS)</i>			
Type of Charter	Commonwealth	Location of School	Newburyport
Regional or Non-Regional	Regional	Chartered Districts in Region	Amesbury, Newburyport, Pentucket, Triton
Year Opened	1999	Year(s) Renewed	2003, 2009, 2014, 2019
Maximum Enrollment	288	Enrollment as of 6/22/2022	284
Chartered Grade Span	K-8	Current Grade Span	K-8
# of Instructional Days per School Year (as stated in the charter)	180	Students on Waitlist as of July 13, 2022	125
# of Instructional Days during the 2021-2022 School Year	180 total days		
School Hours	8:30am – 3:10pm Monday-Friday	Age of School as of 2021-2022 School Year	Twenty-two years
Mission Statement <p>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.</p>			

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

July 18, 2022

To the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

On behalf of the River Valley Charter School community, we are pleased to submit to you our Annual Report for the 2021-2022 academic year. In its third decade of operation, the school is thriving in challenging times. River Valley Charter School continues to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.

River Valley Charter School's high-quality public Montessori program was enriched this year by several key enhancements. Following last year's success with Placed Based Education at the E2 (grades 4-6) level, it was piloted as a permanent addition to our programming. The Middle School gained a language program that offers Spanish, German, and Computer Programming. Additionally, the School's Music curriculum was adjusted and improved to be more accessible, equitable, and robust. Not only do these programs serve to enhance the academic experience at RVCS, but they also, notably, serve to boost our attention to the "whole child" and support mental health within the school.

RVCS maintains a strong fiscal position and cares well for its physical assets. We are thankful for the generous federal grants and consistent state funding that support staff, programs, and our physical location. This year, the Business Office has focused on updating its practices and transitioning regular responsibilities (e.g., payroll and benefits) to outside providers. Improvements were made to our HVAC system and our grounds. The school also developed a 20-year Capital Needs Assessment to prepare for near and long-term capital expenditures. Sound financial practices have carried RVCS through another successful year.

We are emerging now from both the pandemic crisis of 2020-2021 and the re-adjustment challenge of 2021-2022. It is important to acknowledge our entire community once again for their part in contributing to the success of this school year. RVCS is resilient because of the willingness of everyone to step up when needed to support the mission of the school. Teachers, staff, administrators, families, students, Board and Foundation members are all integral to the strength of RVCS.

Thank you for taking the time to review the enclosed report, and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Pamela Armstrong
Chair, Board of Trustees

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Faithfulness to the Charter

Mission and Key Design Elements

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.

Educational Program Based on the Montessori Philosophy

Approximately ten years ago the American Montessori Society recognized a need to focus on Montessori programming in the public-school sector, i.e., separate from Montessori programming in independent schools. This work ultimately led to the creation of the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS). NCMPS has worked to bring consistency, accountability, and credibility to Montessori as a viable public-school option. One tool to support this work is the [Essential Elements Rubric](#) (Accountability Measure 1A) It outlines components of a successful public Montessori program in five domains: the Adults, the Montessori Learning Environment, Family Engagement, Leadership and Organizational Development, and Assessment. Ways in which River Valley meets the standards in the first two domains are described below.

Montessori Educators: River Valley Charter School (RVCS) provides a high-quality Montessori program within the public school arena by employing Montessori-trained and/or certified teachers in every classroom and by providing tuition support for accredited Montessori training. This fulfills the school's expectation that all K-6 lead teachers have Montessori credentials.

In 2021-2022 we returned to our typical K-6 classroom configuration with two adults, typically a lead and assistant teacher, in every classroom. All ten of the grade K-6 classrooms had a full-time lead teacher and a full-time assistant teacher during the 2021-2022 school year¹. Nine of the ten grade K-6 lead

¹ The Lead teacher in one Elementary 2 classroom terminated employment in mid-April 2022. Two former River Valley employees, along with the Assistant Teacher, took on roles as co-teachers through the end of the school year.

teachers had Montessori certification.² Six of the ten grade K-6 assistants had Montessori training, and three have Montessori certification. Our Place-Based Education program (PBE) piloted this year (and described later in this report) was staffed by three educators, two who hold Montessori credentials and one who has Montessori training.

RVCS also supports authentic Montessori programming by staying abreast of best practices in the ever-expanding arena of public Montessori. To this end, River Valley contracts for general Montessori-specific professional development annually and approves individual Montessori-related training for faculty and staff throughout the school year.

Multi Age Classrooms:

The multi-age classrooms in grades 1-8 enrich the curriculum options by offering students the opportunity to learn from and teach each other.

Most lessons are given in small group settings and are customized to meet the learning needs of each student. Individualized instruction is made possible due to the presence of two teachers in every classroom. Teachers provide lessons based on both their Montessori training and the guidelines of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Our learning environments typically operate on the principle of freedom within limits. This contributes to the development of independence and strong decision-making skills.

Montessori Materials: 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, hands-on learning opportunities for all students.

“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

Our classrooms are outfitted with genuine Montessori learning materials and furniture, which are essential to creating a prepared Montessori learning environment. In younger grades, children work with Montessori

materials that demonstrate abstract concepts concretely. The materials solidify their understanding, provide self-correction, encourage collaboration, and represent hands-on learning.

² At the end of the year, with the replacement of one lead teacher in Elementary 2, all lead teachers were Montessori certified.

Whole-Child Education: Montessori education is centered upon a whole-child approach to learning and our faculty 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.

Small group instruction during the school day allows teachers to continuously 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. The design of a Montessori classroom allows for more movement than traditional educational settings. This benefits all children, and especially those who need physical/kinetic opportunities for 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 a community. 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 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

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 others.

During the 2021-2022 school year, every classroom continued to implement the RVCS Habits of Learning curriculum ([described in more detail in the Academic Performance section of this document](#)) which prioritizes and strengthens our whole child approach to education. We continued the use of online portfolios, something we had transitioned to during the 2019-2020 COVID closure. The use of online portfolios continues to be assessed and refined. The goal is to make them as reflective and robust as genuine artifacts. During 2022-2023 we will finalize plans for online portfolios, particularly determining their appropriateness in the younger grades or identifying an alternative.

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 manner to suit the learning style and pace of each student. Rather than structuring the day to assign a limited amount of time to each subject area, the Montessori approach provides 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.

New during the 2021-2022 school year was our ability to provide a consistent and dedicated uninterrupted work period for our grade K-6 students. The uninterrupted work cycle is fundamental to the Montessori pedagogy because it supports the development of deep concentration and "big" work. Its application at River Valley had seemed impossible without employing duplicate specialist teachers and contracting for additional physical space. In January 2022, RVCS adopted a six-day rotation for grade

1-6 specials. This allowed for uninterrupted morning work periods and afternoon specials for students, as well as consistent daily collaborative time for teachers.

In 2022-2023, RVCS will pilot the six-day rotation for the kindergarten and middle school levels as well. While the 6-day rotation reduces the total number of hours that students participate in each special, it ensures that every child has an opportunity to participate in all of our rich offerings. With the six-day rotation we will also add open studio time in the morning and extended time for some specials in the afternoon, particularly those that lend themselves to longer blocks (e.g., art, engineering, lab science).

Much of RVCS students' work is project-based, and students frequently have a voice in the topics they research. For example, every October, our Elementary 1 students engage in a Mystery History project. Each child selects a notable historical figure, researches their life, creates a biography, and formally presents their research to students and families while dressed in the costume of their historical figure.

Our Elementary 2 (grade 4-6 students), regularly engage in project-based work, exploring topics from the Industrial Revolution to our local ecosystems. Through place-based learning opportunities, students gain

"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

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.

Our students have many opportunities to actively engage in learning experiences outside the school walls as well. From exploring the wetland ponds on our school site to advocating for greater awareness and focus on climate change, River Valley students continually experience and learn from the surrounding world in active ways.

Our commitment to providing students with ample outdoor time, called wellness at the middle school level and recess at other levels, reinforces our belief that learning occurs in many venues and under varying circumstances. Children learn valuable social competences, practice activities that contribute to better health, think critically, and develop, and other important skills when they participate in teacher-supported, unstructured activities outside of the classroom.

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 their community faces and develop strategies and responses accordingly.

Students at all levels typically eat lunch in their classrooms with their peers and teachers, allowing for informal social time that provides additional personal and community connections. During the pandemic we had a mix of indoor and outdoor eating depending on individual teacher's comfort managing COVID-safety practices. Regardless of inside or out, lunch is a social, community-building

activity. In many classes, a monthly community lunch occurs. Students, with help from the adults in their family, plan, shop, and prepare a lunch that can be shared with the entire classroom.

The Specials schedule for grades 1-6 is arranged so that students from two classrooms are grouped together by grade. This extends community connections across the grade level and supports the development of a school-wide community. River Valley also holds monthly, whole-school assemblies where

"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

both students and staff share projects and activities happening throughout the building and beyond. The assemblies include student presentations, skits, songs, and other student-led entertainment. Middle school advisory groups serve as hosts of the school-wide assemblies. During 2021-2022, River Valley began a return to student gatherings. Rather than bringing all levels together at one time, we held assemblies by level, providing students with opportunities to see peers they had been separated from the prior year. By yearend, we had returned to at least one full community gathering of all levels.

Students in grades 4-8 typically 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. During the 2021-2022 school year, and because of the COVID-19 pandemic, our students participated in fewer overnight trips. We look forward to the resumption of these activities in 2022-2023.

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

"...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

tables and provide open floor space for group work. 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 deepen their comprehension. Additionally, our commitment to tying the curriculum to the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley naturally lends itself to collaborative work. Project work expectations typically include both reporting and presentation (often multimedia), and our students are responsible for working together to assure successful execution of these expectations, modeling the skills required for success beyond the school environment.

A Sense of Social Justice: At the classroom level, every classroom community develops a social contract at the beginning of the school year to define the expectations and conditions for a peaceful, respectful, and safe learning environment for the year. This process provides opportunities for students to articulate and deepen their thinking regarding social justice and other lofty social issues. It includes global and national health issues, racial injustices, environmental stewardship and more.

River Valley students at all levels also participate in community service work that provides them with perspectives on the larger community and the issues that people beyond our school walls may face.

Our younger students connect with the elderly, economically disadvantaged and/or disabled and learn through these experiences as they interact with these communities. When we were not able to physically visit offsite facilities for community service, we provided children with other forms of connection. Our Kinderhaus students decorated paper bags used for soup kitchen grab-and-go meals for low-income families. Similarly, our grade 1-3 students organized and wrapped plastic cutlery and napkins to be included in the grab-and-go meals. Interaction and support of those less privileged than our youngest students supports their connection to others and recognition that the social fabric is more expansive and complicated than their immediate community. Our younger students also made cards and gifts for the elderly and disabled, critically important for those living in isolation during the pandemic. Last, our younger students petitioned the Mayor of Newburyport to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day. They wrote letters and speeches and spoke at multiple public events in support of this change.

Students in grades 4-8 frequently engage in formal and informal debates, where topics regularly center on social justice issues. Elementary 1 and Elementary 2 students frequently design and run fundraising efforts for non-profit organizations, from the local food bank and animal shelter to hospitals and international NGOs. This year they organized efforts in support of Ukraine, cleaned debris from the local business park, and baked bread to sell and donate to non-profit organizations. Grade 4-6 students tapped maple trees and produced maple syrup. In exchange to access the maple trees by a local historic farm, students created public signage describing the history of maple sugaring and information about the process of making maple syrup.

Our middle school students continuously work to expand their awareness of themselves from their place within their family and friend structure to a greater understanding of their place in the local community as well as within the larger global community. Through a Community Seminar class, middle school students engage in deep discussions and complete project work about the world's most pressing social justice issues. This year, students focused on how conversations and understanding can happen even when differences are present. The yearend project included staff interviews for students developed their own questions. They drew inspiration from the work of StoryCorps and a new project of theirs called One Small Step which facilitates people from vastly different, often opposing, backgrounds, having meaningful conversations with each other founded on similarities rather than differences. In the year ahead, this project will be going outside of the walls of our school, COVID permitting, as students work with local seniors and students outside of our state.

"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

The yearend project included staff interviews for students developed their own questions. They drew inspiration from the work of StoryCorps and a new project of theirs called One Small Step which facilitates people from vastly different, often opposing, backgrounds, having meaningful conversations with each other founded on similarities rather than differences. In the year ahead, this project will be going outside of the walls of our school, COVID permitting, as students work with local seniors and students outside of our state.

In Guidance middle school students researched mental health issues and turned their knowledge into posters to help teach others about issues that were important to them. The Visual Art and Community Service project group designed an animal coloring book to earn money for St. Jude's hospital and a non-kill animal rescue organization. Acknowledging the tumultuous times we live in - the entire MS team works to help our students expand their knowledge of important social justice issues while allowing them to develop their individual voices so they feel empowered to make a difference in the world.

While our Montessori pedagogy ensures that students have a sense of social justice in general terms, living in a community with limited racial and ethnic diversity makes it easy to ignore societal inequities on a day-to-day basis. We continue to reaffirm our commitment to teaching about racial injustice and hold each other responsible for addressing it. We are committed to teaching about equity, ensuring equity, and helping students accept responsibility for this work as well.

Curriculum Rooted in the History, Culture, and Ecology of 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 has been 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. As mentioned previously, River Valley not only preserved this commitment during the global pandemic but used the crisis to further recommit to its mission of place-based education as well.

Elementary 2 Place Based Learning

During the 2021-2022 school year, River Valley expanded on the successful outdoor program created for Elementary 2 students in response to the safety requirements (social distancing and cohorting) of 2020-2021. Working with one of the partners the prior year's outdoor programming, we established a place-based learning space offsite at Maple Crest Farm, a local farm site owned and operated by a Newburyport-educator-turned-farmer. The program is taught by three RVCS employees, one who has outdoor education credentials, and one who has environmental education credentials. The newly created program is called Place-Based Education (PBE) and aligns with the school's mission to provide a program "rooted in the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley."

At the beginning of the year, each Elementary 2 classroom traveled offsite one day per week, all year round. At midyear, we altered the program and sent children outdoors by grade level. This allowed us to change the specials schedule and create a dedicated work cycle for grades K-6, as previously described.

The PBE site includes a working tree farm, a vegetable farm, a reservoir, woods, walking trails, and acres of forest. A wide variety of topics, spanning all curricular areas, can be covered while outside. During PBE, students learned about Indigenous Peoples, mapping/orienteering, maple sugaring/commerce, archeology, plant science, animal adaptations, simple machines, landforms, weather, survival skills, etc. Students whittled; carded, dyed, spun, wove, and felted wool; chopped wood; learned fire building skills; cooked outdoors; made field guides; journaled, explored, hiked, and participated in collaborative games.

The program received positive reviews by nearly all students and families and yielded benefits beyond our expectations. Some of the benefits include:

- Providing an opportunity for students with weaker academic skills to demonstrate an area of non-academic strength to their peers
- Providing opportunities for children to connect with nature and as such develop greater environmental stewardship as well as an appreciation for place
- Providing children who may not have had many outdoor experiences with opportunities to expand their understanding of nature, survival, the environment, etc.
- Providing students with an opportunity to learn how to prepare for extreme weather conditions/survival skills

- Restoring focus and calm to students who may have attentional challenges, or are over-stimulated, and/or sensory-seeking, etc.
- Building confidence and resilience along with skills and knowledge
- Providing opportunities to rekindle social connections following a year of isolation and lost socialization due to cohorting, social distancing, and other pandemic-related safety precautions.

Additional place-based programming for Elementary 2 students included visits to: High Road Farm in Newbury, the Alnoba Peace Center in Kensington NH, the Boston Trolley Tours, the Parker River in Newbury, and the Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary.

Elementary 1 Place Based Learning

We initially considered offering a regular ongoing full-day PBE program to our E1 students as well. The plan involved having E1 students outdoors one day/month. We quickly discovered drawbacks to this plan and abandoned the monthly outdoor program for younger students. In its place, we partnered with a local historic farm, Spencer Pierce Little Farm, with whom we have partnered before, to create a more sustainable and developmentally-appropriate program. Elementary 1 students participated in two different programs: an archeological dig and a 19th century life-on-a-farm program (covering the history of farm tools and practices, animal care, etc.) These hands-on inquiry programs enabled students to handle artifacts to make hypotheses about the raw materials, the design, and the possible uses of unfamiliar objects. Students used real archaeology tools to uncover artifacts used in 18th century New England farming. The students learned about the necessary connection to the land that the first settlers had and how natural processes like salting fish helped people to survive during the harsh winters.

Other place-based programming for Elementary 1 students included an educational environmental boat tour on the Merrimack River provided by Joppa Flats Educational Outreach. Here third grade students interacted with native species and examined various animal adaptations and present threats to the quality and health of the Merrimack River and its watershed. Some students, after raising native brook trout from eggs, went on a trout-release at Bradley Palmer State Park.

E1 students also head started Blanding's Turtles, a threatened species. Head starting Blanding's turtles gives these threatened species an 80% chance of survival by adding five years growth in one year. For the Blanding's turtle project, students collected measurement data weekly to provide to Mass Wildlife, an organization that works in partnership with the Parker River Clean Water Association on this restoration/conservation project. During release, turtles raised in RVCS's classrooms the year prior were found thriving in the wetlands in Groveland.

Middle School Place Based Learning

Our middle school students had numerous place-based experiences as well, including two immersion days for project groups. One group participated in a Newburyport-focused art and science scavenger hunt based on the history, culture and ecology of the city and surrounding area. During a science immersion day, students focused on forest plot studies and species composition of the area, as well as biotic and abiotic influences. They sought to answer how these influencers have impacted what grows in our local area. Middle school students also students studied, visited and collected data on components of a local saltmarsh ecosystem. They researched species in our area and then created individual field guide pages that identified local organisms and explained their role in the ecosystem. In addition, middle school students visited a Bird Banding Research Station and helped with this work.

One middle school project group spent the year learning about beekeeping as well. In addition to studying about bees, they built and cared for beehive boxes that successfully produced honey. They

learned about the importance of bees and shared this with their peers. Other middle school place-based activities included visits to Newton Greenhouse, the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, the Newburyport Rail Trail, MA Audubon, and a rowing trip on the Merrimack River.

Kinderhaus Place Based Learning

Our Kinderhaus students visited Apple Crest Farm, the Ipswich Audubon Center, the Seacoast Science Center and went on a Harbor Tour

Focus on the Development of Students' 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 abilities to make positive and effective choices. Through these 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. Without the use of textbooks, teachers introduce concepts through small group lessons, literature, current events, Socratic seminar, discussions, and real-life activities. Students then explore the

"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

particular concept and are encouraged to develop or discover connections with prior knowledge and life experience. Teachers

understand that effective instruction will emphasize higher order thinking skills and the "why" behind each concept. Project-based learning, a core element of the Montessori philosophy, provides students deeper exploration of topics and the opportunity to extend their thinking beyond simply learning content.

During Elementary 2 debates and middle school Socratic dialogue students examine real-world issues. Through 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.

In the middle school, students are challenged to engage in abstract and higher order thinking in all subject areas. In 2021-2022, the focus in middle school was on early 20th century European history (the rise of the Nazi party and the Holocaust). Classwork included an exploration of concepts of identity, stereotyping and group behavior. In addition to learning about the atrocities of the Holocaust, an equal, if not greater focus, was on the conditions that enabled it to occur.

Following the middle school study of the Holocaust, middle school students began a unit on Race in America, with a focus on the time period from the beginning of the slave trade to emancipation. Last, middle school students studied the Fundamental Needs of Humans, a Montessori structure for comparing and contrasting human needs throughout history. Through this lens, they examined the life and culture of local Indigenous peoples.

Woven throughout the entire middle school program is the application of the arts (creativity) as a means to enhance learning and thinking. The middle school employs an Art Integration Specialist who works closely with the middle school team to broaden critical thinking. Her involvement in the program has enhanced the program by leaps and bounds, ensuring the hand is involved in teaching both the mind and the heart.

The success of our approach is evident through both 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.

Amendments to the Charter

Date	Amendment Requested	Pending or Approved?
Not yet submitted	Updated Enrollment Policy	Pending

Following the 2021 enrollment period, changes to the Enrollment Policy were recommended to ensure compliance. All changes were minor. The Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign and the school board reviewed the changes in March of 2020 and the updated policy was supposed to be submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for approval. Due to the start of the pandemic, and the continued interruptions in 2021-2022, the amendment was never submitted. This work will resume in the 2022-2023 school year.

Access and Equity: Discipline Data

The most recent, publicly available student discipline data is available at <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ssdr/default.aspx?orgcode=04820000&orgtypecode=5&=04820000&>.

Behavioral Expectations & Disciplinary Responses

Generally, River Valley suspends very few students. Out-of-school suspensions are used 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; occurring most often when behavioral infractions represent repeated occurrences of the same infraction. River Valley Charter School matches its disciplinary response to behavioral infractions using concepts of Restorative Justice and logical behavioral consequences.

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. 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. As a small school, administration is aware of all major disciplinary actions and can monitor for disparities among subgroups.

During the 2021-2022 there were four incidents that warranted disciplinary response. One student had a full day in-school suspension, and three students had half day in-school suspensions (all unrelated). Like other schools, we observed increased social-emotional challenges and more behavioral dysregulation among students this year. Next year we will be hosting two counseling interns who will provide additional social-emotional support for students.

In 2020-2021, the most recent year for which there is publicly available student discipline data, there were no out-of-school or in-school suspensions, expulsions, or emergency removals. A table of 2020-2021 student discipline data, by subgroup, is below.

2020-21 Student Discipline https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ssdr/default.aspx?orgcode=04820000&orgtypecode=5&=04820000&					
Student Group	Total # of Students	Students Disciplined	% of In-School Suspension	% of Out-of-School Suspension	% of Emergency Removal
All Students	293	0	Not applicable		
EL	0	0			
Economically Disadvantaged	26	0			
Students with Disabilities	53	0			
High Needs	72	0			
Female	156	0			
Male	137	0			
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0			
Asian	4	0			
African American/Black	1	0			
Hispanic/Latino	16	0			
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic/Latino	13	0			
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0			
White	258	0			

Access, Equity, Inclusion

In 2021-2022 we formed a partnership with the Boys' and Girls' Club of Lower Merrimack Valley to provide afterschool care. This change provided a more affordable program for families and one that provided working families with childcare support during half days, school vacations, and the summer. It also reflected our commitment to increasing our students' exposure and connection to diverse populations (the Boys' and Girls' Club serves a more diverse demographic than River Valley).

This year we launched an online book club for families that centered on non-fiction books that support our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. We read “Becoming Nicole”, a book about a transgender child, and “Raising White Kids, Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America”.

The use of book clubs to help address access, equity, and inclusion will continue going forward. In addition, faculty and staff will be exposed to the Seven Forms of Bias in Instructional Materials during the 2022-2023 school year. This is part of our ongoing commitment to keep DEI concepts at the forefront of our work.

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
Mission/Pedagogy	Presentation	Elementary 1 students	Newburyport City Council	Holiday name-change to Indigenous Peoples' Day
Best Practices	Awards Ceremony	Business Manager, Deb McCrevan	Annual MASBO conference attendees (MA public and charter schools)	Business manager received commendation for business practices.
Best Practices	Fellowship Site	Classroom teachers and the School Counselor, Katy Field	Salem State Merrimac College	RVCS hosted two interns who shared information about the school with in-service peers and educators at their colleges.
Best Practices	Meeting, documents sharing at Montessori Tech and Monthly Teach Leaders Consortium	Technology Coordinator, Pam Dawe Jones	Other public and private technology leaders	Shared practices to improve technology functions
Community Service Programming	Online program development meetings	School Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF)	The school shared its community service program design with the ECC Foundation which in turn shared it with MA schools with whom the Foundation works.
Collaboration	Volunteerism at local vaccine clinics	School Nurse, Kimberly Putney	The entire local community	The school nurse provided nursing and/or support services at a local vaccination site on multiple days.
Anti-Racism Practices	Case Study (online meeting)	School Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	Multiple MA public charter schools participating in a white ally leadership group	Shared practices RVCS used to address anti-racism teaching and communications
Best Practices	Online meetings	School Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	Northeast regional charter schools	Shared policies and practices with multiple charter schools in the northeast region through collaborative efforts with MA Charter Public School Association.

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
Best Practices	Biweekly participation in convening of second year charter leaders	School Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	MA Charter Public School Association, Hill View Montessori School, Advanced Math and Science Academy, Marblehead Charter School, Community Charter School of Cambridge, Martha's Vineyard Public Charter School, Libertas Academy, Bridge Boston Charter School	Documents, policies, and protocols shared with leaders
Collaboration/ COVID Response Practices	Planning Meetings	School Nurse, Kimberly Putney	Public school nurses	River Valley's COVID response practices were shared with other MA nurses.
Mission/Pedagogy	Presentation/Q&A	School Director, Jonnie Lyn Evans	Tufts University pre-service education students	General knowledge about public Montessori programming and outdoor education

Dissemination activities were hindered by the pandemic.

Academic Program Success

Student Performance

The most recent, state-based, publicly available student performance data can be accessed at <https://reportcards.doe.mass.edu/2021/04820050>.

Additional Performance Data: Universal Screeners

During 2021-2022, grade K-6 screening data was collected less frequently than years past as we readjusted following COVID restrictions. When we returned to school in-person across all levels, we found significant need to focus on social/emotional and academic behaviors, rather than academic content. As such, we spent less time assessing academic outcomes and more time gauging social/emotional stability.

Simultaneously, grade K-3 teachers, working in conjunction with a Literacy Interventionist, used observation data to create instructional groupings³, identify students for intervention services, and track the potential need for special education evaluation.

This year we adopted DIBELS, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, assessment for grades K-8. This represents the first literacy assessment tool to span all nine grades at River Valley⁴. DIBELS was piloted in January, following brief training on its administration. The plan was to administer it to all students in grades K-8. In the spring, we administered it to most students, leaving out upper grade students who placed out of their grade level. Following the pilot, we found teachers needed additional training in administration and use of outcome data. Some teachers administered the incorrect assessment or recorded the data in the incorrect fields. Inter-rater reliability was also questionable. Additional training will ensure all teachers are well-versed in DIBELS administration. Our plan is to hire an outside DIBELS trainer to ensure better results and more useful data.

The Acadience Math Screener was administered three times this year in all K-6 classrooms. As a screener, Acadience is difficult to use to gauge how well the school is doing by grade level, especially due to small sample sizes. Regardless, the math scores were not where we would like them to be. A trend we have noted before, and one that continued, is a weakness in general computation skills. In contrast, our students perform better on the concepts and application portion of the screener. Schoolwide 2021-2022 math composite scores at the Elementary 2 level indicated that more than 25% of our students

³ In 2020-2021 our class groupings had been reorganized in response to COVID restrictions. Changes to programming that year included combining grade K and 1 (changing the Elementary 1 program to only grades 2 and 3). In 2021-2022 we returned to our typical standalone kindergarten and a multigrade Elementary 1 consisting of grade 1-3 students.

⁴ RVCS discontinued testing with the Terra Nova test in 2014. It had been administered schoolwide.

were performing below benchmark. At the Elementary 1 and Kinderhaus level, composite scores were slightly more favorable. Composite scores pre-pandemic, in 2019-2020 were generally better. Last year's math scores beg the question- was poor math performance a result of interrupted schooling due to the pandemic or related to teaching practices. Another question that remains unanswered is the accuracy/value of the Acadience screener as an indicator of student mathematical knowledge, and its alignment to curriculum frameworks. Analysis of student performance consistently indicates that our students performance in math, as measured by the MCAS test, increases over their years at River Valley. By the time student cohorts finish their nine-year tenure at River Valley, scores in MCAS mathematics meet, and often exceed, that of our local sending districts.

Next year an Elementary 2 teacher will do a thorough analysis of the usefulness of the Acadience screener and its correlation to MCAS to determine if and what changes might need to be made to our math programming, or if the screener is a poor indicator of student skills and knowledge.

The SAEBRS screener, which stands for Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavioral Rating Scale, is a nationally-normed teacher observational tool that assesses a student's social, emotional, and academic behavior. In 2021-2022, we administered the screener in the winter. Results from the screener, in addition to teacher input, were used to identify students who needed additional social/emotional support. The school counselor worked closely with the school psychologist to create groups, provide lunch-bunch opportunities, and meet with students regularly. We also added a regular guidance class for first grade students. At the middle school level, where the majority of social/emotional dysregulation was observed, new social/support opportunities were created including: Communi-Tea, a social gathering for students desiring support with social connections, a game block for students who struggled socializing during recess, and a yearbook club. Next year we plan to add a guidance block for fourth grade students as well.

In 2022-2023, River Valley will host a full time Master's school counseling intern as well as a part time Master's social work student. We are excited to expand the supports we can offer to our students as they adjust to life with the ongoing prevalence of COVID-19 in our lives.

Academic Program

Curriculum and Instruction: The Montessori Method

The Montessori Method is about 100 years old. River Valley Charter School works to stay true to the Montessori approach in all academic settings while also modernizing to meet the needs and changes of our times.

As a public school, River Valley has aligned the Montessori Scope and Sequence with the MA Curriculum Frameworks to create a robust curriculum. In 2021-2022, we added additional curriculum offerings as follows:

- In middle school, we added a language program offering classes in German, Spanish, or computer coding.
- Middle school staff included a full time Art Integration Specialist who works with all middle school content-area faculty to bring additional creative opportunities to the learning process.
- In Elementary 2, we piloted the Place-Based Education Program, described previously.
- In Elementary 2, we eliminated the band program which had been utilized by children whose families were knowledgeable and/or had the resources to pursue it. We replaced it with a more accessible and wide-reaching program. All fourth-grade students were introduced to the ukulele,

and fifth grade students were introduced to violin. The intention was to provide instrumental options that all students would participate in; eliminate the impact of oft-forgotten instruments; increase equity/inclusion by offering music that multiple ability levels could play; increase opportunities for creative music-making; and expose children to the diversity of American folk music.

- In Elementary 1, we added a guidance class for grade 1 students. This was especially valuable for our young students whose prior year, their kindergarten and introductory educational year, was compromised by the pandemic. These students needed additional support learning how to socialize and interact with their peers, especially as they moved into a classroom of second and third grade students.
- In Elementary 1, we also added a writing class for grade 2 and grade 3 students. The school's Literacy Interventionist and a special education teacher taught this.
- We extended our Engineering special to include kindergarten.

In 2022-2023, River Valley will revisit the curriculum maps and learning goals created in 2017. Much of this work will be supported by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector who has created Skill Inventories for grades K-6 as well as national curriculum alignments.

Montessori Uninterrupted Work Period

As mentioned previously in this report, River Valley achieved something that had long been desired but written off as impossible-- the Montessori three-hour uninterrupted work period. By altering our specials schedule from a four-day rotation to six-day rotation we were able to make this key component of the Montessori pedagogy a reality. For years it had been identified as a weakness in our programming and desired by teachers. Offering the uninterrupted work period was deemed impossible without the addition of duplicate specialists teachers and additional physical space. The six-day rotation ensured that all grade 1-6 students spent the morning in their classrooms receiving lessons and working on follow up work, and afternoons at specials. Under the changed schedule, Kindergarten also had a similar schedule, participating in specials immediately before their lunch and recess period.

The consistency, common planning time, and organization of the specials was a key achievement in 2021-2022. In addition to helping the general education teacher, it also better supported the work of the special education department, helping them to plan, schedule, and meet with students more regularly. The uninterrupted work period was one way to focus and accelerate student learning during 2021-2022. Another byproduct of the schedule change was the availability of our specialist teachers during the work cycle. With the addition of more time in their schedules, we utilized them to provide extra support to students both in and out of the classroom. This added a third adult, operating as a mini-tutor to students identified as struggling.

Informal Assessment

To be successful in Montessori, educators must have a keen sense of observation and use this to continually adjust lessons for students. NCMPS has created observation tools that we will pilot during the 2022-2023 school year to support consistent observation across classrooms.

Montessori educators also continuously conduct informal formative assessment. There are multiple opportunities for authentic assessment in a Montessori classroom where students often create projects, participate in oral presentations, write, perform, and document their learning. As students' ages

increase, classrooms introduce more traditional types of assessment and especially by the time students enter middle school at River Valley.

Student Portfolios

The Habits of Learning, also called the Eight Cs for Curiosity, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Commitment, Communication, Citizenship, and Compassion, were identified as both expected and valued 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 work on portfolios that, rather than reflect a collection of best practices, include work samples and reflections based on the Eight Cs. Grade eight students' Celebrations of Learning (COLs) reflect the Habits of Learning. This year's eighth grade students' COL presentations returned to in-person.

Progress Reports/Parent-Teacher Conferences

We continued with our recently redesigned progress reports during 2021-2022 and offered family conferences three times during the year.

Our progress reports feature a page for our Habits of Learning curriculum in addition to a page for each of the academic areas. The academic areas include an engagement score to indicate a child's interest and commitment to working in that academic area as well as a performance score. Of note, our progress reports are designed to keep parents aware of their children's progress toward appropriate grade level work rather than to rank them in comparison to other students. As such, our progress reports indicate whether a child is "on target" for typical academic achievement. This distinction from other school's report cards is an important one and something that we are continuing to refine and support families in understanding.

River Valley continued to be flexible with conferencing this year to ensure we were meeting families where they were vis a vis their comfort with in-person interactions. At the beginning of the year, conferences were online via Zoom. By year end we were offering both online and in-person conferences to suit individual family needs.

Supports for All Learners

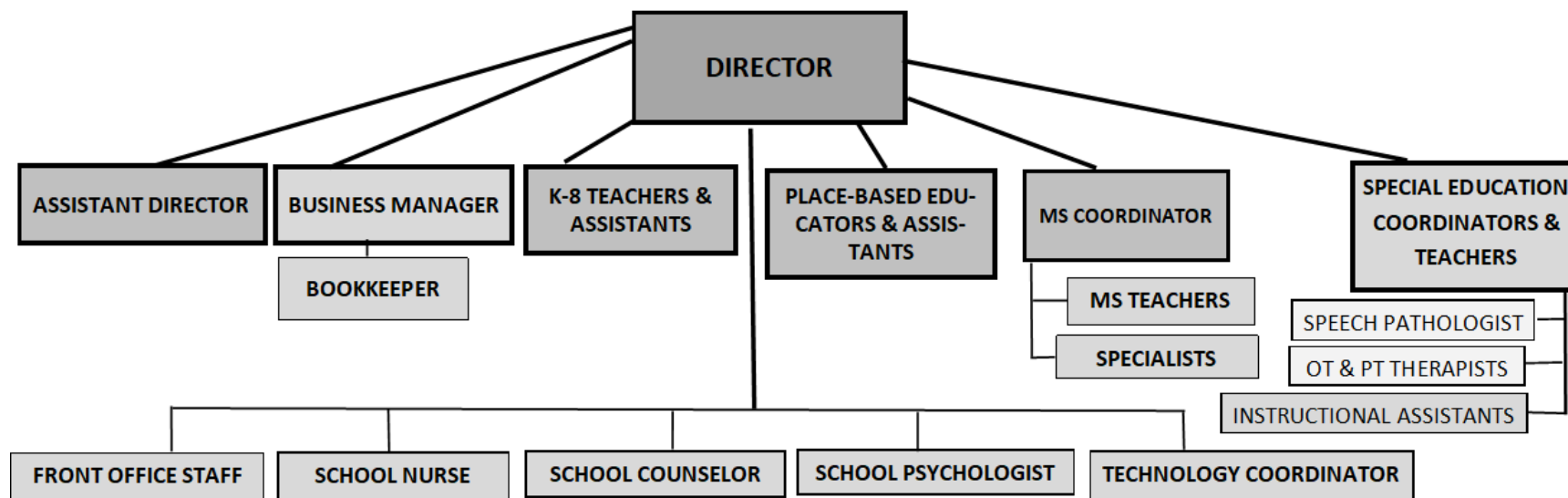
In total, there were five licensed special education teachers at River Valley during the 2021-2022 school year: one for K-3, two for 4-6, and two for 7-8. We employed one instructional assistant for K-3, a literacy interventionist to serve students in grade 1-3, two 1:1 staff members, and a speech and language pathologist. River Valley has a full-time school counselor and a part time school psychologist and subcontracts for occupational therapy and physical therapy.

In comparison to the prior year, River Valley staff and students experienced absences due to infection from the corona virus. We are fortunate that K-6 classes have at least two adults in every room so an absence by one adult was easily covered by the other who has knowledge of the curriculum, the students, and expectations. In many instances we bring in a substitute teacher as well to function as the second adult. In only one classroom were both teachers out with COVID at the same time.

RVCS worked with families to provide student work while students who were well enough to do so, were out. In some instances, mostly at the middle school level, we were able to Zoom students into lessons.

Organizational Viability

Organizational Chart



Organizational Structure of the School During 2022-2023

The organizational structure of the school during 2021-2022 returned to the pre-pandemic structure with the addition of faculty for the Place Based Education program.

The school is administered by a small administrative staff consisting of the School Director, the Assistant Director, a Business Manager, and a number of coordinators including two Special Education Coordinators, a Middle School Coordinator, and a Technology Coordinator. In addition, the School Nurse and the School Counselor support the leadership team. The Front Office staff includes a Receptionist/Secretary and a Data Support Person/Special Projects Administrator. The Business Office has a full time Bookkeeper as well. All other staff are teaching personnel. In July of 2022, the School Director renewed her contract for three additional years.

In 2021-2022, we continued with Level Coordinators and the Coordination Team. The Level Coordinators represent the various levels and areas of the school and meet regularly with administration. The purpose of the Coordination Team is to provide representation from staff about their perspective and needs, and to assure open and continuous communications between faculty and administration. Level Coordinators shared information about ongoing initiatives with their peers, facilitated level meetings, and provided support for some level-related administrative functions. The majority of individuals serving as Level Coordinators will continue serving in these roles next year, and weekly in-person meetings will continue.

The 2021-2022 educational structure returned to its traditional design for classrooms (returning to a single grade Kinderhaus, multiyear and combined cohorts in Elementary 1 and Elementary 2). We hired five new assistant teachers at the start of the year and one lead teacher for the Elementary 2 program. The newly-hired lead elementary teacher departed following April vacation and we brought in two part time consultants, prior employees, to staff that classroom for the remainder of the year.

Student Teachers

During the 2021-2022 school year, River Valley partnered with two colleges: Salem State College and Merrimac College. River Valley hosted a Salem State student teacher in Elementary 1 for half the year and then in Elementary 2 for the second half of the year. We also hosted a Merrimac College pre-practicum counseling intern. Both interns 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.

Next year, River Valley will host two counseling students from Salem State College. We are excited about the extra support in light of the social/emotional needs of students resulting from the pandemic.

Organizational Changes in the Upcoming Year

Looking ahead, the finance and human resource functions are transitioning to an outsourcing model. At the end of 2021-2022, we contracted with HRKnoweldge, a leader in the charter school arena, for HR and benefits. We have also contracted with Central Source beginning with the 2022-2023 school year. Central Source will replace the Business Manager function by the end of the 2022-2023 school year. During the first half of 2022-2023, the Business Manager will stay on to facilitate the transition to HRK and Central Source.

Budget and Finance

FY22 Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Change in Net Assets (Unaudited)

OPERATING REVENUE		
Per-pupil tuition		\$ 4,752,442
In-kind MTRS pension		-
Government grants		138,812
Program specific private grants and contributions		61,205
Program Fees		42,326
In-kind transportation		39,916
	Total operating revenue	5,034,701
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Personnel and related		
Salaries and wages		3,332,815
In-kind MTRS pension		-
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits		472,976
Professional development		29,521
	Total personnel and related	3,835,312
Occupancy		
Building and grounds		140,533
Lease expnese		116,079
Utilities		42,643
Insurance		11,547
Taxes, sewer betterment		2,598
	Total occupancy	313,400
Direct student costs		
Program expenses		97,615
Instructional materials		71,040
Consultants and service contractors		43,276
Technology and equipment		21,579
Testing and assessment		2,257
	Total direct student costs	235,767
Other operating costs		
Insurance		55,929
Technology and equipment		31,139
Professional fees		50,752
General supplies		18,816
Dues and subscriptions		14,711
Minor equipment		4,713
Equipment leases		6,447
Telephone		5,158
Miscellaneous		4,961
Travel		5,852
Advertising and recruitment		1,829
Printing and postage		1,539
Bad debt expense		-
	Total other operating costs	201,846

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Depreciation		67,301
Amortization of right-to-use lease asset		137,553
	Total depreciation and amortization	204,854
	Total operating expenses	4,791,179
CHANGES IN NET POSITION FROM OPERATIONS		243,522
GENERAL REVENUE (EXPENSE)		
Contributions - general		643
Interest and other income		8,150
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Asset		-
	Total general revenue	8,793
CHANGES IN NET POSITION		252,315
NET POSITION:		
Beginning of year		1,997,502
End of Year		\$ 2,249,817

Statement of Net Assets (Unaudited) for Year Ended June 30, 2022

<u>ASSETS</u>			
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents		\$	1,779,396
Accounts and grants receivable			9,431
Prepaid expenses and other			2,700
Total current assets			1,791,527
RESTRICTED CASH			178,977
RIGHT TO USE LEASE ASSET, NET			2,888,622
CAPITAL ASSETS, NET			836,298
Total assets		\$	5,695,424
<u>LIABILITIES AND NET POSITION</u>			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accrued payroll		\$	353,163
Lease liability, current portion			95,552
Accrued expenses			31,184
Accounts payable			17,275
Total current liabilities			497,174
LONG TERM LIABILITIES			
Lease liability, long term			2,948,433
Total liabilities			3,445,607
NET POSITION			
Unrestricted			1,568,882
Invested in capital			680,935
Total net position			2,249,817
Total liabilities and net position		\$	5,695,424

FY22 Approved School Budget**Operating Budget Approved by the Board of Trustees on June 23, 2022
for the Year Ending June 30, 2023**

OPERATING REVENUE		
Per-pupil tuition		\$ 5,050,000
Program specific private grants and contributions		100,000
Government grants-carry forward		106,050
Government grants		59,450
Program Fees		15,000
	Total operating revenue	5,330,500
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Personnel and related		
Salaries and wages		3,510,323
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits		566,500
Professional development		49,500
	Total personnel and related	4,126,323
Occupancy		
Buildings and grounds		164,950
Lease liability interest expense		112,566
Utilities		54,000
Insurance		23,000
Taxes, sewer betterment		3,000
	Total occupancy	357,516
Direct student costs		
Consultants and service contractors		78,000
Instructional materials		77,450
Program expenses		46,750
Technology and equipment		25,000
Testing and assessment		3,000
	Total direct student costs	230,200
Other operating costs		
Professional fees		158,000
Insurance		67,014
Technology and equipment		49,700
General Supplies		31,500
Dues and subscriptions		23,000
Travel		14,100
Minor equipment		10,250
Equipment leases		6,800
Telephone		6,000
Miscellaneous		5,000
Printing and postage		3,500
Advertising and recruitment		3,000
	Total other operating costs	377,864
Depreciation and amortization		235,500
	Total operating expenses	5,327,403
OTHER REVENUE (EXPENSES)		
Community Building Expenses-PA		1,200
Contingency-Board of Trustees		1,897
	Total other revenue (expenses)	3,097
	Total expenses	5,330,500
CHANGES IN NET POSITION FROM OPERATIONS		-

(continued on next page)

GENERAL REVENUE		
Capital Grants-Government (ESSER Grants)		190,500
Interest and other income		2,500
	Total general revenue	193,000
CHANGES IN NET POSITION		193,000
NET POSITION, BEGINNING OF YEAR		2,249,817
NET POSITION, END OF YEAR		\$ 2,442,817
Cash Basis		
Net Surplus (Deficit) from Operations		\$ -
Adjustment - Non-Cash Items		
Non-Operating Income		193,000
Amortization Expense		138,000
Depreciation Expense		97,500
Total Non-Cash Items		428,500
Capital expenditures: Non-Impact to Budget		
Capital reserve funds-deposited per vote by Board of Trustees		(140,000)
Total fixed additions		(308,243)
Anticipated withdrawal from Capital Reserve		117,743
Lease Liability Principal Payments		(95,552)
Total Capital Outlay & Lease Liability Principal Pymt		(426,052)
Total OperatingCash Provided by Existing Resources		\$ 2,448
*** The budget was presented to the Board of Trustees on June 23, 2022. This budget will be amended for any unforeseen material revenue and expense impact due to changes in Federal and State Funding.		

FY22 Enrollment Table

Number of students pre-enrolled via March 15, 2022 submission	288
Number of students upon which FY23 budget tuition line is based	288
Number of expected students for FY23 first day of school	288
Please explain any variances: N/A	

FY23 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 eight years. As the school building is more than two decades old, the property has substantive capital needs anticipated in the coming years: a number of systems and components are at or approaching the end of their useful lives.

River Valley Charter School commissioned a Capital Needs Assessment and Replacement Reserve Analysis from On-Site Insight. It was completed in April 2022. Following review of the report, the Board of Trustees voted in a favor of a funding plan to contribute an annual amount of \$140,000. 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 FY 2021-2022, RVCS completed the following capital improvements and non-capital improvements:

- Interior Alterations & Renovations due to COVID-19 health and safety guidelines – Investment of \$5,888.
- Replacement of 2 HVAC Rooftop Units – Investment of \$75,270.
- Replacement of a Retaining Wall – Investment of \$49,500.

Total expenditures on capital improvements for FY 2021-2022 were \$124,770. RVCS also expended \$5,888 on non-capital improvements. The Capital Reserve Funds of \$130,658 were used to offset leasehold and capital equipment investments.

During FY 2022-2023, RVCS plans the following capital improvements and non-capital improvements:

- Replace 3 HVAC Rooftop Units from the ESSER III Grant Funds – Investment of \$75,000.
- Renovate Site Systems-Middle School Outdoor Space – Investment of \$50,000.
- Purchase of 2 Pre-Owned Ford Transit Vehicles for Teaching & Learning Offsite (Supplemented by ESSER II & III Funds) – Investment of \$138,500.
- Replace Building Stair Treads – Investment of \$20,000.
- Repairs of the Outdoor Spaces including the Parking Lot, Pavilion, Fence & Garden Boxes – Investment of \$15,000.
- Miscellaneous Repairs of the Roof – Investment of \$5,000.
- Interior Renovation – Investment of \$5,000.

Total expenditures on capital improvements for FY 2022-2023 are anticipated at \$308,500. Regular updates of this plan will be monitored by RVCS, and adjustments will accommodate any unanticipated circumstances surrounding the building and operations.

Future capital actions are based on useful life expectations and assume continued effective maintenance and physical management. RVCS has taken a conservative and visionary approach to the future needs and financial stability of the School.

APPENDICES

Accountability Plan Performance for 2021-2022 (Appendix A)

Faithfulness to Charter

Measures that were impacted due to implications of operating during the pandemic are indicated with an asterisk*.

Objective 1: River Valley Charter School will provide a Montessori learning environment that reflects best practices for public Montessori education.

	2021-2022 Performance	Evidence
<p>Measure 1A: River Valley will alternate between a self-assessment and an external audit of its Montessori program every year using the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector's Essential Elements Rubric. Every year the audit will switch such that there are three external audits and two internal during this charter term.</p> <p>Annually, River Valley will obtain at least a satisfactory rating in each of the five domains of the rubric (Adults, Montessori Learning Environment, Family Engagement, Leadership & Organizational Development, Assessment). The rating is based on a four-point rubric (unsatisfactory, needs improvement, satisfactory, exemplary), and will reflect the average score of all the standards within each of the five domains*.</p> <p><i>*The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector recreated the Essential Elements document to more appropriately recognize the implementation of the Montessori Method in the public sector. Previously the Essential Elements, created by the American Montessori Society, contained 22 elements (of which two were excluded because they did not apply in a public-school environment); the new rubric, redesigned by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, contains 26 standards and a four-point rating scale of each element.</i></p> <p>(Link to the Essential Elements Rubric.)</p>	<p>Met</p>	<p>The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector conducted the bi-annual audit of our public Montessori program in April 2022 following a hiatus from our every other year schedule, due to the pandemic.</p> <p>The audit team spent two days at RVCS and utilized the Essential Elements Rubric, which documents the components of the audit. It is included as an attachment. All five domains were assessed during their visit. River Valley met the standards in all five domains. A draft copy of the Draft Essential Elements Review Audit, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector</p> <p>(Accountability Plan Measure 1A) is included as an Attachment.</p>

<p>Measure 1B: Every year, all grade K-6 lead teachers will self-evaluate their Montessori classroom environment and practices using the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector’s Teacher Reflective Practice Inventory. All lead teachers who have been asked to return to River Valley for employment the following year will score at least 80% on the instrument, which includes 22 indicators of Montessori best practices as defined by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.</p>	<p>Not Met*</p>	<p>Right from the start of the 2021-2022 schoolyear, classrooms returned to their pre-pandemic structure, and, by yearend, most classroom practices had returned as well. What remained noticeably different was the social/emotional and academic behavior of students. This was not anticipated as grade K-6 students had attended school in-person for the entire 2020-2021 schoolyear. We expected the transition to full-sized classes, rather than cohorts of half as many students, to be less difficult. With increased and unexpected dysregulation of students following the prior stressful year, teachers struggled to “normalize” children to the Montessori environment in the same time frame it normally takes. River Valley teachers, especially veteran teachers, viewed the dysregulation as a reflection of their teaching abilities.</p> <p>Three of the nine lead teachers, or 33%, who participated in the survey, scored at least 80% on the instrument. (One classroom lead terminated employment in April and we did not administer the survey to the long-term substitute teacher.)</p> <p>An analysis of the self-evaluations indicated the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Kinderhaus teachers met the goal, rating confidently in their assessment of their environment and practices. • The lowest self-rating belonged to the newest lead teacher. <p>The use of self-assessment as a supervision/evaluation tool will be re-evaluated for its usefulness. River Valley teachers rate their practice more harshly than their supervisor rated them. In comparison, a supervisor’s rating yielded the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven of the nine teachers would be given a higher score by their supervisor than they rated themselves, i.e., rated 80% or higher.
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		<p>In addition, the Montessori audit, mentioned in the prior measure, indicated that all classrooms were well functioning and reflective of a high-quality Montessori program in the public sector. This contradicts teachers' self-assessment.</p> <p>A copy of the survey is included as an Attachment: Teacher Reflective Practices Inventory. A copy of the audit is also included as an attachment. See Draft Essential Elements Review Audit, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (Accountability Plan Measure 1A)</p>
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Objective 2: River Valley Charter School will provide educational experiences that connect student learning to the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. River		
	2021-2022 Performance	Evidence
<p>Measure 2A: Annually, every class will engage in a minimum of three place-based learning experiences related to the history, culture, or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.</p>	Met	<p>RVCS was able to continue providing students with place-based learning experiences that related to the history, culture, or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. At all levels, classes engaged in at least three place-based learning experiences related to the history, culture, or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. At the Elementary 2 level, the number of place-based learning experiences significantly surpassed prior years due to the adoption of a formal Place-Based Education program.</p> <p>RVCS remains committed to the belief that applied learning, hands-on learning, active learning experiences, and meaningful activities support learning best.</p> <p>A list of place-based experiences is on file at the school.</p>
<p>Measure 2B: All grade 5-8 students will participate in an annual survey to rate students' understanding of the connection of in-school learning with the history, culture, or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.</p> <p>Ninety percent of the surveyed students will indicate that at least one of their out-of-classroom experiences connected in-class learning to the history, culture, or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.</p> <p>In addition, on a 1-5 Likert scale (with 1 indicating the place-based experience was not relevant to classroom learning and 5 indicating that classroom learning was</p>	Not Met	<p>A survey of 4-6 grade students who participated in the Place Based Education program was administered at yearend with the direct aim being input regarding the continuation and/or expansion of the PBE program. More than 85% of students participated in the survey.</p> <p>68% of students indicated they had a better understanding of the history of the Merrimack River Valley after attending PBE this year. 29% were not sure. Three students (3%) indicated that they did not.</p> <p>Mistakenly the Likert scale question was changed to a 10-point scale and its meaning altered. The new question assessed</p>

amplified through place-based experiences which tied learning to the real world), ninety percent of the surveyed students will rate their experiences at least 3.		student satisfaction with the PBE program. Next year we will improve the survey to better respond to this measure.
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Objective 3: Learning experiences at River Valley Charter School will support students in the development of critical thinking and creative problem solving.

	2021-2022 Performance	Evidence
Measure 3A: Annually, with at least a 50% response rate of River Valley Charter School caregivers, 80% or more respondents will agree or strongly agree in separate questions that River Valley Charter School provides opportunities for their child(ren) to develop critical thinking skills and creative problem-solving skills.	Met	<p>The annual family survey was administered in the spring of 2022. There were 137 respondents, representing a response rate greater than 50%. Of the respondents, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that River Valley provides opportunities for their child(ren) to develop critical thinking skills.</p> <p>87% agreed or strongly agreed that River Valley provides opportunities for their child(ren) to develop creative problem-solving skills.</p> <p>Survey results are on file at the school.</p>
Measure 3B: Each year, the overall percentage of grade K-6 students, including River Valley's primary subgroups (students with high needs and students with disabilities), whose progress report scores show that they usually or consistently demonstrate critical thinking skills (defined as making connections and challenging assumptions, supplying evidence for arguments, and using reflections/feedback as a tool for growth) will increase from the fall to the spring grading period.	Met	<p>The first term (fall) progress report data indicated that 77% of students overall consistently or usually demonstrated critical thinking skills.</p> <p>Third term (spring) progress report data showed marked improvement; 95% of students had consistently or usually demonstrated critical thinking skills. Of note, teachers reported an extremely high level of dysregulation among students at the beginning of this school year. They also reported it taking longer for students to "normalize", a Montessori term that describes how a child adjusts to the environment and structures within a Montessori prepared classroom.</p>

		<p>An analysis of River Valley's primary subgroups (high needs and students with disabilities) revealed the following: In the fall, 7% of special education students did not meet the measure. In the spring, this decreased to less than 2% not meeting the measure.</p> <p>Similarly, in the fall, 10% of high needs students did not meet the measure. In the spring, this had decreased to less than 3% not meeting the measure.</p> <p>Analysis of the performance of the subgroups is not markedly different than that of the full population.</p>
<p>Measure 3C: All graduating students will participate in a River Valley Celebration of Learning (COL) event, and 90%, including River Valley's primary subgroups (students with high needs and students with disabilities), will earn an average final score of 3.0 or better (out of a 1-4 scale), on a rubric that assesses content and presentation. The presentation is a culminating experience that integrates the River Valley Charter School academic curriculum as well as River Valley's Habits of Learning curriculum, thereby representing application of critical thinking and creative problem solving.</p>	<p>Met</p>	<p>All 29 graduating eighth grade students participated in a Celebration of Learning presentation, and all received an average final score of 3.0 or better on the rubric assessing content and presentation. Average final scores ranged from 3.6 to 4.0.</p> <p>A copy of the COL Feedback Form is included as an Attachment. Supporting data is on file at the school.</p>

Dissemination

Objective 4: RVCS will share its Montessori curriculum with other public schools in Massachusetts over the course of its charter term.		
	2021-2022 Performance	Evidence
<p>Measure 4A: By the end of the charter term, RVCS staff will deliver at least five mission-related presentations to five different MA public school audiences to disseminate best practices in public Montessori education.</p>	<p>Met*</p>	<p>2019-2020 RVCS hosted its third 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. (Presentation information is on file at the school.)</p> <p>2020-2021 Despite the pandemic, RVCS delivered mission-related presentations to various educators from MA public schools. The Newburyport Film Festival included local public-school educators who came to hear about project-based learning.</p> <p>RVCS also disseminated information about its place-based programming. One of the four outdoor educators with strong connections to the Gulf of Maine Institute, presented to other Massachusetts school educators who participated in professional development programming offered by the Gulf of Maine Institute.</p> <p>2021-2022 As part of a White Ally's group, the school director River Valley's pedagogical approach to moving toward a diversity/equity/inclusion-focused organization. The affinity group is attended by a number of MA public charter schools.</p> <p>Total presentations during this charter term to date is four.</p>

Recruitment and Retention Plan (Appendix B)

Recruitment Plan 2022-2023
2021-2022 Implementation Summary:
<p>River Valley Charter School implemented its recruitment strategies as laid out in the 2021-2022 Recruitment plan and actively engaged in attracting new students through multiple modalities in order to broaden the diversity of our student populations.</p> <p>In general, RVCS is in an area of the state with limited racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity making it challenging to attract a wide and diverse population of students. In addition, we typically have 15-20 open spots per year. Many families view their chances of getting offered a spot as slim-at-best. Last, some families are discouraged from applying due to the lack of transportation services to out-of-district, non-Newburyport residents. We have begun investigating working more closely with the local public bus system for opportunities to support families living in Salisbury and Amesbury. During the pandemic, bus services were more limited than usual and COVID restrictions made public transportation/carpooling more complicated.</p> <p>We received 179 applications for the 2022-2023 year, representing a lower number than last year but successful recruitment efforts for the school given the uncertainty of education during a pandemic. 64 of the new applications were for Kinderhaus, where most spots are available. This compares to 72 for kindergarten last year. 115 applications were for grades 1-8.</p> <p>The Kinderhaus roster of 32 students who began attending River Valley Charter School in the 2021-2022 school year included two students identified in need of financial assistance after enrollment. Additionally, five Kinderhaus student were on an Individual Education Program (IEPs) by the end of the 2021-2022 school year.</p> <p>This year, the number of spots taken by siblings of currently enrolled students dropped to 7. Given this change in families, our incoming class of Kinderhaus students may reflect a change to some of our enrollment statistics. We have noted a larger number of students from towns in which we had previously not enrolled many children. We also noted a higher degree of racial diversity in newly enrolled kindergarten students.</p> <p>As River Valley does not participate in the Federal Free and Reduced lunch program, families self-identify as low income. We typically see requests for financial assistance when the school asks for funds for fieldtrips and activities (all communications indicate families can receive support from the school).</p> <p>River Valley would welcome a conversation with the Department to discuss alternative methods of better qualifying students and families as low income.</p>

General Recruitment Activities for 2022-2023

Due to COVID 19, River Valley eliminated most in-person recruitment activities during the 2021-2022 school year. Next year, we will resume hosting in-person activities/events (COVID-dependent).

General recruitment activities include advertising efforts via:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Membership with two Chambers of Commerce.
- Advertise in literature distributed by Newburyport Youth Services and the Merrimack Valley Boys and Girls Club.
- Local newspaper advertisements in English and Spanish
- Advertisements in the local libraries and local preschools.
- Signage in public spaces in our local sending districts.
- Public service announcements on the local cable television network
- General publicity through partnerships with Newburyport Council on Aging where our students communicated with elders
- Enrollment Information Sessions (offered at night and on weekdays)
- Website posts on our school website
- A WCVB "EyeOpener" advertising featuring River Valley kindergarten students on local network news morning program to promote the school and the enrollment lottery
- Distribute RVCS tagged "coffee sleeves" to local cafes in our sending districts to distribute to customers
- Local residents observed our students at our Outdoor, Place-Based Education site resulting in ongoing dissemination to the community. A number of news stories were also published during the school year.
- Patrons of Spencer Peirce Farm observed our students when they provided information for the public on maple sugaring.
- Student participation in local politics to encourage the mayor to change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day received River Valley a lot of public notice as well.

Recruitment Plan – 2022-2023 Strategies	
Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities	
<p>CHART data</p> <p>School percentage: 13.9%</p> <p>GNT percentage: NA%</p> <p>CI percentage: 15.4%</p> <p>The school is below the CI percentage</p>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute informational flyers to the special education departments of each of our sending districts. • Continue enhanced SEPAC communications efforts through social media platforms and with local school SEPACs.
	<p>2022-2023 Additional Strategy(ies):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Did not meet GNT/CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies below:</i> Include time allotted for each strategy for data change</p> <p>New strategies to recruit Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities in 2022-2023 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe and meet with pre-schools serving RVCS kindergarten applicants to better support the transition to River Valley. • Similarly, meet with prior schools of new students to support the transition to River Valley. <p>All strategies will be implemented annually. RVCS anticipates 1-2 years to see GNT/CI changes.</p>

Limited English-proficient Students/English Learners	
<p>CHART data</p> <p>School percentage: 0%</p> <p>GNT percentage: .4%</p> <p>CI percentage: .5%</p> <p>The school is <u>below</u> both GNT and CI percentages</p>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute informational flyers to ELL coordinators of each of our sending districts. • Publish enrollment materials with a banner/footer indicating that translation and interpreter services are available if needed. • Make the Montessori Enrollment Session video available to all attendees in Spanish. • Have bilingual (Spanish-speaking) adults available at Enrollment Sessions. • Ask Spanish-speaking parents to share enrollment information in their multicultural communities. • Distribute flyers to local Rec Departments where there may be increased incidence of minority populations. • Maintain a Spanish version of the enrollment application on the school's website. • 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. • Connect with the Newburyport Human Rights Commission, and individuals working on Sanctuary City status, to establish relationships with organizations who work with immigrants. • Enhance our efforts to disseminate information about our program to EL populations in our area by reaching out to local multicultural organizations including the Racial Justice Committee of the YWCA and Amesbury Community Services Center to broaden RVCS' reach to more diverse populations. • Work with local Chambers 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 being presented. • Place a land acknowledgment at the property entrance as physical demonstration of the school's continued commitment to inclusion. • Add a foreign language in middle school programming.
	<p>2021-2022 Additional Strategy(ies):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Did not meet GNT/CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies below:</i></p> <p>New strategies to recruit Limited English-proficient students/English learners in 2022-2023 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a Spanish offering to 6th grade specials classes. • Host Info session specifically for Merrimack Valley Boys and Girls Club families where a larger of selection of diverse students attend. • Partner with the First Religious Society of Unitarian Universalists Church to support their efforts in welcoming Afghani families.

	All strategies will be implemented annually. RVCS anticipates 1-2 years to see GNT/CI changes.
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Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (Low Income/Economically Disadvantaged)	
<p>CHART data</p> <p>School percentage: 9.7%</p> <p>GNT percentage: 12.8%</p> <p>CI percentage: 18%</p> <p>The school is <u>below</u> GNT and CI percentages</p>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute flyers to community service agencies (Head Start, Hugh Doyle Resource Center, Salvation Army, Pettengill House, SNAP, WIC) • Distribute flyers to the low-income housing developments in our sending towns/speak at low-income housing development events. • Provide economically disadvantaged students reduced rates or free access to before and after school childcare for working parents/guardians. • Continue collaborative relationships with Nourishing the North Shore to bridge connections with low-income families in the area. • 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. • Conspicuously post a banner advertising free, full day kindergarten. • Work with Suzanne Dubus, CEO of the Jeanne Geiger Center, to identify and connect with clients served by this agency. • Conduct a fall outreach and a secondary outreach closer to the time of the lottery at low-income residential areas in our region. • Working through the Director of the Newburyport Learning Enrichment Center, invite the tenant leadership group to visit RVCS so that they can reinforce flyer information we share with residents of the park. • Amplify the relationship with Our Neighbors' Table, a food pantry that serves 3,500 guests/year, to include presence at their events. • Connect with all of the Tenant Leadership Councils at each of our sending district's low-income housing areas to provide marketing information about our public-school programming. • Partner with Newburyport Youth Services to increase after school opportunities for older students (grades 6-8) by providing transportation to their after-school facility. • 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. • Enhance partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Lower Merrimack Valley in Salisbury to access another stream of diverse family populations. • Actively foster communication with local low-income housing authorities, especially those in Amesbury, to educate families about our program. • Maintain membership in local chapter of the Rotary Club to further access populations that may not be aware of RVCS. • Partner with the Boys and Girls Club to provide convenient and cost-efficient afterschool programming to RVCS families.

	<p>2022-2023 Additional Strategy(ies):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Did not meet GNT/CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies below:</p> <p>New Strategies to implement in the 2022-2023 school year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> River Valley Charter School will place paid-advertising on Merrimack River Valley Transit Authority buses for the month leading up to the annual lottery. <p>All strategies will be implemented annually. RVCS anticipates 1 year to see GNT/CI changes.</p>
<u>Students who are sub-proficient</u>	<p>Continued 2022-2023 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute flyers to local tutoring agencies including Fun Way Learning Center, Math Port, ClubZ Tutoring, T Cubed, Simms Tutoring, Successful Solutions. Provide the local Boys and Girls Club with paper applications and flyers about River Valley Charter School Advertise that River Valley has small class sizes in middle school math (by employing double the number of math teachers as in the other middle school content areas).
<u>Students at risk of dropping out of school</u>	<p>Continued 2022-2023 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<u>Students who have dropped out of school</u>	NA

Retention Plan

2022-2023

Successes and Challenges of Implementing Strategies in 2021-2022 Plan

Our attrition rate for the 2021-2022 school year dropped from the previous year to 6.2%. River Valley met the 91% goal. The school's retention rate was 93.8%.

Withdrawals during the 2021-2022 school year were minimal and primarily reflected family relocation. Multiple families relocated out of the state of MA. One of the five students who left during the school year left to attend their district school. Transportation and connection with students and families within their community was cited.

An analysis of the 2021-2022 yearend withdrawals provided the following information:

- 1 student transitioned to a private school
- 6 students (2 siblings) returned to their local district
 - Two of the withdrawals were students who entered the school later in their school tenure.

While the number and reason for withdrawals is not of concern, we continue to identify ways to increase retention rates by educating our families about our Montessori programming; fostering greater social connections between classrooms and age levels; offering additional enrichment experiences; continuously improving our programming.

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

Retention Plan – 2022-2023 Strategies	
Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities	
<p><u>CHART data</u></p> <p>School percentage: 9.5%</p> <p>Third Quartile: 7.8%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is above the third quartile percentages.</p>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Below third quartile: no enhanced/additional strategies needed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a strong special education program staffed by qualified professionals. • Offer summer sessions to qualifying students. • Maintain a Response to Intervention program/Student Support Team. • Offer afterschool enrichment programs where less emphasis is placed on academics. • Offer additional support services before and after school to middle school students. • Continue to train additional staff in Crisis Prevention and nonviolent crisis intervention. • Maintain the school's Student Support Team protocol and improve classroom teachers' ability to support students with diverse learning needs. • Provide SEPAC presence on school social media sites. • Find new ways to make Team meetings for special education more accessible and productive for parents with the use of technology and remote meeting platforms. • Enhance efforts to involve more parents in SEPAC to promote the school and family collaboration for students with learning needs. • Identify Crisis Interventionist to oversee crisis intervention team, providing ongoing professional development
	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Above third quartile: additional and/or enhanced strategies needed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a family mentoring program and intentionally connect individual families with special education students with like-families.

Limited English-proficient Students/English Learners	
<p><u>CHART data</u></p> <p>School percentage: NA%</p> <p>Third Quartile: 0%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is neither above nor below third quartile percentages.</p>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a relationship with an ELL service provider. • Ensure adequate number of teaching staff are SEI-endorsed. • Maintain SEI endorsement of at least one member of the administrative team and increasing numbers of the teaching staff. • 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.) • 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.
	<p>2022-2023 Additional Strategy(ies), if needed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>No ELs were enrolled during the 2020-2021 school year. No retention strategies needed.</i></p>

Students eligible for free or reduced lunch (low income/economically disadvantaged)	
<p><u>CHART data</u></p> <p>School percentage: 9.1%</p> <p>Third Quartile: 12.6%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is below third quartile percentages.</p>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Below third quartile: no enhanced/additional strategies needed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to school-based counselor to identify additional services available in the area. • Provide a high quality free or reduced-price lunch program to qualifying students. • Provide reduced cost before and after care program to qualifying students. • Provide reduced cost enrichment programming to qualifying students. • Increase connections with families at risk of financial needs particularly in the current economic downturn due to Covid-19. • Update and enhance the resources for financial and meal assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic with monthly refreshes of information.

<u>Students who are sub-proficient</u>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide summer sessions to qualifying students. • Provide Homework Help for grades 4-8 • Provide students with computer-based programming to reinforce/practice math skills. • Reduced cohort sizes in grades K-6 to ensure students receive additional 1:1/small group instruction.
<u>Students at risk of dropping out of school</u>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide drop-in summer sessions for Middle School student
<u>Students who have dropped out of school</u>	<p>Continued 2021-2022 Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA

School and Student Data Tables/Board and Committee Information & Schedules (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

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

STUDENT RACE AND ETHNICITY AND SELECTED POPULATIONS	
Race/Ethnicity	% of School
African-American	1
Asian	1
Hispanic	6.6
Native American	.3
White	86.5
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0
Multi-race, non-Hispanic	4.5
Selected Populations	% of School
First Language not English	.3
English Learner	0
Low Income	9.7
Students with Disabilities	13.9
High Needs	21.2

ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER DURING THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR			
Name, Title	Brief Job Description	Start date	End date
Jonnie Lyn Evans School Director	Serves as the organization's Chief Executive Officer providing organizational and academic leadership. Supervises all K-8 faculty.	07/01/2019*	NA
Dan Bouchard Assistant Director	Serves as the organization's assistant to the director.	07/01/2019	NA
Lisa Kelley & Patricia Innes Special Education Co-Coordination	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 DURING THE 2021-2022 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 RVCS employee</i>			

TEACHERS AND STAFF ATTRITION FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR				
	Number as of the last day of the 2021-2022 school year	Departures during the 2021-2022 school year	Departures at the end of the school year	Reason(s) for Departure
Teachers	41	3	2	Two midyear departures were by employee choice; one was terminated. One yearend departure was by employee choice; one was non-renewal.
Other Staff	14	0	0	NA

BOARD AND COMMITTEE INFORMATION	
Number of commissioner-approved board members identified in the Board Member Management System as of August 1, 2022	16
Minimum number of board members in approved by-laws	11
Maximum number of board members in approved by-laws	20

BOARD MEMBERS FOR THE 2021-2022 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
Pam Brockmeier Armstrong	Board Officer Committee Officer	Executive	First term completed, extending into second term	2017-2020 2020-2023
Erin Bradley Irose	Committee Officer	Committee on Trustees	First term in progress	2020-2023
Mark Bishop	Board Officer Committee Officer	Executive Finance	First term in progress	2019-2022

BOARD MEMBERS FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR				
Nancy Durkee	Trustee	Accountability	First term in progress	2019-2022
Jonnie Lyn Evans	Ex-Officio Trustee	Executive Accountability Finance	First term completed, extending into second term	2019-2022 2022-2025
Amber Hewett	Board Officer Committee Officer	Executive Committee on Trustees	First term completed, extending into second term	2017-2020 2020-2023
Nina Keery	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term completed, extending into second term	2017-2020 2020-2023
Alfred Link	Committee Officer	Accountability Development	Completed first term, extending into second term (returning board member)	2017-2020 2020-2023
Catherine Martin	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term completed, extending into second term	2018-2021 2021-2024
Matt Renninger	Trustee	Finance	First term started but moved midyear	2021-2021
Erin Seaton	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term in progress	2019-2022
Albert Ting	Trustee	Accountability	First term in progress	2020-2023
Karen Popken	Staff Representative	NA	Completed one-year term	2021-2022
Anna Wetmore	Board Officer	Executive	First term in progress	2020-2023

BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR	
Date/Time	Location
August 23, 2022 - 7:00pm	River Valley Charter School 2 Perry Way Newburyport, MA
September 20, 2022 - 7:00pm	
October 18, 2022 - 7:00pm	
November 15, 2022 - 7:00pm	
January 17, 2023 - 7:00pm	
February 14, 2023 - 7:00pm	
March 14, 2023 - 7:00pm	
April 11, 2023 - 7:00pm	
May 9, 2023 - 7:00pm	
June 13, 2023 - 7:00pm	

COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULES FOR THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR		
Name of Committee	Date/Time	Location
Executive Committee	2022: 8/16, 9/13, 10/11, 11/8 2023: 1/10, 2/7, 3/7, 4/4, 5/2, 6/6 All meet at 7:00pm	River Valley Charter School 2 Perry Way Newburyport, MA
Accountability Committee	2022: 8/8, 9/12, 10/3, 2023: 1/9, 1/30, 2/27, 3/27, 4/24, 6/5 All meet at 6:00pm	River Valley Charter School 2 Perry Way Newburyport, MA
Development Committee	2022: 8/31, 9/28, 10/26, 11/30, 2023: 1/25, 3/1, 3/22, 4/26, 5/17, 6/21 All meet at 6:00pm	River Valley Charter School 2 Perry Way Newburyport, MA
Finance Committee	2022: 8/16, 9/13, 10/11*, 11/8 2023: 1/10, 2/7, 3/7, 4/4, 5/2, 6/6 All meet at 6:00pm (*5:00pm)	River Valley Charter School 2 Perry Way Newburyport, MA
Committee on Trustees	2022: 9/20, 10/18, 11/15 2023: 1/17, 2/14, 3/14, 4/11, 5/9, 6/13 All meet at 6:00pm	River Valley Charter School 2 Perry Way Newburyport, MA

Additional Required Information (Appendix D)

Key Leadership Changes for the School Year 2022-2023

Position	Name	Email Address	No Change/ New/Open Position
Board of Trustees Chairperson	Pam Brockmeier Armstrong	rvcsbot@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
Charter School Leader	Jonnie Lyn Evans	jlevans@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
Assistant Charter School Leader	Dan Bouchard	dbouchard@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
Special Education Directors	Patricia Innes and Lisa Kelley	pinnes@rivervalleycharter.org lkelly@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
MCAS Test Coordinator	Jonnie Lyn Evans	jlevans@rivervalleycharter.org	New (returning)
SIMS Coordinator	Jonnie Lyn Evans	jlevans@rivervalleycharter.org	New (returning)
English Learner Program Director	Dan Bouchard	dbouchard@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
School Business Official	Deb McCrevan	dmccrean@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
SIMS Contact	Patricia O'Leary	poleary@rivervalleycharter.org	No change
Admissions and Enrollment Coordinator	Patricia O'Leary	poleary@rivervalleycharter.org	Open position (additional responsibility)

Facilities: Not applicable

Enrollment

Action	2022-2023 School Year Date(s)
Student Application Deadline	Tuesday, February 14, 2023
Lottery	Thursday, February 16, 2023

Conditions: Not applicable

Complaints: Not applicable

Attachments

Essential Elements Rubric (Accountability Measure 1A)

Domain 1—Adults

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
Teachers have Montessori credentials, from a MACTE or AMI accredited training program, for the age group they teach, in addition to any required licenses or credentials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level and hold required licenses or credentials. All auxiliary staff (special education, PE) are Montessori trained or oriented. Montessori principles are evident in the actions of all adults. Key actions include: speaking softly, clearly, and respectfully to children and adults, refraining from offering unnecessary help, inviting as opposed to commanding, and student engagement in meaningful work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level, with the remainder in the process of earning an appropriate Montessori credential. Auxiliary staff have been oriented in Montessori theory and practice. Montessori principles are evident in many, but not all adults' actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level, with the remainder in the process of earning an appropriate Montessori credential. Montessori principles are evident in some adults' actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level. Absence of robust knowledge of Montessori theory and practice is evident in the actions of adults; key actions include: interrupting students who are concentrating, using a loud, intrusive voice, attempting to control rather than model respectful behavior.
Each teacher is supported by a paraprofessional/ assistant given Montessori-specific orientation for that role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. The school provides an orientation workshop for all assistants. All assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom, providing support in the care of the environment, modeling positive behavior, assisting the teacher when students need redirection, and other duties as assigned by the teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. The school provides an orientation workshop for all assistants. Many assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. Some assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer than 75% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course Assistants, when they are present, are disengaged from the work of the room or function solely as disciplinarians.
All adults, Montessori trained or not, embrace core Montessori principles, respecting the process of human development and supporting children's independence, freedom, responsibility, and growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All adults interact with children in ways that are deeply respectful and support their development as appropriate to the children's age and level of independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults sometimes set developmentally inappropriate expectations for children, expecting too little or too much independence and responsibility. Adults sometimes interact disrespectfully with children (e.g., interrupting, ordering, teasing, contradicting, controlling...) Montessori trained staff interact appropriately, but untrained staff are poorly supported in appropriate interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults often set developmentally inappropriate expectations for children, expecting too little or too much independence and responsibility. Adults often interact disrespectfully with children (e.g., interrupting, ordering, teasing, contradicting...). Untrained staff show no awareness of appropriate interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult interactions with children are not guided by Montessori principles, and are developmentally inappropriate and disrespectful (controlling, interrupting, shouting, shaming, blaming, etc.).

Domain 2—Montessori Learning Environment

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
Children are grouped according to Montessori age groupings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5-6 • 6-9 • 9-12 • 12-15 • 15-18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learning environments reflect Montessori age groupings. • Classroom communities serve at least 24 students supervised by no more than two adults. • The primary point of entry to the program is age 3. • For students who enter after age 4, the school has a well-elaborated orientation and induction program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learning environments reflect Montessori age groupings. • Classroom communities feature at least 24 students supervised by no more than two adults. • Significant numbers of 5-year-olds may enter without prior Montessori experience, but these new students are carefully oriented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed-age environments exist, but children are segregated by age, gender or ability. • There is a stand-alone “kindergarten” program for 5 year-olds, but is working toward a full 3-6 program, and has a reliable method for orienting these children. • Students age out of the school before the end of a 3-year cycle (e.g., after 1st, 2nd, 4th, or 5th grades, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are grouped in single-grade or two-year classrooms. • There is a stand-alone “kindergarten” program for 5 year-olds with no reliable method for orienting these children. • Children are segregated by age, gender or ability.
Learning environments provide uninterrupted 3-hour work periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classrooms provide 3-hour morning work periods. • Classrooms for older children provide 2-hour work periods, with limited interruption for specials and other programmed activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classrooms provide 2.5-hour morning work periods. • Classrooms for older children provide 2-hour work periods, with limited interruption for specials and other programmed activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classrooms provide 2.5-hour morning work periods. • Classrooms for older children provide 2-hour work periods, but 2-3 times a week, those periods are taken up with specials and other programmed activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work periods are divided into small portions (e.g.: Readers or Writers Workshop, Literacy Block) with limited opportunity for children to concentrate on self-chosen work.
Specialty programs such as music, art, and second languages are integrated into the three-hour work cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Montessori teachers confidently deliver Montessori music, using bells, tone bars and other materials integral to this part of the program. • Materials for making and viewing art are visible on shelves, and students have access to them at all times. • Bilingual staff support an immersion approach to second-language instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialty programs (music, art, second language) are offered as separate classes, but do not interrupt extended work periods. • Students have free access to Montessori music materials—bells, tone bars, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialty programs (music art, second language) are offered as separate classes, usually during afternoon work periods. • Students have limited access to Montessori music materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialty programs such as music, art, and second languages are delivered by non-Montessori specialists during work periods. • There are separate morning and afternoon classes. • Students have no access to Montessori music materials.
The environment supports a high degree of student choice in what to work on, where to work, and how long to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can choose to work at tables, on rugs on the floor, or outside. • Students have ongoing access to all materials, and are allowed to choose their work freely during extended work periods. • Almost all instruction takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can choose to work at tables, on rugs on the floor, or outside. • Students have ongoing access to all materials, and are allowed to choose their work for the majority of work periods. • 80% of instruction takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have choice regarding where and what to work on for part of the day. • Students may be assigned work but may choose where and in what order they will do their work. • Whole or large-group instruction is used almost as much as individual and small group instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student movement is restricted. • Most students work at tables. • Most learning is directed by adults. • Most instruction takes place in whole-group formats. • Teaching and learning are expected to follow a pacing set by the teacher.

continued

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
The full complement of Montessori materials is available in every area, representing the majority of materials on all shelves. Additional materials conform to Montessori standards of order, beauty, and simplicity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The full complement of Montessori materials is available in every area. Montessori materials are meticulously cared for and displayed in an orderly and inviting manner, representing the majority of work available to students. Materials are in constant use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The full complement of Montessori materials is available in every area. Montessori materials are displayed in an orderly and inviting manner, representing the majority of work available to students. Materials are in good repair and ready for use. Materials are in regular use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is less than a full complement of Montessori materials. Montessori materials are visible, but not organized in a way that invites robust engagement and concentration. Montessori materials are liberally supplemented with other curricular approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montessori materials may be visible, but the majority of work involves other materials and resources, such as worksheets, text books, or computers. The environment is cluttered, with little attention to order, beauty and simplicity.
The learning environment offers ongoing access to real-world materials and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have ample opportunities to engage in care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and meal cleanup, and plant and animal care, and these activities are a regular part of children's activity. Tools and materials for practical activities are functional and child-sized. Appropriate cutlery, glassware and dishes are used daily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have some opportunities to engage in care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and meal cleanup, and plant and animal care, and are at times engaged with them. Functional child-sized tools and materials are available, but the supply is limited or some are not appropriate for children's use. Appropriate cutlery, glassware and dishes are used daily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some real world activities are available, but children do not spontaneously engage in them. Tools and materials are very limited, or mostly inappropriate for children's use. Care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and cleanup, and plant and animal care are handled mostly by adults. Children eat with disposable cutlery, plates, and cups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No real world activities are available. Care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and cleanup, and plant and animal care are handled by adults. Children eat with disposable cutlery, plates, and cups.
The learning environment offers appropriate access to a prepared outdoor environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have free access, within appropriate limits, to a well-prepared outdoor learning environment. The outdoor environment is in regular use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have some access to a well-prepared outdoor learning environment. The outdoor environment is in occasional use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the outdoor environment is tightly restricted by adults. The outdoor environment is not well prepared or appropriate for children's use. The outdoor environment is infrequently in use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to the outdoors is only available during "recess", as a free play activity. The outdoor environment is not well prepared or appropriate for children's use.
SPED students are fully included and supported within the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montessori teachers are dual certified as SPED teachers and able address all but most significant learning issues through the Montessori program. SPED and Resource Teachers are Montessori trained or oriented and work in collaboration with Montessori teachers to provide special services within the prepared environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPED students are pulled out for small portions of the day, or specialists come in the classroom but work with the SPED students apart from the rest of the group and primarily through non-Montessori materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPED students are pulled out of the Montessori classroom for large portions of the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPED students have a separate program for most or all of the day.
ELL students are fully included and supported within the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montessori teachers are dual certified as ELL teachers. ELL Resource Teachers are Montessori trained or oriented and work in collaboration with Montessori teachers to provide special services within the prepared environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELL students are pulled out for small portions of the day, or specialists come in the classroom but work with the ELL students apart from the rest of the group and primarily through non-Montessori materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELL students are pulled out of the Montessori classroom for large portions of the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELL students have a separate program for most or all of the day.

Domain 3—Family Engagement

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
A strong partnership between home and school is evident in all formal and informal communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-developed Family Handbook elaborates mutual expectations in clear, accessible language. • Robust, two-way communication begins prior to enrollment and is visible in a website, newsletters, letters home, and processes for parent-teacher conferences. • All relevant documents are translated into languages reflecting the school's population • The school's Parent Engagement plan may include home-visits. • Faculty and staff reflect the ethnic, linguistic and racial makeup of the student-body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-developed Family Handbook elaborates mutual expectations in clear, accessible language. • The school maintains an active website. • Most classrooms distribute newsletters and other regular communications such as websites, blogs, or Google groups. • Highest priority documents are translated into the languages reflecting the school's population. • Efforts are made to hire faculty and staff that reflect the ethnic, linguistic and racial makeup of the student- body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Family Handbook exists, but is out-of-date and not widely distributed. • Communication between home and school is limited to informing families of events, deadlines, and other administrative matters. • Some classrooms distribute newsletters and other regular communications, but there is no coordinated system for ensuring that all members of the community are informed. • Translation services are limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Family Handbook may exist, but is out-of-date and not widely distributed. • Communication between home and school is sporadic, and usually in the form of announcements from the administration. • Translations are sporadic or non-existent.
The school provides ongoing opportunities for family education, including information sessions, discussion groups, observation of classrooms, and parent-teacher-student conferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enrollment process features multiple opportunities for parents to learn about Montessori and the family commitment expected by the school. These events are well planned and executed, and attended by large numbers of prospective families. • A robust family induction process, includes open houses, orientation evenings, and networking with experienced families. • Family education opportunities are offered monthly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enrollment process features some opportunities for parents to learn about Montessori and the family commitment expected by the school. • The school offers an orientation evening for new families. • Family education opportunities are offered quarterly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enrollment process may feature events such as open houses, but they are poorly advertised and sparsely attended. • The school offers an annual Open House. • Family education opportunities are offered sporadically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enrollment process includes no opportunities for families to learn about the school, and any families enroll without any knowledge of Montessori education. • No family education opportunities are offered.

continued

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
The school cultivates a strong school-home association, in which parents have authentic opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the school's mission and communicate with school leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school maintains a designated space for adults to gather, which includes a resource library filled with material related to Montessori, child development, parenting, and other topics of interest. • The school employs a Community Engagement specialist, who supports the family community by partnering with parent leaders, assisting in the coordination of volunteer opportunities. • There is an active school board and/or governance council with significant family representation. • Minutes of all meetings are shared with the entire community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's School-Home or Family Association is active, with parent/adult leaders visible in the school. • Minutes of all meetings are shared with the entire community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has a School- Home Association, but it is not active. • The school's Board or governance council may have family representation, but families do not regularly attend meetings. • Minutes of meetings are not regularly shared with the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no formal structures through which families can participate in the school.

Domain 4—Leadership and Organizational Development

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
An experienced Montessori educator guides the implementation of the Montessori program, as Principal, Program Director, Curriculum Coordinator or Instructional Coach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Montessori trained school leader communicates and advocates effectively for full Montessori implementation. At least one instructional coach, with Montessori training for at least one program level, supports full Montessori implementation as a primary responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school leader is not Montessori trained, but is enthusiastically engaged in ongoing Montessori professional development. A trained Program Director or Montessori Coach supports the untrained school leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school leader is not Montessori trained, and has engaged in minimal Montessori professional development. The school does not employ a Montessori Program Director or Coach, but does rely on the expertise of experienced teachers or consultants in making program decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school leader is unwilling to engage in Montessori professional development The school leader regards Montessori as an aspect of the school program rather than the essence of the school program. The school leader engages in teacher evaluation and program development systems that are in conflict with Montessori principles and practice.
The school has a clear vision for how it delivers Montessori education, and has an active cycle of reflection and self-review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has a current and active strategic/school improvement plan, which is grounded in Montessori principles, informed by multiple constituents, and widely understood and embraced by the school community. The school regularly employs Montessori consultants to provide internal and external audits of program quality, and incorporates consultant feedback into an ongoing strategic planning process. The school has a well-articulated and transparent process for inducting, mentoring and evaluating teachers. Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol designed to support fully implemented Montessori practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has a living strategic/ school improvement plan, which is grounded in Montessori principles, informed by multiple constituents, and made available to the school community. The school has employed a Montessori consultant within the past three years to provide internal support for strategic planning and instructional improvement. Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol that is friendly to Montessori pedagogical principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is in the process of developing a strategic/ school improvement plan, which includes goals for improving Montessori practice. The school does not look to outside resources for Montessori support. Teachers are evaluated in part or whole based on a protocol that does not reflect Montessori practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's strategic/school improvement plan includes no goals for improving Montessori practice. Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol that has no relationship to Montessori pedagogical practice.
The school maintains membership in one or more Montessori professional organizations, and seeks accreditation to ensure consistent quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is accredited or recognized by at least one major Montessori professional organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school maintains membership in at least one major Montessori professional organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is not be a full member (due to costs or other constraints), but leaders and staff attend at least one major Montessori professional organization's conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has no connections with any Montessori professional organization.

continued

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
The school has a pipeline for recruiting, training, hiring, and retaining high quality Montessori teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school sponsors two or more teachers for Montessori training annually. The school provides a robust annual Assistant's/Fundamentals Course. The school has a strong relationship with a MACTE accredited or AMI Montessori training center. The school recruits broadly and provides a substantive interview and induction process for all prospective and new hires. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's budget supports sponsorship for Montessori training for at least one new teacher a year. The school offers orientation and professional development designed to support classroom assistants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's operating budget does not support annual sponsorships, but efforts are made to raise funds for the specific purpose of supporting the talent pipeline. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has no systems in place to ensure a reliable pipeline of high quality Montessori teachers.
All adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 – 90% of adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some, but fewer than half, of adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults do not engage in ongoing Montessori professional development.
Adults treat one another with respect and model grace and courtesy in their interactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All adult interactions are respectful, gracious, and courteous. Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize formal and informal school activities. Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize interactions with families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most adult interactions are respectful, gracious, and courteous. Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize most formal and informal school activities. Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize most interactions with families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults are sometimes disrespectful, preemptory or dismissive with one another. There are notable status divisions among trained teachers, support staff, and administrative staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults are generally disrespectful, preemptory or dismissive with one another. Non-teaching staff are blatantly disrespected or delegitimized.
Montessori practice is supported by a clearly defined Montessori scope and sequence, integrated with (but not driven by) state standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty and staff understand and can explain the Montessori approach and how it meets state standards. A Montessori scope and sequence aligned with state standards is shared widely in the school and available to families, district staff, and other stakeholders. Teachers lead with their Montessori training and refer back to state standards as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most faculty and staff understand and can explain the Montessori approach and how it meets state standards. An alignment of the Montessori scope and sequence with state standards is in process. The Montessori scope and sequence is part of internal and external communications. Teachers mostly lead with their Montessori training and refer back to state standards as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many faculty and staff members are unclear on the Montessori approach and how it meets state standards. No alignment of the Montessori scope and sequence with state standards is in use. The Montessori scope and sequence is available but not part of community understanding or regular practice. Teachers mostly lead with state standards and use some Montessori materials and lessons to teach them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty and staff are following a scope and sequence that conflicts with Montessori pedagogy. Teaching is entirely driven by state standards.

Domain 5—Assessment

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
Assessment protocols integrate measures of academic achievement with measures of executive functions such as self-regulation, initiation, and cognitive flexibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school tracks multiple indicators of success through means such as alumni, parent, and receiving teacher surveys. The school uses cognitive measures such as the Flanker Inhibitory Control Task, or the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS), to document wide-scope developmental outcomes. The school maintains profiles of all students based on narrative appraisal and work sampling, as well as performance on standardized academic measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is in the process of developing a protocol that allows the documentation of social and emotional and executive function outcomes. The school maintains profiles of all students based on narrative appraisal and work sampling, as well as performance on standardized academic measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school includes narrative appraisals of social and emotional development as part of its assessment and reporting protocols, but has no larger system for tracking wide-scope student outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only form of assessment is state-mandated tests. Results are reported without context. Minimal standards of proficiency drive instruction.
Ongoing, personalized qualitative assessment, in the form of observation and documentation, drives all instructional decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular, recorded observation is the basis of planning and assessment. The school uses an on-line record-keeping system to ensure that data are collected and managed effectively. Teachers make time daily to record observed activity within the environment. An observer's chair is visible in the environment. Teachers meet weekly as teams to discuss student progress, reflect collectively on challenges, and share potential solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular, recorded observation is the basis of planning and assessment. Some teachers use an on-line record-keeping system to ensure that data are collected and managed effectively. Teachers make time daily to record observed activity within the environment. An observer's chair is visible in the environment. Teachers meet occasionally as teams to discuss student progress, reflect collectively on challenges, and share potential solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some teachers make time daily to record observed activity with the environment, but there is no link to a larger system of data management. Some classrooms have an observer's chair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no evidence of ongoing, recorded observation. Teachers do not meet to reflect on student progress.
Assessments are delivered in the least obtrusive manner possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formative and summative assessments are delivered to individual students during work periods. Tests are treated as Practical Life activities, with minimal emphasis or work disruption. Test preparation is limited to practice experiences designed to familiarize students with format and language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summative assessments are delivered during testing windows. Total test preparation constitutes no more than one week of student work time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formative and summative assessments are delivered to the whole school/whole class during prescribed testing windows. Test preparation constitutes more than two weeks of student work time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing windows take over the entire school day, with work periods suspended, students grouped in grade-level cohorts, and assessments proctored by unfamiliar teachers. Preparing for tests drives the school's program.

continued

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
As students mature, they are increasingly involved in monitoring their own progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning in the elementary level, students keep daily journals of their work. Teachers regularly confer with students to assist in the development of personal learning goals and to reflect on progress. Beginning in the elementary, students regularly participate in parent-teacher discussions of student progress. 	<p>Students keep work journals, but they are not regularly employed in the self-assessment process.</p> <p>Teachers sometimes confer with students to assist in the development of personal learning goals and to reflect on progress.</p>	<p>Students are given assigned "work plans" which they have little input in developing or reflecting on.</p> <p>Work plans require the teacher to "check-off" completed work rather than allowing students to manage their time and productivity.</p>	Students are disconnected from the assessment process, except to receive grades.

Draft Essential Elements Review Audit, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (Accountability Plan Measure 1A)

River Valley Charter School: The Essential Elements Review

A Report Submitted to

River Valley Charter School
Newburyport, MA

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Introduction

This report provides description and analysis of the performance of River Valley Charter School (RVCS) as measured by standards and indicators of quality Montessori practice in the public sector¹. The reflections and recommendations shared here are based on a site visit conducted on April 11-12, 2022. During the visit, two reviewers from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) observed core classroom environments (K-8) and facilitated focused conversations with representatives of the following stakeholder groups: board of trustees, building administration, classroom teachers, instructional assistants, specials teachers, resource personnel, parents, and students. In addition, this report is informed by a review of the school's website² and a suite of institutional materials, including³: charter documents, strategic plan, annual report, master schedules, newsletters, handbooks, staff recruiting materials, learning goals, and progress reports.

What follows is a discussion of the school's strengths and assets, the challenges and opportunities ahead, and our recommended next steps.

This Moment in River Valley Charter School's History

Context

RVCS was the first charter Montessori program, built from the ground up, to open in the state of Massachusetts. The school received its inaugural charter⁴ from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in 1999⁵, and this year (SY2021-2022) celebrates its 22nd year of operation. RVCS originally opened as an elementary program (serving children in grades 1-5), grew to reach its full capacity through 8th grade in 2002, and in 2003 was granted permission by DESE to enroll kindergartners.⁶

Enrollment & Demographics

¹ A completed NCMPS' Essential Elements Rubric from our site visit is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

² [River Valley Charter School](http://www.rvcschool.org)

³ A copy of each of these resources is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies the EER rubric and report.

⁴ Excerpts from the original charter contract are included in the supporting documentation that accompanies this report.

⁵ [Massachusetts Department of Education / Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-department-of-education-office-of-charter-schools-and-school-redesign)

⁶ [River Valley Charter School / About Us / History](http://www.rvcschool.org/About-Us/History)

For SY21-22, RVCS is fully enrolled with 288 students divided by the following level configurations: two stand-alone Kinderhaus (K) classrooms, four Elementary 1 (E1) classrooms (grades 1, 2, and 3), four Elementary 2 (E2) classrooms (grades 4, 5, and 6), and one combined Middle School (MS) environment (grades 7 and 8) taught by content specialists: Math, ELA, Humanities, and Science.

Student race and ethnicity at RVCS⁷ closely matches that of the wider NPS district⁸. An analysis of selected populations reveals some differences: 6.1% fewer students identifying as first language learners (0.3% of students at RVCS); 2.4% fewer students receiving English language learner supports (0%); 6.8% fewer students with disabilities (13.9%); 9.2% fewer students identified as high needs (21.2%); and 3.6% fewer students classified as low income (9.7%).

Landscape Analysis

The Newburyport Public Schools (NPS) district oversees four schools in its portfolio: two elementary programs (one serving PreK-3rd grade, and another serving 4th and 5th grade); a middle school; and a high school.⁹ For SY21-22, NPS enrolled 2,150 students across these four campuses, PreK-12.¹⁰

The Montessori Census¹¹, while not an exhaustive list (as schools have to preferentially claim their profiles), indicates that Massachusetts is home to 77 Montessori schools, 6 of which are public programs. Of those, 4 are district-managed programs and 2, RVCS included, are charter schools; the closest public program to RVCS is Hill View Montessori Charter Public School¹² in Haverhill.

RVCS is located just southwest of Newburyport's High Street neighborhood, a tree-lined and walkable community of mostly single-family homes. The median home price in the neighborhood is approximately \$722,500¹³; the median household income in Newburyport, writ large, is approximately \$110,000.¹⁴

Apprehension & Opportunity

Public Montessori schools such as RVCS are asked to fulfill a special promise: to deliver a

⁷ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education / School and District Profiles / River Valley Charter School

⁸ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education / School and District Profiles / Newburyport Public Schools

⁹ Newburyport Public Schools

¹⁰ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education / School and District Profiles

¹¹ The Montessori Census

¹² Hill View Montessori Charter Public School

¹³ Redfin / High Street Neighborhood Housing Market

¹⁴ US Census Bureau / Quick Facts / Newburyport, MA

high-quality Montessori program, while meeting all of the expectations of performance required of the neighboring schools in the district. The burden of this responsibility has been made all the more demanding due to the ongoing challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The weight of external accountability, and fear of the consequences of students not performing well on year-end testing, can contribute to public Montessori schools focusing heavily on the metrics they will be reporting to the district - metrics that likely don't align with what public Montessori schools hold and treasure, including: independence, focus and concentration, passion and joy - in short, human flourishing.

Designing a quality Montessori program with these outcomes in mind, and sustaining the implementation of aligned best practices through the push and pull from external stakeholders, are critical factors in determining a school's overall success. While providing a rich, child-centered, and developmentally appropriate Montessori program is embraced by RVCS' school leadership and staff, opportunities for greater staff collaboration, enriched instructional practices, and data-informed instruction are areas of interest and energy; these are each themes addressed later in this report.

Building on Strengths

RVCS is rooted in many of the critical foundations of a successful Montessori program, including:

- Peaceful Staff & Students
- Cohesive, Holistic, Child-Centered Service
- Engaged, Purposeful Teaching & Learning
- Actively Living RVCS' Mission, Vision, & Habits of Learning
- Assistants and Support Staff in Classrooms
- Multi-Age Classrooms & Protected Work Cycles
- Prepared Classrooms & Common Spaces
- Enriched Student Experiences

Additionally, RVCS' stated Vision, Mission, Core Values¹⁵, and Habits of Learning¹⁶ are reflective of the school's dedication to child-centered service through Montessori pedagogy:

¹⁵ River Valley Charter School / Mission, Vision & Core Values

¹⁶ These "Eight Cs" were identified as both expected and valued outcomes of the RVCS Peace Education Curriculum Map and represent Dr. Montessori's vision of education as a tool to promote peace. (Source: RVCS' "Annual Report (2020-2021)", a copy of which is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.)

- Vision
 - RVCS will design, create and/or refine its educational programming to preserve the essence of childhood, challenge the boundaries of traditional educational pedagogy, and develop individuals who know themselves, enhance the world's interconnectedness, and have agency to pursue their individual passions.
- Mission
 - 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.
- Core Values
 - Premier Montessori Public Education
 - Collaboration and Professional Practice
 - Creativity, Challenge and Persistence
 - Authentic Learning and Student Engagement
 - Building Student Passion, Reflection and Peace
 - Parental Engagement
- Habits of Learning
 - Curiosity
 - Creativity
 - Critical Thinking
 - Collaboration
 - Commitment
 - Communication
 - Citizenship
 - Compassion

The development of such statements is an important process in the articulation of a school's philosophical mindset and overall strategy for implementation; they reflect healthy aspirations and achievable goals.

Opportunities & Recommendations

In examining the ways in which RVCS can continue to develop its program to meet these expressed ends, we recommend that the following elements of fidelity and sustainability receive further refinement:

- Community
 - Celebrate & Champion RVCS' Accomplishments
 - Build Opportunities for Staff Collaboration and Coherence
 - Review & Refine Curricular Maps, Student Outcomes
- Curriculum & Instruction
 - Prioritize Montessori Materials, Lessons, and Key Experiences
 - Foster Complex & Integrated Work Across the Curricula
 - Curate Opportunities for Student Autonomy, Purpose, and Mastery
- Assessment
 - Pilot an Online Montessori Record Keeping Platform
 - Establish Tools, Protocols, and Expectations for Scientific Observation
 - Leverage Formative Data to Inform Lesson Planning & Design

Greater detail on each of these areas of improvement is included in the discussion that follows.

The Essential Elements Rubric

The Essential Elements for Montessori in the Public Sector rubric considers five domains: Adults, the Montessori Learning Environment, Family Engagement, Leadership and Organizational Development, and Assessment. The first two domains reflect the fidelity of Montessori implementation, while the latter three domains provide insight on the level of a school's sustainability. Each domain of the rubric is comprised of a series of standards of practice (the essential elements), that are further divided into indicators representing a school's present reality. An annotated version of RVCS' completed rubric is included in our supplemental documentation; it illustrates how the ratings reported here were derived, and is designed to be read as a companion to this report. Following the convention for rating each individual standard of performance, each domain of the rubric is likewise rated as Exceeds the Standards, Meets the Standards, Moving Towards the Standards, or Limited Implementation of the Standards. Domain-specific reflections, ratings, and recommendations are offered below.

Nb: We suggest analyzing the detail shared here alongside the staff self-study data and reviewer's completed rubric, as well as the information gathered through the use of the

Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS) - as reflected in our Preliminary Oral Report.¹⁷ Using each of these tools in tandem provides a powerful 360° perspective on this moment in time in RVCS' evolution.

Domain 1: Adults | Rating: Meets the Standards

Observations & Reflections

Establishing and maintaining a trained community of Montessori practitioners for every classroom environment is the essential cornerstone to rooting high-quality, student-centered service. In the Kinderhaus and elementary classrooms, nearly all lead teachers are Montessori trained and/or certified through a MACTE-accredited¹⁸ Montessori teacher training program.¹⁹ At the middle school level, all core content teachers have Montessori training; at least four of them have 9-12 certifications, as well. That each of the classroom teachers at RVCS is trained for, at least, the level in which they are teaching is a remarkable accomplishment with significant school-wide cultural and implementation implications; indeed, schools that are able to foster community and build capacity through a lens shared pedagogical priorities are more apt to keep their focus on what matters most: the healthy, holistic development of its students.

Many of RVCS' lead teachers are veteran employees, while some are newer to the teaching profession. There is a collegial ease among many staff members, and staff often exhibit a calm, peaceful, and energized demeanor when interacting with their students. Lesson presentations, when observed, were generally clear, precise, and introduced with curiosity and purpose. Students appeared to be comfortable with school personnel, and there exists a reciprocal attitude of care between the school's adults and children.

In Montessori classrooms, assistants play a vital role, one very different from that of assistants and paraprofessionals elsewhere. A fully oriented Montessori assistant protects students' concentration, models grace and courtesy, and allows the lead teacher to focus on lesson presentations - just to name a selection of their critical responsibilities; these are habits of mind and technical skills that need to be taught, fostered, and continually supported. One of RVCS' programmatic strengths is that all classrooms (K-6) have a designated full-time assistant. Recognizing the significance of their roles and responsibilities, 95% of assistants have been provided a formal Montessori assistants training. During our site review, classroom assistants

¹⁷ A copy of RVCS' Essential Elements Review / Preliminary Oral Report is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies the EER rubric and report.

¹⁸ Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE)

¹⁹ During the on-site review, one of the E2 lead teachers was not Montessori trained; that teacher has since left RVCS, and that classroom's assistant, and two other Montessori-trained teachers are covering that classroom; between the three of them, they are trained at the following levels: 3-6, 6-9, 9-12.

were observed to be working in partnership with their lead teachers - collaborating on the needs of individual students, and those of the whole-class community.

When it comes to professional development and pedagogical support during the school year, RVCS mostly relies on its veteran Montessori teachers to help shape the school's instructional priorities and practices. RVCS facilitates weekly staff meetings that rotate between level, classroom, all-staff, and social gatherings.²⁰ In addition, teachers have an hour of meeting time four days a week; one day is reserved for level meetings to talk about children, curriculum, etc. In focus group conversations, staff reflected a deep appreciation for their colleagues, feeling supported in a collaborative professional environment. At the same time, many expressed a desire for further unification around instructional practices and student experiences²¹; greater coordination between the levels; and support for meeting the needs of diverse learners.

In our work with public programs around the country we have found that, second only to having strong, Montessori-trained teachers in every classroom, employing an experienced Montessorian to champion the implementation of Montessori philosophy and curricula, providing tailored professional development, and coaching instructional practices is critical to school's success. RVCS currently employs an unembedded coordinator for the middle school, but not yet for the Kinderhaus or elementary Levels. We recommend that RVCS hire a designated employee to serve in this capacity; the NCMP's Coaches Training²² would be an excellent first step in preparing this individual for these responsibilities.

Additional Commentary

In order to fully benefit from the unique insights and practices that each teacher brings to their work, and to deepen a shared whole-school programmatic vision for RVCS, we recommend developing a schedule for teachers to regularly observe in each other's classrooms - first amongst classrooms of the same level, then vertically between classrooms of different levels. Implementing use of the Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS)²³ would be another

²⁰ A copy of RVCS' "FY22 Post January Faculty Meeting Calendar" is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report. (nb: Of the five all-faculty events scheduled, one has a Montessori focus (and was the presentation of our initial reflections and recommendations from the on-site review).

²¹ RVCS' faculty "have created Learning Goals that highlight the expectations or outcomes parents can expect their children to have as a result of the education they receive at River Valley." (Source: River Valley Charter School / Curriculum & Instruction / Learning Goals). Copies of the Learning Goals for each level (Kinderhaus, Elementary 1, Elementary 2, and Middle School) are included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

²² NCMP's Coaches Training

²³ The Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS) is an iPad-based classroom assessment tool. It is currently designed for early childhood and elementary environments; NCMP is currently working on a similar tool for adolescent environments. For SY21-22, Hill View has 4 registrations allocated for the DERS Training & Certification course.

powerful way to collect information on the classroom-based strategies that are aligned to the outcomes that matter most for children.

Lastly, as RVCS refines its strategic plan with sustainability and longevity in mind, we recommend that high-quality Montessori teacher training (that includes specific support for working in the public sector), ongoing implementation support, succession planning, and the establishment of a lead teacher pipeline be a cornerstone of that design.

The school can become stronger in the Adults domain through:

- Further rooting a unified professional community of reflective practice through Montessori coaching.²⁴
- Deepening its commitment to ongoing Montessori professional development for all teachers, at all levels.

Domain 2: Montessori Learning Environment | Rating: Meets the Standards

Observations & Reflections

There is a palpable sense of purpose and possibility at RVCS. Staff and students, alike, reflect care and enthusiasm for their shared work. We observed a graceful ease between students and their teachers; it was clear that developing such strong interpersonal relationships had been purposely fostered. As students feel safe, they are more apt to engage in activities that require courage, and through taking risks they learn and grow.

Students at RVCS generally appeared comfortable in their classrooms, handled materials with care, and engaged with purpose; many could select and initiate work on their own, were eager to converse and collaborate with peers, engage in productive struggle, and take responsibility for their own learning; often we observed students expressing joy. Adults, in turn, were knowledgeable, patient and responsive - fostering exploration and collaboration. In each classroom and auxiliary space we observed a lived culture of curiosity and work.

Additional Commentary

²⁴ The NCMP's School-Wide and Teacher Reflective Practice inventories are included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies the EER rubric and report.

One of the remarkable features of RVCS' programming (K-8) is the integration of Place Based Learning at Maple Crest Farm²⁵ and the Specials/Spelectives curriculum²⁷. Such embedded extracurricular activities enrich students' school experience, reveal novel interests and talents, and serve to root a love of learning and living. To be sure, the curated content of these tailored activities stand on their own; what more, is that the staff members leading them clearly love what they do.

Recommended steps for a stronger Montessori Learning Environment at RVCS include:

- Implementing use of the Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS) to collect information on the classroom behaviors and environmental design considerations that are aligned to the outcomes that matter most for children (K-6).
- Continuing to build staff's capacity to embrace the full scope of Montessori curricula and material-based presentations; ensure daily opportunities for students to follow their own interests and drives; make cross-curricular connections; and engage in real work through practical life activities...
- Exploring the integration of the tools and protocols of NCMP's Child Study Training.²⁸
- Providing opportunities for Special Ed teachers and resource personnel to plan and collaborate with trained Montessori teachers to foster push-in support and side-by-side instruction within the daily work periods.²⁹

Domain 3: Family Engagement | Rating: Meets the Standards

Observations & Reflections

Family engagement is vitally important to the health of a school and its students. When guardians understand and feel connected to their child's Montessori education they are more apt to support and reinforce the approaches to learning and practical life skills emphasized at

²⁵ Maple Crest Farm

²⁶ For SY21-22, they are on a 6-day cycle: Two classes of 4th graders go out one day, two classes of 4th graders go out the next, then two classes of 5th graders, etc. Fridays are skipped. Through this program, E2 students experience about 20-25 outdoor days/year.

²⁷ Specials (K-6) at RVCS consist of Art, Engineering, Music, and PE on a six-day rotation. K and E1 also have Library. E1 has Guidance (1st years), Writing (2nd years); E2 also has Technology, and Science Lab. For the MS, all of the specialist teachers offer "special electives", called Spelectives, designed to give middle school students more choice of specials. It could be yoga, or basketball, or watercolors, or Legos, etc. These change three times/year and occur four days/week.

²⁸ Known as Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in conventional public schools, the NCMP's Child Study process articulates: the structure for facilitating conversations about the needs of students; the curating of strategies to employ in service of these needs; and the collection of data relative to implementation. Essential to this work is the regular collaboration between teachers, and between teachers and specialists, including consultation with school leadership as is appropriate.

²⁹ English Language Learners and Special Education Students in Montessori Schools: The Case for Push-In Services

school. In turn, students benefit from the strong alignment between their teachers and guardians.

RVCS is strong throughout this domain. During the enrollment period, RVCS offers three information sessions that provide an overview of charter schools and of public Montessori, as well as the application process; before the COVID-19 pandemic this also included a tour of the school. Following the lottery, RVCS then hosts an orientation for new parents to talk more about Montessori pedagogy. RVCS hosts one formal family education event each year, believing that embedded experiences (rather than a series of formal presentations) is the strongest way to foster a strong school-home partnership. These might include special classroom events, chaperoning field trips, etc.³⁰

Some of the currently employed structures for fostering family engagement throughout the school year include: RVCS' website³¹, school-level notices (e.g. the weekly "RVCS Happenings", etc.)³², classroom communications³³, progress reports and conferences, the Parents Alliance³⁴, and minutes shared from the meetings of the board of trustees³⁵.

In focus group conversations, the guardians who gathered shared their deep appreciation for the school and staff, noting that they and their children generally feel seen, heard, and cared for. They celebrated the holistic Montessori approach to education and expressed an interest in continuing to learn how to incorporate Montessori principles at home.

Additional Commentary

The school can continue its growth in the Family Engagement domain through exploring:

- Investing in community outreach to articulate and celebrate RVCS' vision, mission, and how the school lives out its core values day-to-day.
- Leveraging parents and guardians as RVCS' most compelling marketing team. From the grocery store line, to their children's sports sidelines, those casual opportunities - when paired with tightly tailored messages - can be powerful ways to build confidence in and excitement for RVCS' whole-school programming.

³⁰ River Valley Charter School / For Families / Parent Education.

³¹ River Valley Charter School.

³² RVCS emails families a weekly newsletter, "RVCS Happenings", full of timely administrative announcements, opportunities for parent involvement, and highlights from that week at school. Examples of these communications are included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this rubric.

³³ K-5 classrooms send home weekly communications; the MS does this monthly.

³⁴ The Parents' Alliance.

³⁵ Minutes from the meetings of RVCS' Board of Trustees can be found here.

Domain 4: Leadership & Organizational Development | Rating: Meets the Standards

The opportunity to continue to offer a progressive and developmentally-aligned pedagogy to the families of Newburyport and surrounding communities is an exciting endeavor. Critical to RVCS' longevity as a successful public Montessori program will be staying true to its vision, mission, and strategic plan³⁶ and having the tenacity to ensure that the principles of practice employed day-to-day adhere to those intentions.

A Montessori program is student-centered and holistic, rooted in fostering human flourishing: "the capacity to thrive socially, academically, and economically; to participate meaningfully in family, community, and civic life; and to live a life of curiosity, agency, and satisfaction".³⁷ Fidelity to the implementation of Montessori philosophy and practice is, therefore, essential; in so doing a school is able to develop in its students the skills and attributes required of society, as well as the wide-scope developmental outcomes linked to long-term happiness and success. The systems and structures built to support that work are critically important.

Staying true to its commitments, RVCS' response to the COVID-19 pandemic was exemplary. The school "created multiple programs specially designed to meet the holistic needs of students based on their age, developmental level, emotional maturity, social needs, and ability to thrive in an electronic educational environment." In person experiences were prioritized, as were Specials classes, and the school's place-based curriculum; RVCS offered fully remote options, as well, for those children and families that preferred to remain at home.³⁸ Through it all, RVCS' administration and staff stayed nimble and responsive to the needs of the school's students and families.

Observations & Reflections

There is a balance to be found between a school's chosen pedagogy, instructional practices, mission-aligned policies, and the people employed to do the work. One measure of a school's health is to what degree each of these design elements is regularly considered and supported.

RVCS' director, while not Montessori-trained, has enthusiastically participated in a series of professional development opportunities offered by NCMPs: Leaders Training, Leaders Workshop, Assessment Playbook Workshop, Public Montessori Symposium, Montessori Assistants Training, and Looking Ahead Workshop. Such curiosity for, and dedication to, best practice is commendable, and indicative of the school's strategic intentions.

³⁶ A copy of RVCS' draft "Five Year Strategic Plan" is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

³⁷ NCMPs' Montessori Assessment Playbook (p.7)

³⁸ For greater detail see pp. 2-4 in RVCS' "Annual Report (2020-2021)", a copy of which is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

The organizational matrix at RVCS has been built to accommodate clarity and collaboration. The administrative team (director and assistant director) work with the special education coordinators, the middle school coordinator³⁹, technology coordinator, and business manager to manage daily operations. Each program level has, in turn, their own liaison which together work closely with RVCS' administration.

RVCS' administrative team and front office staff exhibit a confidence and collaborative spirit that is palpable. Throughout our visit planning process, and during our visit on-site, we were made to feel welcome and were provided all of the resources necessary for successful review. In addition, members of administration made themselves available to answer questions, etc., as they arose; that level of real-time responsiveness, in general, was echoed in our observations of teacher-student interactions and in conversations with staff.

Conversations in multiple staff focus groups elicited a deep appreciation for their colleagues, feeling supported in a collegial and professional environment; belief in RVCS' values and commitments appeared to be embraced by all interviewed, as was the championing of a culture of continuous learning. Staff routinely work collaboratively to refine and build tools that support their work. To that end, school leadership and staff are in the process of reviewing each level's Learning Goals⁴⁰ and are in the process of building tailored appraisal protocols, mirroring the scope and content of what is included in the NCMPS appraisal suite.⁴¹

Additional Commentary

RVCS can further root its practices in Meets the Standards domain through:

- Continuing to develop a professional community that encourages honest talk, collaborative work, and a commitment to Montessori philosophy and pedagogy.
- Fostering additional contracted time for individual staff to reflect, record keep, and design - as well as the time for staff to meet as levels, and between levels, in order to: build consistent instructional practices between classrooms of the same level; intentionally scaffold instructional practices between classrooms of differing levels; and refine level-specific exit outcomes, aligned to goals for the matriculating 8th grader.

³⁹ Moving forward, RVCS' administration envisions coordinators for the kindergarten and elementary levels as well.

⁴⁰ Copies of RVCS' Learning Goals for each level are included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

⁴¹ Copies of NCMPS' appraisal instruments for the executive, teacher, and assistant are included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

- Providing additional opportunities for teachers to attend off-site Montessori conferences, workshops, and trainings.
- Building a salary schedule that is both commensurate with the local cost of living, and one's expertise and responsibilities.

Domain 5: Assessment | Rating: Meets the Standards

A coherent assessment system is at the core of a strong Montessori program; it is important that the methods of data collection reflect the goals and values of the school. Without a robust Montessori-aligned assessment plan, schools naturally and inevitably turn towards the state's year-end standardized tests (and aligned benchmark assessments during the school year) to understand how they are doing. But the state's tests do not reflect the totality of outcomes for students who attend RVCS, and a focus on them, in turn, begins to undermine and erode full implementation of the Montessori program.

To that end, RVCS maintains a robust suite of assessment protocols to help inform its holistic understanding of student academic and social/emotional needs. In addition to the year-end summative Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)⁴² test taken by students in grades 3-8, RVCS employs Quick Phonics Screeners (K-3)⁴³, Acadience Math Screener (K-6)⁴⁴, DIBELS (K-8)⁴⁵, and SAEBS (K-8)⁴⁶. Relatedly, school leadership may want to also consider using one of the products developed by Reflection Sciences⁴⁷ (one of NCMPS' research partners) as a tool to measure the development of executive function skills, seen as the roots to both academic success and social-emotional competence.

Performance Rating⁴⁸

During SY20-21, students in grades 3 through 8 at RVCS participated in the MCAS tests in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics; students in grades 5 and 8 also took the MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) test.

⁴² [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education / Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System](#)

⁴³ [Read Naturally / Quick Phonics Screeners](#)

⁴⁴ [Acadience Learning / Math](#)

⁴⁵ [University of Oregon / Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills \(DIBELS\)](#)

⁴⁶ [Illuminate Education / Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener \(SAEBS\)](#)

⁴⁷ [Reflection Sciences](#)

⁴⁸ Data shared in this section comes from RVCS' "FY22 MCAS Results Summative Info for Presentation". A copy of this slide deck is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

Overall, 63% of the students tested met or exceeded the standard for ELA, 43% of the students tested met or exceeded the standard for Math, and 54% of the students tested met or exceeded the standard for Science. Grade-specific scores are as follows:

ELA:

- 67% of 3rd graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 72% of 4th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 61% of 5th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 58% of 6th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 66% of 7th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 57% of 8th graders either met or exceeded the standards

Math:

- 24% of 3rd graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 44% of 4th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 32% of 5th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 45% of 6th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 41% of 7th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 53% of 8th graders either met or exceeded the standards

STE:

- 55% of 5th graders either met or exceeded the standards
- 54% of 8th graders either met or exceeded the standards

In examining student growth in ELA and Math, students at RVCS in SY20-21 grew at a typical rate (48.8 and 52.7, respectively, on a scale of 1-99).⁴⁹ Growth in STE wasn't reported.

One of the challenges that public Montessori programs face is aligning their pedagogical posture, and instructional design and practices to meet standards-based proficiency measures. These summative assessments provide aggregate, grade-specific data that do not account for the nuances of individual student need, nor the pace of individual growth. A student's cognitive development is nonlinear; rather, it unfurls at varying rates, naturally punctuated by periods of acceleration, diminution, and stagnation.

What is critical, therefore, is that schools routinely analyze the multiple forms of formative assessment at their disposal, allowing for tailored student-centered service. We encourage RVCS to routinely revisit the scope and quality of assessments given each year, and interrogate if and how the school's assessment data is used to inform student support and classroom-based Montessori instruction.

⁴⁹ [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education / 2021 School Report Card](#)

Observations & Reflections

The Montessori scope and sequence - when implemented as designed - prepares students for proficiency.⁵⁰ We recommend ongoing professional development, Montessori coaching, and Lesson Study⁵¹ to support teachers in leaning into and leading with the Montessori curriculum and materials.

We commend RVCS for its articulation of level-specific Learning Goals⁵²; such clarity in academic outcomes fosters pedagogical momentum and school-wide coherence of priorities. Integration of NCMP's Montessori Curriculum to Standards Alignment (MCSA)⁵³ could further support RVCS' student-centered and data-informed approach to curriculum and instruction. The MCSA is a comprehensive alignment between the Montessori curriculum and national standards (ECE-6) including the Common Core. It helps teachers cover required standards while staying true to their Montessori practice by linking Montessori curriculum areas and lesson purposes to the right assessment vocabulary, considerations, and standards. The tool aligns to the Common Core State Standards, College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies, the Next Generation Science Standards, and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

Assessment protocols and data systems that track multiple measures of student success (academic outcomes along with executive functions such as self-regulation, initiation, and cognitive flexibility) and that are used and analyzed consistently to inform instruction have the potential to lessen the tendency to focus on externally mandated measures. These protocols and systems include: regular scientific observation; a robust and a consistent record-keeping system across all levels of the school that will help teachers tailor work to student readiness and interest; lesson planning that reflects and tracks each child's progress; use of skills inventories⁵⁴ to manage the scope and rhythm of lessons offered in each level; and reporting on student progress that foregrounds the development of wide-scope developmental outcomes, and is easy for guardians to understand.

RVCS employs tools that center its values and commitments. Embedded in a student's school's progress report (K-6)⁵⁵ is a page devoted to the program's Habits of Learning: curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, commitment, communication, citizenship,

⁵⁰ [NCMP's / Research and Resources](#)

⁵¹ The NCMP's Lesson Study Protocol is included in this report's supporting documents.

⁵² Copies of RVCS' Learning Goals for each level are included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

⁵³ [Montessori to Curriculum Standards Alignment \(MCSA\)](#)

⁵⁴ The NCMP's Skills Inventories for Early Childhood, Lower and Upper Elementary are included in this report's supporting documentation.

⁵⁵ Examples of RVCS' Progress Reports for Kinderhaus, Lower and Upper Elementary, and Middle School are included in the supporting documentation that accompanies this report.

and compassion. These “Eight Cs” “were identified as both expected and valued outcomes of the RVCS Peace Education Curriculum Map, and represent [Dr. Montessori’s](#) vision of education as a tool to promote peace.” Relatedly, the sections of the report devoted to academic progress include an engagement score to indicate a child’s interest and commitment to working in that academic area, and whether a child is on track for typical academic achievement. In addition, students at RVCS (K-8) build portfolios as they matriculate through the program that, “rather than reflecting a collection of best practices, include work samples and reflections based on the Habits of Learning”.⁵⁶ We celebrate RVCS’ use of protocols that root holistic, developmental student outcomes.

Additional Commentary

In our work with public Montessori programs around the country, we routinely encounter considerable tension between the need to meet year-end benchmarks and the desire to provide a high-quality Montessori education. Sacrifices are often made to the pedagogy [in order to](#) ensure preparation for, and proficiency on, such summative assessments. This dynamic was, in general, noticeably absent from our focus group conversations at RVCS - nor did we see classroom-based instruction that appeared exclusively test-driven. Not that these pressures [aren’t](#) real; to be sure, charter programs often face greater scrutiny than conventional neighborhood programs, having to justify their existence (read: use of public dollars). We applaud RVCS for having found a workable balance between external accountability and internal priorities and practices..

Further refinement in the Assessment domain could include:

- Adopting skills inventories for assessing readiness to move between [levels, and](#) providing time for ongoing horizontal and vertical teaming throughout the school.
- Placing an expectation for daily teacher observation that drives instruction by assessing student readiness and interest.
- Exploration and piloting of an online Montessori record-keeping platform ([e.g. Transparent Classroom](#)⁵⁷) for Montessori-trained teachers so to inform best instructional practices (planning, delivery, reflection, refinement, and student-level support).

⁵⁶ Commentary for this section draws heavily on RVCS’ “Annual Report (2020-2021)”, a copy of which is included in the supplemental documentation that accompanies this report.

⁵⁷ [Transparent Classroom](#)

- Planning lessons based on the Montessori curriculum and integrating state standards when needed (and in that order). An orientation to NCMP’s Montessori to Curriculum Standards Alignment⁵⁸ could be instrumental here.
- Tracking RVCS’ alumni experiences in high school, and beyond.

Next Steps

River Valley Charter School is at a critical point in its evolution of providing high-quality public Montessori programming to the families of Newburyport and surrounding communities:

In summary, the following next steps [are recommended](#):

- **School-Wide Culture**
 - Continuing to develop a professional community that encourages honest talk, collaborative work, and a commitment to Montessori philosophy and pedagogy.
 - Further rooting a unified professional community of reflective practice through Montessori coaching.⁵⁹
 - Deepening its commitment to ongoing Montessori professional development for all teachers, at all levels.
 - Investing in community outreach to articulate and celebrate RVCS’ vision, mission, and how the school lives out its core values day-to-day.
 - Leveraging parents and guardians as RVCS’ most compelling marketing team. [From the grocery store line](#), to their children’s sports sidelines, those casual opportunities - when paired with tightly tailored messages - can be powerful ways to build confidence in and excitement for RVCS’ whole-school programming.
 - Tracking RVCS’ alumni experiences in high school, and beyond.
 - Building a salary schedule that is both commensurate with the local cost of living, and one’s expertise and responsibilities.
- **Systems & Structures**
 - Fostering additional contracted time for individual staff to reflect, record keep, and design - as well as the time for staff to meet as levels, and between levels,

⁵⁸ [NCMP’s Montessori to Curriculum Standards Alignment](#)

⁵⁹ The NCMP’s School-Wide and Teacher Reflective Practice inventories [are included](#) in the supplemental documentation that accompanies the EER rubric and report.

in order to: build consistent instructional practices between classrooms of the same level; intentionally scaffold instructional practices between classrooms of differing levels; and refine level-specific exit outcomes, aligned to goals for the matriculating 8th grader.

- Adopting skills inventories for assessing readiness to move between [levels](#), and providing time for ongoing horizontal and vertical teaming throughout the school.
- Exploration and piloting of an online Montessori record-keeping platform (e.g., Transparent Classroom⁶⁰) for Montessori-trained teachers so to inform best instructional practices (planning, delivery, reflection, refinement, and student-level support).
- Exploring the integration of the tools and protocols of NCMPS' Child Study Training.⁶¹
- Providing opportunities for Special Ed teachers and resource personnel to plan and collaborate with trained Montessori teachers to foster push-in support and side-by-side instruction within the daily work periods.⁶²

- **Montessori Pedagogy & Practice**

- Implementing use of the Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS) to collect information on the classroom behaviors and environmental design considerations that [are aligned](#) to the outcomes that matter most for children (K-6).
- Continuing to build staff's capacity to embrace the full scope of Montessori curricula and material-based presentations; ensure daily opportunities for students to follow their own interests and drives; make cross-curricular connections; and engage in real work through practical life activities.
- Placing an expectation for daily teacher observation that drives instruction by assessing student readiness and interest.

⁶⁰ [Transparent Classroom](#)

⁶¹ Known as Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in conventional public schools, the NCMPS' Child Study process articulates the structure for facilitating conversations about the needs of students; the curating of strategies to employ in service of these needs; and the collection of data relative to implementation. Essential to this work is the regular collaboration between teachers, and between teachers and specialists, including consultation with school leadership as is appropriate.

⁶² [English Language Learners and Special Education Students in Montessori Schools: The Case for Push-In Services](#)

- Planning lessons based on the Montessori curriculum and integrating state standards when needed (and in that order). An orientation to NCMPS' [Montessori to Curriculum Standards Alignment](#)⁶³ could be instrumental here.
- Providing additional opportunities for teachers to attend off-site Montessori conferences, workshops, and trainings.

With the support of RVCS' board of trustees and the whole school community, these recommendations can [be incorporated](#) into the strategic planning process and operationalized through committed action from school administration and staff.

⁶³ [NCMPS' Montessori to Curriculum Standards Alignment](#)

Teacher Reflective Practices Inventory (Accountability Plan Measure 1B)

K-6 Teacher Reflective Practice Inventory

Self-reflection provides an opportunity for you to think about the many parts of your Montessori practice, including your role as the guide, the prepared environment, and your instructional practices.

Using the Likert scale below, please select the number that best represents where you are in your Montessori practice.

*** Required**

1. Email address *

2. 1. Every object in my environment is chosen with regard to development of the child: there is nothing extraneous. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

It's not my strength yet. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It's my Superpower!

3. 2. The environment is impeccably clean and tidy, and all materials are displayed in sequence from simple to complex. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

It's not my strength yet. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It's my Superpower!

4. 3. Furniture is arranged to nurture concentration and to provide smooth flow. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

5. 4. There is a variety in shapes, colors, textures and materials in the objects in the environment--trays, containers, rugs, and a variety of arts and crafts on the walls and integrated in various areas of the classroom. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

6. 5. The children in my environment understand that the classroom belongs to them; they are fully oriented to the environment and show strong trust for one another and the adults. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

7. 6. There is an attitude of learning from mistakes and an acceptance that errors are a part of the learning process. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

8. 7. There are routines for cleaning and ordering the classroom, introducing more complex materials based on student interest and need, rotating language materials to enrich vocabulary development, and refreshing pictures/art on the walls and in culture folders. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

It's not my strength yet. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It's my Superpower!

9. 8. I am direct, specific, and consistent in communicating expectations with regard to social interactions, care of the environment , and purposeful work. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

It's not my strength yet. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It's my Superpower!

10. 9. I consistently use the environment, and the materials to provide the first level of support for children's development and I intervene directly only when this support is insufficient. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

It's not my strength yet. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ It's my Superpower!

11. 10. I am confident in my repertoire of lessons, and I consistently provide presentations with fluency, clarity and economy of movement. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

12. 11. My lesson planning is based on ongoing observation of the children; I take time every day to sit and observe students in the environment. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

13. 12. While engaging with individual children, I am aware of the general classroom and the children's activity. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

14. 13. I consistently identify student learning challenges early, and make necessary adaptations to my environment and/or presentations to meet the unique needs of individual students. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

15. 14. I have a reliable system for documenting ongoing observation of student work, and use that system to monitor student development as well as to communicate progress with parents, support staff, and, when needed, school/district officials. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

16. 15. I am highly sensitive to cultural differences and always appropriately respectful in communications with families. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

17. 16. I am proactive with respect to sharing student concerns and/or challenges with families. I make myself available for e-mail, telephone, and face-to-face conferences with families. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

18. 17. I approach each family with a spirit of empathetic inquiry, with the acceptance that parents want the best for their child. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

19. 18. I consider myself a child development expert, and am up-to-date on the latest research on the subject, including new insights on neuroscience and cognition and their relationship to Montessori theory and practice. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

20. 19. I strive to be fully present in every interaction--whether the other is a child, an adult or the environment. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

21. 20. I understand Maria Montessori's Cosmic vision and regard daily work with children and families as a contribution to the larger cosmic effort. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

22. 21. I continually strive to realize my own human potential, and I look toward the child for inspiration. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

23. 22. I am intentional about caring for my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
It's not my strength yet.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It's my Superpower!

Celebration of Learning Feedback Form (Accountability Plan Measure 3C)

COL Feedback Form

Please provide feedback on the presenter's Story of Self. Did it have a logical flow, meaningful insights and the student's voice present throughout?

- ☐ 1 = Story not ordered or fully developed
- ☐ 2 = Story needs improvement in organization and development; lacks student's voice
- ☐ 3 = Story has logical flow, is unique to the student; personal voice is evident
- ☐ 4 = Story is easy to follow; includes meaningful and complex insights, is infused with student's distinct voice throughout

Please provide feedback on the student's response to questions throughout the presentation.

- ☐ 1 = Does not respond or responds with "I don't know"
- ☐ 2 = Student makes an attempt at answering the questions but does not fully address the questions
- ☐ 3 = Student responds to questions with understanding and gives well reasoned answers
- ☐ 4 = Student engages with audience; displays openness; gives carefully thought out answers

Please provide feedback on the students Evidence of Learning. Were the examples of work integrated well into the story and did they make a strong connection to the Habits of Learning?

- ☐ 1 = No evidence of examples
- ☐ 2 = Examples are weak or do not strongly connect to story and/or Habits of Learning
- ☐ 3 = Examples are clearly developed and make strong connections to the story and/or Habits of Learning
- ☐ 4 = At least 5 examples are shared and discussed and make connections to story and/or Habits of Learning are complex and robust and

Please provide feedback on the student's comfort, poise, grace and eye contact with the audience

- ☐ 1 = Student's body language detracts from presentation (paces, fidgets, plays with paper/notes)
- ☐ 2 = Student appears comfortable at times but displays some distracting body language
- ☐ 3 = Student is comfortable before the audience and gestures when appropriate
- ☐ 4 = Student exudes confidence throughout the entire presentation and gestures enhance the presentation. Strong eye contact helps presenter connect to audience

Please provide feedback on the student's volume, cadence, tone, inflection

- ☐ 1 = Student speaks too quietly for audience to hear; student mumbles
- ☐ 2 = Student's voice is low and does not project to entire audience
- ☐ 3 = Student's voice is clear; audience members can hear presentation
- ☐ 4 = Student projects and uses variations of voice in a way that engages the audience