



RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL
montessori made public

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Date Report Finalized: July 26, 2023

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

2 Perry Way
Newburyport, MA 01950

Jonnie Lyn Evans, Director

Phone: (978) 465-0065

rvcs@rivervalleycharter.org

www.rivervalleycharter.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL	4
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION	5
FAITHFULNESS TO CHARTER	5
CRITERION 1: MISSION AND KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS	5
Amendments to the Charter	7
CRITERION 2: ACCESS AND EQUITY	7
CRITERION 4: DISSEMINATION	9
ACADEMIC PROGRAM SUCCESS	11
CRITERION 5: STUDENT PERFORMANCE	11
CRITERION 6: PROGRAM DELIVERY	11
ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY	13
CRITERION 10: FINANCE	13
FY23 Unaudited Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets	13
FY23 Unaudited Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet)	14
FY24 Approved Budget (approved June 9, 2023)	15
FY24 Enrollment Table	16
APPENDICES	18
APPENDIX A: ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN EVIDENCE 2022-2023	18
Faithfulness to the Charter	18
Dissemination	22
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN 2023-24	25
Recruitment Plan	25
Retention Plan	29
APPENDIX C: SCHOOL AND STUDENT DATA TABLES	32
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION	32
ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER AND STAFF ATTRITION DATA	32
APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL REQUIRED INFORMATION	35
Facilities	35
Enrollment	35
APPENDIX E: CONDITIONS, COMPLAINTS AND ATTACHMENTS	35

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL

<i>River Valley Charter School</i>			
Type of Charter	<i>Commonwealth</i>	Location	<i>Newburyport</i>
Regional or Non-Regional	<i>Regional</i>	Districts in Region	<i>Amesbury, Newburyport, Pentucket, Triton</i>
Year Opened	<i>1999</i>	Year(s) Renewed	<i>2003, 2009, 2014, 2019</i>
Maximum Enrollment	<i>288</i>	Enrollment for 2022-23	<i>288</i>
Chartered Grade Span	<i>K-8</i>	Grade Span for 2022-23	<i>K-8</i>
Number of Instructional Days per School Year (as stated in the charter)	<i>180</i>	Students on Waitlist for 2022-2023	<i>155</i>
Number of Instructional Days during the 2022-23 School Year	<i>180</i>		
School Hours	<i>8:30-3:10 (Monday-Friday)</i>	Age of School in 2022-23	<i>24 years</i>
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>			



July 18, 2023

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 2022-2023 academic year. In its third decade of operation, the school is thriving in challenging times. River Valley Charter School continues to apply the Montessori philosophy to provide a rigorous academic program rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.

River Valley Charter School's high-quality public Montessori program remains nimble in the current educational landscape. Strong internal relationships and a positive external reputation helped the school retain talented educators and respond to mid-year staff changes. Place Based Education strengthened our Montessori mission, including grounding educational programming in our local environment and expanding opportunities for students. Place Based Education will be a focus of future strategic curricular work.

This was a notable year for RVCS organizationally. Since our founding over twenty years ago, our Business Office has been managed by the same highly responsible and fiscally conservative manager. In preparation for her retirement this year, the Director put in place the necessary pieces to make a smooth transition to contracted business office and HR systems. With a supportive and highly qualified Board Finance Committee advising her, Jonnie Lyn Evans continues to spearhead the transition to more efficient and updated systems. We anticipate this to be a transition that will need continued attention and close oversight in this first year. We are looking forward to the potential savings in both time and money that this transition will afford RVCS, allowing the school to focus resources most effectively.

We are glad to be exiting the official "emergency" of the pandemic and carefully stepping forward into both proven and new ideas for what makes our school successful. We are thankful for the flexibility that being a MA Charter school affords us and for the pedagogical guiding light that Montessori philosophy sets. We are thankful to our entire community for the support and grounding they provide: Teachers, staff, administrators, families, students, Board of Trustees, 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, River Valley Charter School

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

FAITHFULNESS TO CHARTER

CRITERION 1: 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.

An Education Program Based on the Montessori Philosophy

River Valley Charter School has created and sustained a learning community based on the Montessori philosophy. We started the year with an all-staff professional development “Montessori Refocus” led by Elizabeth Slade from [Public Montessori In Action](#). Our work centered around preparing ourselves as educators and preparing our learning environments in support of the child. Each of our classrooms is led by a Montessori trained and/or certified teacher, and many of our assistant teachers and specialists also have training in Montessori pedagogy.

The structure of our multi-age classrooms in grades 1-8 allow students to learn from and teach each other. Most lessons are given in small groups and are customized to the learning needs of each student. Individualized instruction is made possible through the presence of two teachers in every classroom. Teaching teams prepare learning environments for River Valley students where they have access to active, hands-on learning opportunities. In elementary classrooms, Montessori materials and manipulatives enable students to work from abstract to concrete. These materials solidify their understanding and provide self-correction and encourage collaboration. Classrooms typically operate on the principle of freedom within limits. This contributes to the development of independence and strong decision-making skills.

A Curriculum Rooted in the History, Culture, and Ecology of the Merrimack River Valley

Place-based learning is a central element of a child’s learning experience at River Valley. Middle School learning experiences this year included a collaboration with the Park River Wildlife Refuge where students visited the Plum Island marsh, gathered data about pollution and biodiversity, and presented their findings to local professionals in the form of a collaborative mural with QR links to their written summaries. Our MS Performing Arts group connected with a local cultural organization, [The Firehouse Center for the Arts](#), to present their performance of Matilda, Jr.

Our E2 Place-Based-Education program is in its third year, with students this year heading outside with their classrooms one day per week all year long. Three Place-Based educators, with the classroom assistant, provided learning opportunities based at Maple Crest Farm. This year, students and staff constructed a greenhouse at the site to provide shelter and give space to grow plants, and to allow further exploration of the ecology of the area. One student-initiated project was born of a hike at a local site where students found an historical family gravesite that was left unattended. Assisted by their teacher, the students conducted research at our local libraries and organized a cleanup of the site, which was featured in our local newspaper.

Place-Based-Education at the E1 level this year included four day-long excursions per classroom at a local historical farm, [Spencer-Peirce-Little-Farm](#). Each class participated in a half-day workshop led by the farm staff, as well as a half-day lesson and exploration of the area by River Valley Place-Based educators. Topics included cloud formations, local tree identification and nature cyanotypes, simple machines, engineering, and historical tools used at the farm. All E1 students ended the year by studying local marine wildlife. One class visited Plum Island and explored the habitat of the piping plover. Their research culminated in an art show where they presented artwork and research about an endangered animal of their choice, in order to raise awareness and share how others can help preserve and protect these creatures.

Our Kinderhaus classrooms explored the area several times this year, starting with a visit to a local apple orchard in the fall. As part of their maple-sugaring project this year, E2 students hosted the Kinderhaus at Spencer-Peirce-Little-Farm and presented lessons about the history of maple-sugaring in New England, as well as a demonstration of the current process. They ended the year with a visit from the Seacoast Science Center, where they had hands-on, interactive lessons from their staff.

A Focus on the Development of Students' Critical Thinking and Problem-solving Skills

A Montessori classroom inherently provides opportunities for both critical thinking and problem solving. One area of focus for this school year was to give students greater agency in their classrooms through the [Positive Discipline](#) approach. Through class meetings or circles, students used critical thinking and creativity to solve problems in their classroom communities through a collaborative process emphasizing open communication and responsibility. One class worked together to solve the problem of snack time, while another worked through an interpersonal problem between students.

Students in the Middle School level used 'socratic dialogue' in their Humanities and Language Arts classes. The Socratic Dialogue is a format for a group of two or more people to explore a topic of conversation and think critically about the subject material. The basis of the conversations often originates in questions posed to one another. In preparation for the discussion, students read an article on the merits of different grading systems and the impact they have on overall student achievement. The dialogues between the students were robust and impressive and made everyone think deeply about the subject.

Amendments to the Charter
No charter amendments were submitted in the 2022-2023 school year.

CRITERION 2: ACCESS AND EQUITY

2021-22 Student Discipline Data Report

2021-22 Student Discipline					
Student Group	Total Number of Students	Students Disciplined	Percent In-School Suspension	Percent Out-of-School Suspension	Percent Emergency Removal
All Students	294 ¹	1	Not applicable		
English Learner	0	NA			
Economically Disadvantaged	30	1			
Students with Disabilities	57	1			
High Needs	79	1			
Female	155	0			
Male	139	1			
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0			
Asian	3	0			
African American/Black	3	0			
Hispanic/Latino	20	0			
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic/Latino	14	0			
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0			
White	253	0			

Historically, River Valley has very low rates of in-and out-of-school suspensions. Our Montessori philosophy includes Grace and Courtesy lessons, which serve as the backbone of behavioral expectation for all students and staff. Most behavior issues are handled by the classroom teachers, with the support of the school counselor when needed. For the 2023-2024 school year, we are fortunate to have an additional counselor on staff, who worked previously as an intern at River Valley. This addition will allow an administrative team of one counselor and one administrator to focus their support on a specific group of students (K-3, 4-8).

¹ Maximum enrollment is 288 students.

Disruptive behavior is viewed as an opportunity for learning, and natural consequences are utilized over punishments. As mentioned previously, one focus of our professional development work this year was an approach called Positive Discipline. Chip DeLorenzo, a former Montessori Head of School and Positive Behavior Coach, provided virtual and in-person sessions where teachers utilized tools to create a classroom environment where children are encouraged to be responsible, respectful, and a capable member of their community. We are fortunate to have a ratio of one counselor per 144 students as well as a part time school psychologist. Looking ahead, we continue to seek out support and professional development opportunities surrounding social and emotional learning for our staff and parent community.

CRITERION 4: DISSEMINATION

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/Curriculum	Article in EdPost	Place-Based Educator, Lynne Taylor	EdPost community	Our Placed-Based educator developed a curriculum about the history of Native Americans in our area. She collaborated with a media contact from the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association to write an article that was posted on a national site.
Best Practices, Mission/Pedagogy	Teacher training	Three current assistant teachers	Montessori Elementary Teacher Training Collaborative , other teacher trainees and faculty	River Valley currently funds three assistant teachers who are completing their Montessori training. They are able to share and discuss our mission and philosophy, and especially our Place-Based Education program, with their cohort and teachers.
Best Practices, Collaboration	Research Mural Documentary film	MS Teaching Team and Students	Parker River Wildlife Refuge, Essex County Greenbelt Association Peabody Essex Museum Maritime Biolabs	Middle School students collected and shared data on the Plum Island marsh to local professionals. They developed mural themes and did additional research, and made individual creative pieces which were used to build the murals. These murals were then displayed publicly in a partnering organization's lobby. A documentary film of the project is being distributed widely to educators who work with the partnering organizations.

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	Fellowship Site	School Counselor, Katy Field	Salem State and Merrimac College	River Valley hosted two counseling interns who shared information about the school with inservice peers and educators at their colleges.
Best Practice/Research and Volunteer Project	Article in Daily News , Research Project	Place-Based Educator and students	West Newbury Historical Commission, Public	Students shared their research with the West Newbury Historical Commission and their project was shared in an article in our local paper.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM SUCCESS

CRITERION 5: STUDENT PERFORMANCE

[2022 School Report Card](#)

CRITERION 6: PROGRAM DELIVERY

Curriculum & Instruction: The Montessori Method

River Valley Charter School endeavors to stay true to the Montessori approach in all academic areas while also meeting the needs of students as our world evolves. As a public school, River Valley has aligned the Montessori Scope and Sequence with the MA Curriculum Frameworks to create a robust curriculum.

This year, our rotating Specials schedule allowed for uninterrupted morning work cycles for K-6 students. While this time was valuable, the rotating schedule was complicated and difficult to manage. A scheduling team was formed during the year, and we held round-table discussions with students and staff. The end result is a new pilot schedule for next year that simplifies our Specials offerings with the goal of more time for student-initiated and group work in their classrooms.

2022-2023 was the third year of our Placed Based Education program, which has been a successful addition to our programming. Our goal for next year is to collaborate on a more integrated model, where classroom teachers are part of the Place Based Education team.

Assessments

Children who learn in a Montessori classroom are assessed in a variety of ways. Observation is a key tool for teachers, and they use this informal formative assessment to continually adjust lessons for student learning and engagement. Creative projects, oral presentations of research, performances, and written work are also part of our evaluation process.

Progress reports and parent-teacher conferences are held three times per year. In preparation for their conferences, students create portfolios of their work, divided into our Habits of Learning (Curiosity, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Commitment, Communication, Citizenship, and Compassion).

Sixth year students prepare oral research presentations to culminate their E2 experience, which are presented to the school community. Eighth year students end their River Valley journey by giving a presentation we called “Celebrations of Learning (COLs). The COL is an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning and growth both academically and outside of the classroom. In an interactive presentation given by each eighth year student, a group of panelists ask questions, challenge the student’s thinking, and engage in open conversation. Presentations include: A Story of Self, Expression of Gratitude, Evidence of Learning, and a panel discussion.

Supports for All Learners

At the beginning the 2022-2023 school year, River Valley employed seven dedicated special education staff members (five special education teachers, a literacy specialist, a speech and language pathologist, and a special education assistant). Due to the changing needs of our student population, we added two 1:1 assistants during the year. One staff member who was out on medical

leave returned to a new position as an intervention specialist for grades K-3. In addition, we have a part time school psychologist, subcontractors for occupational and physical therapy, a full time counselor on staff, and in 2022-2023, one full and one part time counseling intern. Next year, we are extending a contract to one of the counseling interns. This will allow us to better provide for the growing social emotional needs of children.

Accelerated Learning

This year, our Specials schedule and staffing gave us the flexibility to meet the needs of students who needed extra academic support. Students were supported with small group tutoring especially in math and reading as we evaluated their needs throughout the year through our DIBELS literacy and Accadience mathematics assessment and SST meetings. One staff member who returned from an extended medical leave transitioned into an interventionist for our K-3 students. A veteran teacher came in mid-year to mentor and assist teachers and students. We saw an increase in the social-emotional needs of students across all grades and were fortunate to have support from one full-time and one part-time counseling intern during the year.

ORGANIZATIONAL VIABILITY

CRITERION 10: FINANCE

FY23 Unaudited Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets

Tuitions	\$ 4, 980, 633
Federal and state grants	305,681
Program Fees	64,243
On-behalf fringe benefits	-
City provided transportation services - in kind	-

Total Operating Revenues	<u>5,350,557</u>
--------------------------	------------------

Personnel and Related

Salaries	3,400,818
Payroll taxes	145,774
Fringe benefits and staff development	463,593

Occupancy

Maintenance of buildings and grounds	154,116
Lease Expense	250,120
Utilities	59,543
Insurance	11,922

Direct Student Costs

Instructional technology	23,574
Educational services, supplies and expenses	265,349

Other Operating Costs

Contracted and professional services	150,461
Insurance	35,032
Office supplies and expenses	25,440
Dues, subscriptions and licenses	25,232
Recruitment/advertising	1,839
Depreciation	102,741
City provided transportation services - in kind	-
On-behalf fringe benefits	-

Total Operating Expenses	<u>5,115,555</u>
--------------------------	------------------

Operating Income	<u>235,002</u>
------------------	----------------

Contributions and other income	3,136
Contribution from Foundation/(to the School)	140,000
Interest income	12,152
Net Nonoperating Revenues/(Expenses)	<u>155,288</u>
	390,290
	<u>2,250,293</u>
	<u>\$ 2,640,583</u>

FY23 Unaudited Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet)

Assets

Current Assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,270,465
Grants and accounts receivable	8,771
Related party receivables/(payables)	140,000
Prepaid expenses	<u>20,321</u>

Total current assets	<u>2,439,556</u>
----------------------	------------------

Noncurrent Assets:

Capital assets, net	<u>3,712,863</u>
---------------------	------------------

Total noncurrent assets	<u>3,712,863</u>
-------------------------	------------------

Total assets	<u>\$ 6,152,418</u>
--------------	---------------------

Liabilities and Net Position

Current Liabilities:

Accounts payable	\$ 41,985
Accrued expenses	521,416
Deferred revenue	0

Total current liabilities	<u>563,401</u>
---------------------------	----------------

Noncurrent Liabilities:

Lease Liability	2,948,434
-----------------	-----------

Total noncurrent liabilities	<u>2,948,434</u>
------------------------------	------------------

Total liabilities	<u>3,511,835</u>
-------------------	------------------

Net Position:

Total net position	<u>2,640,583</u>
--------------------	------------------

Total liabilities and net position	<u>\$ 6,152,418</u>
------------------------------------	---------------------

FY24 Approved Budget (approved June 9, 2023)

Tuition	\$ 5,247,503
---------	--------------

Federal and state grants	164,211
--------------------------	---------

Program Fees	115,000
--------------	---------

Total Operating Revenues	<u>5,526,714</u>
--------------------------	------------------

Personnel and Related

Salaries	3,715,632
----------	-----------

Payroll taxes	156,500
---------------	---------

Fringe benefits and staff development	524,447
---------------------------------------	---------

Occupancy

Maintenance of buildings and grounds	164,950
--------------------------------------	---------

Lease Expense	250,120
---------------	---------

Utilities	51,000
-----------	--------

Insurance	13,000
-----------	--------

Direct Student Costs

Instructional technology	64,000
--------------------------	--------

Educational services, supplies and expenses	269,500
---------------------------------------------	---------

Other Operating Costs

Contracted and professional services	150,000
--------------------------------------	---------

Insurance	70,000
Office supplies and expenses	43,000
Dues, subscriptions and licenses	25,000
Recruitment/advertising	4,000
Depreciation	134,098
Total Operating Expenses	<u>5,635,247</u>
Operating Income	<u>(108,533)</u>
Contributions and other income	0
Contribution from Foundation/(to the School)	100,000
Interest income	12,500
Net Nonoperating Revenues/(Expenses)	<u>112,500</u>
	3,967
	<u>2,640,583</u>
	<u>\$ 2,644,550</u>

FY24 Enrollment Table	Enter Number Below
Number of students pre-enrolled via March 15, 2023 submission	288
Number of students upon which FY24 budget tuition line is based	288
Number of expected students for FY24 first day of school	288

FY24 Capital Plan Update

The River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees has committed to funding a restricted Capital Reserve Fund for future infrastructure needs. Through careful fiscal planning, the Trustees expect to position the school to absorb any unforeseen infrastructure costs without significant impact on annual operations. The current Capital Reserve Funds balance is \$236,000.

During FY 2022-2023, River Valley Charter School completed the following capital improvements:

- Replacement of two HVAC Rooftop Units – Investment of \$61,857
- Replacement of flooring – Investment of \$12,435

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN EVIDENCE 2022-2023

Faithfulness to the Charter

	2022-23 Performance M (Met) NM (Not Met)	Evidence
Objective 1: River Valley Charter School will provide a Montessori learning environment that reflects best practices for public Montessori education.		
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. 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 and 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.	M	2022-2023: An administrative team conducted the internal audit utilizing the same format as the 2021-2022 external auditors. The school met the standard in all five domains of the Essential Elements Rubric . A copy of the audit is on file at the school.

	2022-23 Performance M (Met) NM (Not Met)	Evidence
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.	NM	<p>2022-23: Five out of ten, 50%, K-6 lead teachers scored 80% or more on the self-assessment survey. The use of a self-assessment as a supervisory/evaluation tool will be re-evaluated for its usefulness. In almost every situation, faculty ratings were lower than their supervisor-assigned rating. A new evaluation tool is being developed for use in assessing teachers and will be piloted during the 2023-24 school year.</p> <p><u>Teachers Reflective Practices Inventory</u> (Appendix E) Results of the inventory are on file at the school.</p>
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.		
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.	M	Placed-based learning continues to be an integral part of River Valley Charter School. All levels participated in more than three learning experiences during the year that were related to our mission. Teachers and outside organizations provide opportunities for hands-on, active, and meaningful learning experiences to support student growth. Our E2 Place-based education program is evolving to include more integration with classroom teachers. We continue to keep a list of learning experiences for every level at the school.

	2022-23 Performance M (Met) NM (Not Met)	Evidence
<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 amplified through place-based experiences which tied learning to the real world), ninety percent of served students will rate their experiences at least 3.</p>	NM	<p>All grade 4-6 students were administered a survey to rate their understanding of in-school learning with the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. 89% of students, just shy of the 90% goal, rated their Place Based Education program as helping them learn about the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley with a score of 3 or better.</p>

Objective 3: Learning experiences at River Valley Charter School will support students in the development of critical thinking and creative problem solving.

<p>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.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>The annual survey was administered in the spring of 2023. 175 individuals responded, representing a response greater than 50%. 94% agreed or strongly agreed that River Valley provides opportunities for their child(ren) to develop critical thinking skills. 94% agreed or strongly agreed that River Valley provides opportunities for their child(ren) to develop creative problem-solving skills.</p>
<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.</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>88% of students overall consistently or usually demonstrated critical thinking skills on the fall progress report.</p> <p>94% of students overall consistently or usually demonstrated critical thinking skills on the spring progress report, indicating growth from the first semester to the last.</p> <p>An analysis of River Valley's primary subgroups (high needs, students with disabilities) revealed similar results. None of the scores for students in either subgroup decreased.</p>

Objective 3: Learning experiences at River Valley Charter School will support students in the development of critical thinking and creative problem solving.

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.

M

All 34 graduating eighth grade students participated in a Celebration of Learning presentation. The overall average score was 3.8 with average final scores ranging from 3.5 to 4.0. Supporting data is on file at the school.

Dissemination

	2022-23 Performance M (Met) NM (Not Met)	Evidence
Objective 4: RVCS will share its Montessori curriculum with other public schools in Massachusetts over the course of its charter term.		
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.	M	<p>2022-2023</p> <p>During the 2022-2023 school year, River Valley participated in three dissemination activities that could directly impact MA public school audiences, including the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dissemination about the history of the native people in our area to readers of the EdPost community. 2. A documentary film of our Middle School Salt Marsh Mural project is being distributed widely to educators who work with local organizations involved in environmental stewardship. 3. Student research on local historical cemeteries in collaboration with West Newbury Historical Society was published and widely circulated in an article in the Daily News.

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PLAN 2023-24

Recruitment Plan

2022-23 Implementation Summary

River Valley Charter School implemented its recruitment strategies as laid out in the 2022-2023 Recruitment plan and actively engaged in attracting new students through multiple modalities in order to broaden the diversity of our student populations. We continue to see strong interest in applying for admission to River Valley and received 192 applications for openings for the 2023-2024 school year, an increase from last year.

We continue to target specific local institutions to reach target populations where our school fell below GNT and CI percentages. In general, River Valley 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. Limited openings (mostly at the kindergarten level) and lack of transportation services to out-of-district, non-Newburyport residents are two significant barriers to families who wish to apply. Last year, 7 students exercised sibling preference which limits the number of spaces available to new families and thus the opportunity to add impact student demographics.

For 2023-2024, 8 of our 32 new students in Kindergarten are siblings of students already enrolled. This is consistent with a trend from the 2022-2023 year, where there are more new families entering River Valley than in previous years. Given this information, we anticipate our incoming class of Kinderhaus students may reflect a change to some of our enrollment statistics.

General Recruitment Activities for 2023-24

- We will continue to work with current students and families to share information by word-of-mouth to support a diversity of applicants across our community.
- We will continue our social media marketing efforts via Facebook and Instagram.
- We will pilot a program of River Valley Ambassadors, where current families will reach out to their communities via social media.
- We will advertise in literature distributed by Newburyport Youth Services and the Merrimack Valley Boys and Girls Club.
- We will continue membership with two local Chambers of Commerce.
- We will advertise in local newspapers in English and Spanish.
- We will hold in-person and online enrollment and information sessions during the year for prospective students and families.
- We will advertise in local libraries and preschools.
- We will display a banner at a local park to advertise our application deadline.
- We will email all families on our waitlist to invite them to reapply in our next lottery.

Recruitment Plan - 2022-2023 Strategies	
Special Education Students/Students with Disabilities	
<p>(a) CHART data</p> <p>Met GNT/C</p> <p>School percentage: 17.7%</p> <p>GNT percentage: NA</p> <p>CI percentage 15.3%</p> <p>The school is <u>above</u> CI percentages</p>	<p>Continued 2022-2023 Strategies</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Met GNT/CI: no enhanced/additional strategies needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observe and meet with pre-schools serving RVCS kindergarten applicants to better support transition to River Valley. - Similarly, meet with prior schools of new students to support the transition to River Valley.
Limited English-proficient Students/English Learners	
<p>(a) CHART data</p> <p>Did not meet GNT/C</p> <p>School percentage: 0.0%</p> <p>GNT percentage: 0.9%</p> <p>CI percentage: 0.9%</p> <p>The school is <u>below</u> both GNT and CI percentages</p>	<p>Continued 2022-2023 Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host information and enrollment session specifically for Merrimack Valley Boys and Girls Club families where a larger of selection of diverse students attend. <p>(c) 2023-24 Additional Strategies</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Did not meet GNT/CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Google Translate” link will be available on our website - Our website will include a statement welcoming LEP applicants - Find and reach out to local pre-schools known to have greater populations of limited English proficient families - Reach out to local religious organizations that provide services in languages other than English <p>We expect it will take three years using these strategies to realize their effectiveness.</p>
Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch (Low Income)	
<p>(a) CHART data</p> <p>Did not meet GNT/C</p> <p>School percentage: 7.6%</p> <p>GNT percentage: 12.9%</p> <p>CI percentage: 16.5%</p>	<p>Continued 2022-2023 Strategies</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 care to qualifying students. - Provide reduced cost enrichment programming to qualifying students. - Increase connections with families at risk of financial needs. <p>(c) 2023-24 Additional Strategies</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Did not meet GNT/CI: additional and/or enhanced strategies needed.</p>

<p>The school is <u>below</u> both GNT and CI percentages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outreach and connections at local WIC and SNAP sites - Brochures and applications made available at local food pantries and Head Start locations (Seacoast Center Head Start) - State in our brochures and advertisements that our program serves all students, including students of all socio-economic backgrounds - Distribute materials at bus stops, libraries, and laundry mats in our sending districts - Include advertising signage on local busses <p>We expect it will take three years using these strategies to realize their effectiveness.</p>
<p><u>Students who are sub-proficient</u></p>	<p>(e) Continued 2022-23 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.
<p><u>Students at risk of dropping out of school</u></p>	<p>(e) Continued 2022-23 Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - River Valley Charter School summer school programming and after-school drop-in sessions for middle school students are attractive to families who may have students at risk of dropping out of school.

Retention Plan 2022-2023

Implementation Summary 2022-23

The school met its annual goal for student retention. Our attrition rate for the 2022-23 school year was 6.2%. The school's retention rate was 93.8%, exceeding the 92% goal.

Withdrawals during the year were minimal and similar to prior years. Concerns listed included students looking for more support and wanting a larger learning environment for social opportunities. 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, providing targeted interventions, fostering greater social connections between classrooms and age levels, and building community connections. During the 2022-2023 school year, we piloted a New Family Mentor program, connecting new families with mentors from our school community, which we plan to continue moving forward.

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

Retention Plan – 2023-24 Strategies

Strategies for retention activities for various demographic groups.

Special education students/students with disabilities

<p><u>(a) CHART data</u></p> <p>School percentage: 7.0%</p> <p>Third Quartile: 6.9%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is <u>above</u> third quartile percentages.</p>	<p>(b) Continued 2022-23 Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a family mentoring program and intentionally connect individual families with special education students with like families. <p>(c) 2023-24 Additional Strategy(ies), if needed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>Above third quartile: additional and/or enhanced strategies needed.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child study/SST process for early intervention on a pre-special education evaluation basis - Frequent parent conferences - Student Support staff will meet regularly with general education teachers to monitor and accommodate students on IEPs. <p>We expect it will take two years of using these strategies to fully evaluate their effectiveness.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Limited English-proficient students/English learners

<p><u>(a) CHART data</u></p> <p>School percentage: NA</p> <p>Third Quartile: 0%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is <u>below</u> third quartile percentages.</p>	<p>(b) Continued 2022-23 Strategies</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>At or below third quartile: no enhanced/additional strategies needed.</u></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 a language other than English at home, etc.) - Ensure current families are aware that RVCS offers ELL services. <p>We expect it will take two years of using these strategies to fully evaluate their effectiveness.</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Students eligible for free or reduced lunch (low income)

<p><u>(a) CHART data</u></p> <p>School percentage: 12 %</p> <p>Third Quartile: 9.2%</p> <p>The school's attrition rate is <u>above</u> third quartile percentages.</p>	<p>(b) Continued 2022-23 Strategies</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 care program to qualifying students. - Provide reduced cost enrichment programming to qualifying students.
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Retention Plan – 2023-24 Strategies

Strategies for retention activities for various demographic groups.

	<p>(c) 2023-24 Additional Strategy(ies), if needed</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>Above third quartile: additional and/or enhanced strategies needed.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Specifically state in our promotional materials that our program serves all students, including students of all socio-economic backgrounds.- Collaborate with counselors from CATCH, the Children and Teen Center for Help, to ensure families have access to community resources. <p>We expect it will take two years of using these strategies to fully evaluate their effectiveness.</p>
<u>Students who are sub-proficient</u>	<p>(d) Continued 2022-23 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>(e) Continued 2022-23 Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide drop-in summer sessions for Middle School students

APPENDIX C: SCHOOL AND STUDENT DATA TABLES

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2022-23)

Student Data by Race/Ethnicity (2022-23)	
Race/Ethnicity	Percentage of Student Body
African American	1.0
Asian	1.0
Hispanic	6.6
Native American	0.0
White	85.8
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.0
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	5.6

Selected Populations (2022-23)

Selected Student Populations (2022-23)	
Title	Percentage of Student Body
First Language not English	0.3
English Language Learner	0.0
Low-income	7.6
Students with Disabilities	17.7
High Needs	23.3

ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER AND STAFF ATTRITION DATA

Administrative Roster During the 2022-23 School Year			
Name	Title	Start date	End date
Jonnie Lyn Evans	Executive Director	07/01/2019*	NA
Dan Bouchard ²	Assistant Director	07/01/2019	11/19/2022
Colin Vandenburg	Middle School Coordinator	09/01/2014	NA
Pamela Dawe Jones	Technology Coordinator	11/01/2011	NA
Deb McCrevan ³	Business Manager	01/01/2000	02/15/2023
Lisa Kelley	Special Education Coordinator, 4-8	08/01/2015*	NA
Patricia Innes	Special Education Coordinator, K-3	08/01/2015*	06/14/2023
* date represents start date for this position; staff was previous River Valley employee			

Teacher and Staff Attrition for the 2022-23 School Year				
	Number as of the last day of the 2022-23 school year	Number of departures during the 2022-23 school year	Number of departures at the end of the school year	Reason(s) for Departure
Teachers	49		3	One retirement, two non-renewal.
Other Staff	10	3		One retirement, two chose to end employment.

² The Assistant Director was not replaced midyear. His duties and responsibilities were temporarily covered by current employees who assumed additional responsibilities.

³ The Business Managers position was not filled during but instead, the school contracted with outside vendors for financial and HR management services.

Board Membership During the 2022-23 School Year				
Name	Position on the board	Committee affiliation(s)	Number of terms served on the board	Length of each term Terms begin July 1 and end June 30
Armstrong, Pamela Brockmeier	Board Officer Committee Officer	Executive	Second term completed	07/17-06/20 07/20-06/23 End of Term: effective 06/30/23
Bradley-Irose, Erin	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term completed, extending into second term	07/20-06/23 07/23-06/26
Durkee, Nancy	Committee Officer	Accountability	First term completed, extending into second term	07/19-06/22 07/22-06/25
Evans, Jonnie Lyn	Ex-officio, School Leader	Executive Accountability Finance	First term completed, extending into second term	07/19-06/22 07/22-06/25
Herrera, Denise	Trustee	Finance	First term in progress	07/22-06/25
Hewett, Amber	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	Second term completed	07/17-06/20 07/20-06/23 End of Term: effective 06/30/23
Jackman, Ken	Committee Officer	Development	First term in progress	07/22-06/25
Keery, Nina	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	Second term completed	07/17-06/20 07/20-06/23 End of Term: effective 06/30/23
Letson, Tim	Trustee	Accountability	First term in progress	07/22-06/25
Link, Alfred	Board Officer Committee Officer	Accountability Executive Finance	Second term completed	07/17-06/20 07/20-06/23 End of Term: effective 06/30/23
Martin, Catherine	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term completed, extending into second term	07/18-06/21 07/21-06/24
Murdy, Tanya	Committee Officer	Development	First term in progress	07/22-06/25
Ives, Laine	Trustee, Faculty Representative	N/A	First term completed	07/22-06/23 End of Term: effective 06/30/23
Seaton, Erin	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	First term completed, extending into second term	07/19-06/22 07/22-06/25
Simone, Eric	Trustee	Accountability	First term in progress	07/22-06/25

Board Membership During the 2022-23 School Year				
Ting, Albert	Board Officer Committee Officer	Accountability Committee on Trustees Executive	First term completed, extending into second term	07/20-06/23 07/23-06/26
Wetmore, Anna	Board Officer	Committee on Trustees Executive	First term completed	07/20-06/23 End of Term: effective 06/30/23
Whitford, Chris	Trustee	Finance	First term in progress	07/22-06/25

[Board of Trustee and Committee Meeting Notices](#)

APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL REQUIRED INFORMATION

Facilities

Address	Dates of Occupancy
2 Perry Way, Newburyport, MA 01950	8/1999 - current

Enrollment

Action	2023-24 School Year Date(s)
Student Application Deadline	Tuesday, February 13, 2024
Lottery	Thursday, February 15, 2024

APPENDIX E: CONDITIONS, COMPLAINTS AND ATTACHMENTS

Conditions

Not applicable

Complaints

River Valley Charter School received one formal complaint during the 2022-2023 school year. A parent brought forth a complaint to the RVCS Board of Trustees Complaints Committee regarding inappropriate behavior by a Board of Trustee Member. The observed incident occurred during a scheduled public meeting while the member was participating remotely via video conference. The parent observed the member drinking an alcoholic beverage through the video feed and felt strongly that this affected the member's ability to make decisions during the meeting. The parent felt this offense and a subsequent interaction with the member warranted the member's resignation from the Board of Trustees.

The RVCS Board of Trustees Complaints Committee conducted interviews with all parties involved, reviewed Board of Trustee policy, and met as a committee to resolve the complaint.

As a result of this process, the RVCS Board of Trustees created a board member expectations document which all Board members will receive each year. In addition, further review of board norms and board member expectations will be evaluated yearly and strengthened as appropriate.

Teacher Reflective Practice Inventory

Using the scale on the right, circle the number that corresponds to the degree of emphasis needed for your growth this year. A rating of 5 represents an area you believe warrants intense focus, not necessarily because it is a weakness, but because growth in this area will help you move toward mature practice.

Every object in my environment is chosen with regard to development of the child; there is nothing extraneous.	1	2	3	4	5
The environment is impeccably clean and tidy, and all materials are displayed in sequence from simple to complex.	1	2	3	4	5
Furniture is arranged to nurture concentration and to provide smooth flow.	1	2	3	4	5
There is 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	1	2	3	4	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.	1	2	3	4	5
There is an attitude of learning from mistakes and an acceptance that errors are a part of the learning process	1	2	3	4	5
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.	1	2	3	4	5
I am direct, specific, and consistent in communicating expectations with regard to social interactions, care of the environment, and purposeful work.	1	2	3	4	5
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.	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident in my repertoire of lessons, and I consistently provide presentations with fluency, clarity and economy of movement.	1	2	3	4	5
My lesson planning is based on ongoing observation of the children; I take time every day to sit and observe students in the environment.	1	2	3	4	5
While engaging with individual children, I am aware of the general classroom and the children's activity	1	2	3	4	5
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.	1	2	3	4	5
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.	1	2	3	4	5
I am highly sensitive to cultural differences and always appropriately respectful in communications with families.	1	2	3	4	5
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.	1	2	3	4	5
I approach each family with a spirit of empathetic inquiry, with the acceptance that parents want the best for their child.	1	2	3	4	5
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.	1	2	3	4	5
I strive to be fully present in every interaction—whether the other is a child, an adult or the environment	1	2	3	4	5
I understand Maria Montessori's Cosmic vision and regard daily work with children and families as a contribution to the larger cosmic effort.	1	2	3	4	5
I continually strive to realize my own human potential, and I look toward the child for inspiration.	1	2	3	4	5
I am intentional about caring for my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.	1	2	3	4	5