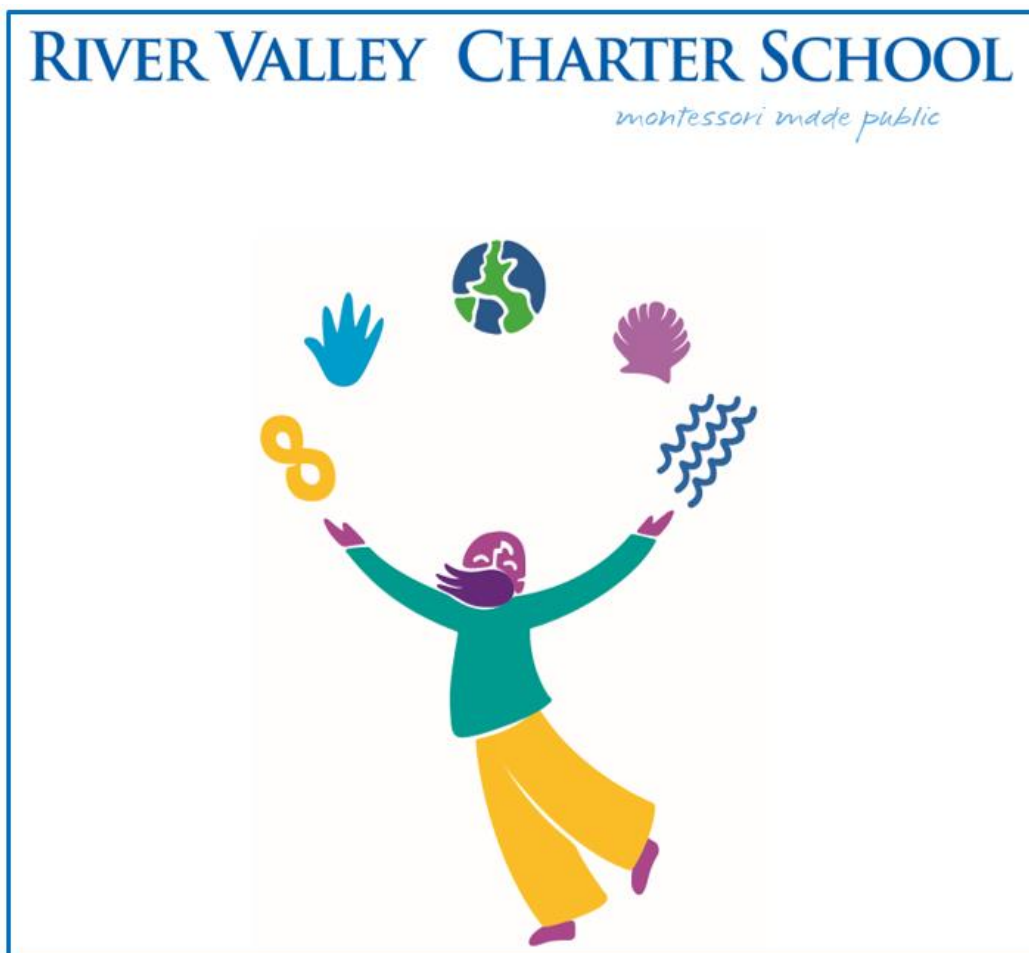


Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter



RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

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School Director: Andrew Willemsen

Board of Trustees Approval Date: July 25, 2018

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Submission Date: July 26, 2018

COVER LETTER FROM THE SCHOOL DIRECTOR

Founded in 1999, River Valley Charter School was conceived as a means to bring K-8 Montessori education into the public domain. With a century of success behind it, Montessori education has proven to be an effective model that results in holistic growth and academic achievement for our learners. River Valley Charter School (RVCS), like all Montessori schools, is founded on a sense of trust and respect for each child as they explore and learn from the world around them. From the earliest ages, we provide a learning environment that promotes both independence and collaboration, grounded in a deep respect for self, others and the environment. Creativity and imagination are celebrated, and the perseverance and problem-solving skills necessary to pursue ideas and challenges are developed. Through daily cooperation and teamwork, our students develop high levels of self-confidence and emotional maturity. We value each child as an individual and seek to offer students a voice in their own learning. The result is a school where there is a shared sense of purpose, where all students and adults embrace the joys and challenges of learning and seek to support one another.

We provide a distinct choice among local school districts with a program that is holistic, child-centered, interdisciplinary, academically challenging and interwoven with the rich and varied resources of the Merrimack River Valley. Our multi-aged classrooms and distinct learning environments set us apart from other educational options in our region, and River Valley has historically received abundant applications for our annual enrollment lottery. With two full-time teachers in each classroom from Kinderhaus to grade 6, we also offer unique support to our students.

During the past charter term, River Valley has addressed and strengthened several central components of its program. Curriculum Maps and Learning Goals have been updated, the new Peace Education Map and Habits of Learning curriculum have been implemented, and the place-based learning focus has been revised and improved. Engineering and technology classes have been added, the middle school specials program has been reimagined and improved, and the school schedule has been redesigned to provide common meeting time for all levels. Curricular consistency between classrooms and between levels has been improved, and systems for communication among staff and throughout the school community have been considerably strengthened. The school's professional development program has been significantly enhanced through a teacher-led process to define and address best practices in teaching.

Multiple key policies have been updated and improved, including the Code of Conduct, the Employee & Family Handbooks, the Enrollment Policy and the Food Allergy Management & Prevention Plan.

The school strengthened the financial support it receives from private foundations and families, enhancing funding for field trips, technology and Montessori materials. We purchased a 10-passenger van to support field trips, and established partnerships with local non-profits to support the health of the local ecology.

Physically, RVCS has been significantly enhanced during the last five years. A major renovation of the middle school space, including the addition of a makers-space and faculty room, has provided important benefits to the entire school and staff. Our office space has been reconfigured to provide greater flexibility and efficiency. The school health office has been upgraded, the Kinderhaus rooms have been re-configured and the entire school has been re-carpeted. All light fixtures have been

upgraded from fluorescent to LED bulbs, and during the summer of 2018, we will install 350 solar panels on the roof of the school.

Results and feedback from the family survey have steadily improved, as have results from the staff survey (no staff survey existed prior to the current charter term). The caliber of the faculty is both strong and stable, with only two full-time staff departing this year. Staff compensation has been significantly increased during the charter term, and our generous health benefits plans have been maintained.

Connections with the local districts and elected officials, though strained by Ballot Question 2, have remained positive. The school's Fiscal Policies and Procedures Guide has been updated, all annual audits have been clean, and the Board of Trustees and River Valley Charter School Foundation are in the process of refinancing to secure stable interest rates for the next fifteen years.

With strong governance from the Board of Trustees, proven leadership from the administrative team, and a highly skilled and dedicated faculty, we are optimistic about the future of River Valley Charter School. We will continue to refine and improve all aspects of our program and will seek to foster a culture of continuous learning for all students and adults in the building.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AW', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Willemssen
Director

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INTRODUCTION TO RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL			
Type of Charter (Commonwealth or Horace Mann)	Commonwealth	Location of School (Municipality)	Newburyport
Regional or Non-Regional?	Regional	Chartered Districts in Region	1
Year Opened	1999	Year(s) Renewed	2003, 2009, 2014
Maximum Enrollment	288	Current Enrollment	287 on 6/21/2018
Chartered Grade Span	K-8	Current Grade Span	K-8
# of Instructional Days per school year	180	Students on Waitlist	161 on 6/04/2018
School Hours	8:30am – 3:10pm	Age of School	Nineteen
Mission Statement 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.			

SUMMARY OF KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE 2014-2018 CHARTER TERM

- All curriculum maps updated and aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
- Learning goals for all levels established and posted on the school's website
- School vision and core values refined and articulated by faculty and shared with families
- RVCS Peace Education Curriculum Map developed through a whole-school community process
- RVCS Habits of Learning curriculum developed and implemented at all levels
- Portfolio process updated and improved
- Student Progress Reports to families updated and improved
- Place-based learning curriculum and partnerships strengthened
- Student support and assessment strengthened through RTI process
- Curricular consistency between classrooms improved
- Engineering and Technology classes added for grades one through six
- School schedule redesigned to offer multiple common planning times for teaching teams and additional grade-level socialization opportunities for students
- Professional development program enhanced through teacher-led initiative
- RVCS Professional Practice Framework established
- Staff survey implemented, with results consistently positive
- Communication to families significantly improved through weekly classroom emails and school newsletter
- Parent Survey updated, with results consistently strong
- Employee and Family Handbooks updated
- Key policies updated, including Code of Conduct, Enrollment, and Allergy Management Plan
- Ten passenger van purchased to support place-based learning curriculum
- Middle school completely renovated, including the addition of a maker space
- 350 panel solar array installed on school's roof (summer 2018)
- School Health office expanded and upgraded
- Green cleaning program implemented to enhance health conditions
- Dissemination targets exceeded, local district relationships solid
- Fiscal policies and procedures updated
- Clean audits resulting in a strong financial dashboard
- Staff compensation significantly strengthened

Charter School Performance Criteria Relating to *Faithfulness to the Charter*

CRITERION 1: MISSION AND KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

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.

Montessori Principles

River Valley Charter School (RVCS) provides a high-quality Montessori program within the public-school arena. The school maintains its commitment to the Montessori pedagogy by hiring Montessori-trained and/or certified teachers in every classroom whenever possible and by providing full tuition support for accredited Montessori training to meet the school's expectation that all lead teachers be Montessori trained. RVCS also supports authentic Montessori programming by staying abreast of best practices in the ever-expanding arena of public Montessori programs. Every classroom in grades K through six has a full-time lead teacher and a full time assistant teacher, which is a core component of the Montessori approach. All K-6 lead teachers are Montessori trained and/or certified. Our classrooms are outfitted with genuine Montessori learning materials and furniture, which are essential to creating a prepared Montessori learning environment. We offer multi-age classrooms, extended daily learning periods, hands-on learning, a project-based curriculum, frequent student collaboration and student-directed learning; all hallmarks of the Montessori philosophy.

Montessori education is centered upon a whole-child approach to learning. Our primary goal is to help children reach their full potential both academically and personally, while instilling in them a sense of their place in the world and their responsibilities as productive members of society. The curriculum is designed to develop the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive elements of each student, and is based on a belief that children are naturally eager to learn when appropriate conditions exist. Our learning environments operate on the principle of freedom within limits. This contributes to the development of independence and decision-making skills of our students. Lessons are given in small group settings and are customized to meet the learning needs of each student. With two teachers in every classroom, instruction is individualized to the greatest extent possible. The multi-age classrooms enrich the curriculum options by offering students the opportunity to learn from and teach each other. Teachers provide lessons based on both their Montessori training and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

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

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

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

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

Dr. Maria Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential

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

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

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

Students in grades four through eight participate in overnight field trips during which our place-based learning curriculum and community-building activities are emphasized. These trips allow students to demonstrate their skills and abilities outside of the academic environment, further strengthening each student's standing within the community. Students at all levels eat lunch in their classrooms (with teachers), allowing for informal social time that provides additional personal and community connections. In order to develop school-wide community, River Valley holds regular, monthly whole-school assemblies where both students and staff provide insight into the projects and activities happening throughout the building and beyond. To the fullest extent possible, students run the school-wide assemblies.

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

Dr. Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence

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

"...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

Merrimack River Valley naturally lends itself to project-based learning. River Valley students regularly work in groups (often multi-aged) to explore concepts in science, history and

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

Deep Understanding: The River Valley curricular approach is one of mastery learning rather than of simply covering concepts. Our Curriculum Maps identify all learning goals for each level, yet our teachers have the flexibility to present concepts in various manners to suit the learning pace and style of each student. Rather than structuring the day to assign a limited amount of time to each subject area, our Montessori approach provides both students and teachers complete flexibility in the time they choose to devote to any given pursuit. When a student, or group of students, demonstrates a particular interest in exploring a concept, question, or issue more deeply, the Montessori philosophy calls for teachers to facilitate such interest.

"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

Much of the student work is project-based, and students frequently have a voice in the topics they research. For example, every October our Elementary 1 students (E1), in grades 1-3, engage in the Mystery History project where each child selects a notable historical figure, researches his/her life, creates a biography, and formally presents their results to students and parents while dressed in the costume of their historical figure. Our Elementary 2 students (E2), in grades 4-6, regularly engage in project-based work, exploring topics from the Industrial Revolution to our local ecosystems. Through frequent field trips, students have opportunities to engage in meaningful and hands-on activities that bring relevance and deeper comprehension to their studies. Nearly all projects culminate in some form of presentation, providing students the opportunity to teach others about their learning, and providing teachers opportunities for authentic assessment.

Active Learning Opportunities: Maria Montessori pioneered the now widely-accepted principle that the work of the hand informs the learning of the mind. Given this fundamental belief, Montessori

“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

classrooms are designed to provide active learning to all students. Montessori materials allow students to manipulate learning materials in order to experience the concrete representation of a given concept. Students are free to move about

the classroom, providing important kinesthetic opportunities. Students have an active voice in their learning process, and rarely learn in a sit-and-listen format. Our place-based learning focus allows students multiple opportunities to actively engage in learning experiences outside the school walls. From exploring the wetland ponds on our school site to participating in the Model United Nations program, River Valley students continually experience and learn from the surrounding world in active ways.

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

“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

River Valley students at all levels participate in community service work that provides them with new perspectives on larger communities and the issues that people beyond our school walls may face. Our younger students visit facilities for the elderly and disabled and learn through experiences as they interact with these communities. Students in grades four through eight frequently engage in formal debates, and topics regularly center on social justice issues. Elementary 2 students also work with a local soup kitchen and are able to reflect upon the challenges faced by this segment of our

community. E1 and E2 students frequently design and run fundraising efforts for non-profit organizations, from the local food bank and animal shelter, to hospitals and international NGOs. Our middle school students engage with and fundraise for a variety of social justice causes, including a multi-year campaign to steward the Merrimack River.

Curriculum Rooted in the Merrimack River Valley

Place-based learning is a central element of the River Valley curriculum. The geographic, historical, and cultural resources of the Merrimack River Valley provide outstanding learning opportunities, and the school is committed to integrating these resources into the curriculum for all students. We believe that learning experiences beyond the classroom walls are essential to fostering deeper knowledge and critical thinking. To this end, the RVCS Foundation, a 501(c)3 dedicated to supporting RVCS, provided \$35,000 in funding support for field trips during SY15 and SY16. This funding level was increased to \$45,000 for SY17 and SY18. The Foundation has committed \$50,000 for the 2018-2019 school year. These funds are received from private foundations and families, further strengthening the commitment and collaboration of our school community.

During the charter term, River Valley students participated in over 150 field trips each year, resulting in abundant place-based learning projects and experiences, many of which are detailed in the school's Annual Reports. A few examples are outlined below.

Our younger students have raised salmon, trout, and endangered Blandings Turtles for release into the waterways of the Merrimack River Valley. They have visited such sites as the Plum Island Wildlife

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

Refuge, the Seacoast Science Center, and the Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary to further their studies of the local ecology. Students in grade K-3 have studied the history of the region through projects on Native Americans, early settlers and Colonial America, and have visited such locations as the Mary Baker Eddy Library, the Spencer-Pierce-Little Farm, Strawberry Banke and American Stonehenge.

Our upper elementary students have engaged in several year-long projects to study and steward the local ecology. Their study of the invasive Asian Green Crab involved weekly trips to the marshes to trap and measure the impact on indigenous species. Their study of the European Brown Moth resulted in a published article in the local paper regarding the impact on the local flora. For two years, these students partnered with the Gulf of Maine Institute (GOMI) to build ocean "drifters" to measure ocean currents and partnered in the creation and launch of the GOMI Journal, featuring student and teacher articles. E2 students spent a semester studying immigration, culminating in a theatrical reenactment of a day at Ellis Island. They engaged in in-depth studies of the Industrial Revolution, with trips to the Boot Mills in Lowell, and exploration of the lasting impacts on our local riverfront towns.

At the middle school level, students engaged in a multi-year "Sci-Manities" study responding to the National Geographic report citing the Merrimack River as the eighth most endangered river in the United States. The Humanities and Science teachers collaborated to design a student-driven, year-long study of the threats and solutions to this situation. During the 2016-2017 school year, student activism raised enough money to officially "adopt" a mile of the Merrimack River for the following

year. During 2017-2018, students set out to provide stewardship over that adopted mile of the river through such efforts as building storm gardens, marking storm drains, and advocating for zero-waste initiatives. Students presented their work at the local farmer's market in May, delivering short speeches to inform market-goers about their efforts, as well as asking residents to sign a Watershed Pledge saying that they would help to steward their own property for the health of the river. Students partnered with the Newburyport City Engineer, Newburyport Parks Commission, as well as local organizations like The Merrimack River Watershed Council, with representatives from each organization working collaboratively with the students and faculty. Middle School students study the history of the Merrimack River Valley at deeper levels, including the history of race in America. During this charter term, RVCS students partnered with students from the Pentucket Regional School District to advocate for naming the southbound span of the new Route 95 bridge in honor of Newburyport-based abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. This process included meetings with local elected officials, state legislators and Massachusetts Highway Department representatives, and was closely followed by the local press.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Capabilities

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

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

Dr. Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence

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

fostered. Within this framework, our teachers routinely seek to extend these skills by supplementing our core curriculum with additional opportunities.

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

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

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

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

As one middle school teacher explained:

It is this wrestling with complicated webs of human activities, natural history, scientific concepts and students' own lives that is at the heart of our work within the middle school. We also hope students will come to appreciate their environs with a deeper sense of understanding, connection and gratitude, perhaps leading to further exploration and stewardship of what's here.

Beyond classroom work, middle school students also participate in programs such as the Model United Nations, Destination Imagination, and Science Olympiad to further their creative and higher-order thinking processes. These project groups run for the full school year, culminating in final presentations or competitions that represent durable learning experiences for the students.

Common Understanding of the School's Mission

Staff, students, and families all share a common understanding of the school's mission. On the 2018 Staff Survey, 89% of staff agreed with the statement that "Our school community (staff, students, families, Board of Trustees) is working together toward a common vision." On the 2018 Parent Survey, 96% of respondents agreed that "The learning experience for my child is clearly tied to the school's mission." The school provides frequent opportunities for families to learn about the Montessori philosophy, and faculty regularly communicate with families regarding both Montessori and place-based learning curriculums.

Amendments

Four amendments were made to the Commissioner or Board during this charter term. All four were approved.

Date	Amendment Requested	Approved?
12/23/2014	Enrollment Policy	Approved
1/14/2015	Accountability Plan	Approved
12/2/2015	Expulsion Policy	Approved
11/16/2017	Enrollment Policy	Approved

CRITERION 2: ACCESS AND EQUITY

Recruitment and Retention

River Valley is committed to enrolling a student population that reflects the demographics of its sending districts. The school works to ensure that students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, and/or students who are English Language Learners are aware of and attracted to River Valley, and consider it a valuable and effective educational option. Over this charter term, River Valley has employed several new strategies intended to recruit and retain students whose demographics match our sending districts more closely.

While River Valley welcomes a diverse student body and the cultural and ethnological enrichment it would bring to our school, the reality is that our sending districts have limited diversity. Add to this the fact that approximately 1/3 of every incoming kindergarten class is populated with siblings of currently attending students, and it is challenging to make significant changes to student demographics in the short term.

Students with Disabilities

More than fourteen percent of students at River Valley Charter School are students with disabilities. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Comparison Index¹, used to equate and compare the percentage of River Valley students with disabilities to comparable schools, indicates that we are attracting and enrolling an appropriate number of students from this demographic. Every year of this charter term, the percentage of RVCS students with disabilities has been consistently above the Comparison Index which has ranged from 10.6-12.7%.

Economically Disadvantaged

Of River Valley Charter School's 288 students, 7.6 percent were classified as economically disadvantaged in 2018; this is below the Comparison Index of 13.6 percent. While this demographic does not yet match our sending districts, it should be noted that the number of students classified as economically disadvantaged has risen steadily since 2014. We attribute this to improvements in our recruitment strategies, as well as changes made in the classification of students as economically disadvantaged.

River Valley does not participate in the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program. The school qualifies students for financial support through a Request for Relief from Financial Hardship application. Families who apply for relief receive support for student fieldtrips and school supplies, reduced rates for our before and after care program and enrichment programming, and free lunches. The school anticipates that the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged will continue to increase slowly and will ultimately mirror our local sending districts.

¹ As defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, "The comparison index provides a comparison figure derived from data of students who reside within the charter school's sending district(s). The comparison index is a statistically calculated value designed to produce a fairer and more realistic comparison measure that takes into account the charter school's size and the actual prevalence of student subgroups within only those grade levels in common with the charter school."

English Language Learners (ELL)

During this charter term, and as indicated by the Comparison Index, River Valley has had more students whose first language is not English than do our comparison schools. This has not, however, translated into an equal number of students who are English Learners (ELs). Every year we have enhanced our targeted recruitment strategies hoping to increase the number of EL applicants. While we do not currently have any English language learners enrolled at RVCS, we maintain a relationship with an EL consultant who would provide direct English instruction to EL students should we enroll any. We also have supported faculty in obtaining their Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsement by partnering with the local district to provide training. To date, one administrator and several teachers are SEI endorsed; eleven additional teachers and administrators have participated in a 15-hour SEI training program.

Student Attrition

Three out of four years of this charter term, River Valley has had attrition rates for all students above the third quartile of comparison schools. The attrition rates for students with disabilities were also above the third quartile (in three of the last four years). The attrition rates for low income students were below the third quartile of comparison schools.

River Valley is committed to understanding and responding to the causes of student withdrawals. As such, withdrawing families participate in exit interviews and the school carefully reviews attrition data. Despite attrition rates that suggest students with disabilities leave River Valley more often than they leave our comparison schools, our research has not supported the idea that parents are withdrawing from River Valley because they are dissatisfied with our special education services. Instead, our analysis indicates that the reasons families withdraw their children from River Valley are quite varied. Some withdrawals are driven by practical reasons such as families moving out of district, and others by the logistical challenges of having multiple children at different schools; the commute from Amesbury, for example, to RVCS can add significant time to a family's morning routine. Other withdrawals are more clearly connected to the RVCS program and structure. The primary trends, as well as the school's efforts to address each, are explained below.

Cause #1: Some parents have reported that they are concerned about the challenges of transitioning to the local districts at the high school level. This concern results in some attrition at the upper grades, as parents seek to acclimate their children to the local districts both academically and socially.

Response: During this charter term, we established Middle School Open Houses for parents of current sixth grade students to help them gain an understanding of our middle school program and how it aligns with district programs. We began publishing and distributing a Middle School Monthly Newsletter which highlights the academic and extracurricular activities of the middle school and is distributed to the entire school community. Sixth grade students visit the middle school multiple times during their spring term, observing classes, working with middle school teachers, and participating in community building events.

Cause #2: We have lost grade 5-7 students over the years to area private schools. Parents report that admission to these schools is more accessible in the lower grades than in ninth grade, prompting them to commit early in order to assure placement for the high school years.

Response: In addition to the efforts articulated in the response to Cause #1, we created and implemented an alumni and alumni family survey to assess how prepared our students are for the

high school curriculum. The responses were consistently positive, and we shared this data with the entire school community. We also convened a panel of alumni and alumni parents at an all-school community meeting and allowed them to share their perspective on the lasting value of a River Valley education.

Cause #3: Parents have withdrawn their children due to concerns about limited social opportunities at River Valley. With mixed-age classrooms, grade 1-6 students typically have no more than three or four peers of the same gender in their classroom. Particularly as students approach middle school grades, some parents become uncomfortable with this structure.

Response: We have worked to address this concern by changing the way we group students for our six specials blocks. At the beginning of this charter term, we changed our model such that students are grouped by grade for specials rather than by classroom, bringing together students from different classrooms. This doubled the social opportunities available for students across grades 1-6 and has been received positively by students and families. Teachers in grades 1 through 6 also seek other opportunities to collaborate between classrooms, including community service work, reading buddies, and place-based learning projects.

Cause #4: A few families have reported dissatisfaction with the athletic opportunities at River Valley.

Response: River Valley established a fall cross country team and a spring track and field team to provide more sports-based extracurriculars. Both programs compete locally with other public schools. The school also offers after-school programming in basketball, floor hockey, and rock climbing.

Cause #5: For some students, the Montessori approach simply turns out to be a challenging model. Students who benefit from a highly structured learning environment with consistent teacher direction can struggle with the more open approach at River Valley.

Response: We have increased the amount of parent education provided at lottery information sessions, as well as at Kinderhaus screening days and parent back-to-school nights. We instituted a requirement for every K-6 teacher to provide families with a weekly overview of the lessons being taught in the classroom. In addition, we increased parent education opportunities, focused them on particular subjects of the Montessori curriculum, created Montessori Moments (mini drop-in lessons on Montessori materials for parents), and increased the participation of students in our parent education events. This work has helped us better articulate what parents can expect from a River Valley Charter School education.

Informing the Public about Programming for Underserved Populations

Despite nearly twenty years operating in our community, we are aware that many individuals still do not recognize that River Valley is a public school. River Valley makes extensive effort to provide the local community, including underserved populations, with information about our public programming and the open, unbiased enrollment process. We do this in a number of ways. For one, enrollment is managed by the Assistant Director, ensuring that information about the school is relayed from the highest levels of the school. Front office staff are regularly trained in the importance of sharing accurate enrollment information whenever an inquiry is made. We also include bylines in all our enrollment materials making note of programming for students with disabilities or those who are limited English speakers or economically disadvantaged. Enrollment materials include information in Spanish to ensure that we are open and inviting to non-English speaking families.

River Valley is currently in the midst of a website upgrade. The school has partnered with an experienced website developer that specializes in the educational arena to create a website that is appealing, accurate, and includes relevant information for families. The website contains references to the fact that the school is public and has services for students who are English language learners, have disabilities, and/or who are economically disadvantaged.

Recently we painted the side of our building with a large logo and our tag line, '*montessori made public*'. We also created a banner stating, 'Now enrolling for free, full-day kindergarten'. It hangs on the side of the building during our enrollment period. The logo and signage face a major thorough way and should improve knowledge that RVCS is a tuition-free, public school.

Behavioral Trends

Montessori's Grace and Courtesy lessons form the foundation of behavioral expectations for River Valley Charter School students. All behavioral infractions are viewed as opportunities for learning, rather than occasion for punishment. River Valley's Code of Conduct highlights the school's individualized approach to discipline. Most often, behavioral issues are handled by the classroom teacher with the support of the School Counselor. When necessary, the Assistant Director becomes involved. Involvement of the Assistant Director, and the extent of a disciplinary response, is dependent on the significance and/or frequency of behavioral infractions. The more severe, or the more frequent, the more school support personnel and/or administration are involved.

Out-of-school suspensions are not used except in extremely limited circumstances such as those that would occur if a student were to engage in illegal behavior. In-school suspensions are also used infrequently. River Valley Charter School matches its disciplinary response to behavioral infractions using concepts of Restorative Justice and logical behavioral consequences.

The rate of in-school and out-of-school suspensions at River Valley is low, including the rates for all subgroups. Each year of this charter term there have been less than six suspensions per year. The reasons we have suspended students include non-violent behaviors such as theft, inappropriate use of technology, bullying, and bringing a toy knife to school.

CRITERION 3: COMPLIANCE

River Valley Charter School is fully compliant with the terms of its charter and all applicable state or federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to provisions of General Law chapter 71, section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00 and the Statement of Assurances.

The school and Board of Trustees follow the Open Meeting Law, Public Records Law, Coordinated Program Review requirements and all health and safety codes. When necessary, River Valley undertakes corrective action to maintain compliance with all legal requirements.

CRITERION 4: DISSEMINATION

In writing the 2014-2019 River Valley Charter School Accountability Plan, the school included a goal specifically about continuing our strong track record of dissemination. Throughout this charter term, faculty and administration have sought opportunities to partner with educators from our sending districts, host educators from other schools at River Valley, share our programs and policies, and present our best practices at regional and national professional conferences. The table below lists 35 examples of our dissemination efforts. Highlights include presentations at the National American Montessori Conference, hosting the first annual New England Public Montessori Convening, and multiple presentations at the New England League of Middle Schools and Montessori Schools of Massachusetts annual conferences.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
Montessori Curriculum: Habits of Learning (SEL) Curriculum	2018	American Montessori Society National Conference	Presenting at professional conferences.	Montessori Educators & Administrators	Peace Education Curriculum Map, Habits of Learning Guidelines, Student Reflection & Portfolio Process Documents and Presentation Slide Deck were all posted on the American Montessori Society website for dissemination to all 4,000 conference attendees.
Systems View of High Quality Public Montessori	2018	Hosted the First Annual Public Montessori Convening	Hosted educators from five public Montessori Schools	Teachers and administrators from five public Montessori schools.	Keynote presentation slide deck, RVCS Peace Education Curriculum Map and RVCS Educator Growth Model documents shared with attendees.
Habits of Learning (SEL) Curriculum	2018	Shared Peace Education Curriculum Map with the Montessori Institute of New England (educator training program)	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	Montessori Institute of New England Leaders and Teacher Trainers	Peace Education Curriculum presented as part of Montessori teacher training program.
Kindergarten Montessori Program	2018	Hosted representatives from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector to observe our public Kinderhaus program.	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, Washington, D.C.	Evaluated our program to influence guidance for best practices in the national movement.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
<i>Habits of Learning (SEL) Curriculum</i>	2017	Shared Peace Education Curriculum Map	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	Johnna Maraia, principal of Sanfordville Elementary School in Warwick Valley School District, NY	District to review curriculum for possible implementation.
<i>RVCS Educator Growth Program</i>	2017	Shared RVCS Professional Practice Framework & Educator Growth Process documents	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school	Sparhawk School, Amesbury Mass.	School to review program & process for possible implementation.
<i>Formative Assessment Practices</i>	2017	Modeled & shared formative assessment practices.	Sharing resources and hosting educators.	Salem State University MED Program Director & a Fulbright Scholar	RVCS practices to be used as exemplars in the SSU 4+1 Med Program.
<i>Food Allergy Management & Prevention Plan</i>	2017	Shared RVCS Policy & Plan	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school	Amesbury School District, Mass	District to review policy & plan for possible implementation.
<i>Parent Education</i>	2017	Two nationally-known speakers presenting in a Parent Speaker Series	Family Engagement	Local community of parents and educators	The <i>Navigating the Parent Years Speaker Series</i> is a collaborative effort of the Newburyport Public Schools, The Newburyport Youth Services Commission and River Valley Charter School. In addition to the presentation, books and audio tapes are made available.
<i>Place-Based Learning Interdisciplinary Curriculum</i>	2016	DESE DissemiNATION Fair Poster Display and Panel Presentation Participation	Presenting at professional conferences.	DESE DissemiNATION Fair attendees	Poster display included curriculum outlines, evaluation rubrics and student work artifacts. Panel presentation centered on the Essential Question: How have humans and the natural environment shaped and changed our place in the Merrimack River Valley? Slide deck was shared with participants.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
<i>RVCS Educator Growth Model</i>	2016	New England League of Middle School (NELMS) Annual Conference Workshop presentation	Presenting at professional conferences.	Middle school administrators and educators from throughout New England	Slide deck shared with all participants – “ <i>Grow Teacher Grow – Encouraging Professional Growth in Teachers that is Relevant and Vital.</i> ” Presentation served as an initial training session on how to implement this work in other schools.
<i>RVCS Peace Education Curriculum</i>	2017	Montessori Schools of Massachusetts (MSM) Annual Conference Workshop presentation	Presenting at professional conferences.	Montessori administrators and educators from throughout Massachusetts	Presentation served as an initial training session on how to implement this work in other schools. Slide deck, rubrics & other materials shared with participants.
<i>Picturing Writing Curriculum</i>	2017	RVCS hosted professional development workshops	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Educators from local district & private schools	Ongoing conversations between educators about this curriculum and its implementation. Plans are in place to continue this collaboration in the upcoming school year.
<i>RVCS Food Allergy Policy</i>	2017	Networking with regional Montessori school leaders as well as local nurse leaders from district schools	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	Hill View Montessori Charter Public School Thatcher Montessori School Boxford School District	RVCS policy served as a model for other schools. Initial network was established for further sharing of policy documents.
<i>Parent Education</i>	2017	Three nationally-known speakers presenting in a Parent Speaker Series	Hosting other educators & parents at the charter school.	Local community of parents and educators	The <i>Navigating the Parent Years Speaker Series</i> is a collaborative effort of the Newburyport Public Schools, The Newburyport Youth Services Commission and River Valley Charter School. In addition to the presentation, books and audio tapes are made available.
<i>Public Montessori Policies and Practices</i>	2017	In collaboration with the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector’s Leadership Workshops we	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	Five Public Montessori schools.	The group set up a drop box to share curriculum materials, policies, documents, etc.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
		participated in online coaching sessions			
<i>Place-Based Science Curriculum</i>	2017	GOMI Journal	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	Schools and other organizations connected to the GOMI network.	Place-based education was shared via the GOMI Journal, a quarterly, peer-reviewed scientific journal.
<i>Montessori Curriculum</i>	2016	Observation by Merrimack, MA district educators & administrators	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Merrimack, MA district.	Evaluated our program to influence implementation of an International Baccalaureate program. Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
<i>Montessori Curriculum</i>	2016	Observation by Salem, MA district educators & administrators	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Salem, MA district.	Evaluated our program to influence redesign of their K-2 program. Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
<i>Middle School Curriculum: Model United Nations</i>	2016	Observation by & meetings with Newburyport district teachers.	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Newburyport, MA district.	Evaluated our Model United Nations program to influence creation of a MUN program in the district.
<i>Montessori Curriculum: Writing</i>	2017	Presentation at the Annual Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Conference: <i>Creating a Culture of Quality in Student Writing</i>	Presenting at professional conferences.	Montessori educators & administrators.	Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
<i>Curriculum: Place Based Learning</i>	2017	Presentation at the Cambridge College Science Colloquium: <i>Developing Authentic Content, Skills, and Stewardship through Involvement in Citizen Science.</i>	Presenting at professional conferences.	District educators & administrators.	Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
<i>Curriculum: Place Based Learning</i>	2017	Collaboration with the Gulf of Maine Institute (GOMI) to create the GOMI Journal.	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	District educators & administrators, residents of states bordering the Gulf of Maine.	Online Journal issues published.
<i>Parent Education</i>	2017	Public screening of the documentary <i>Beyond Measure: Rescuing an Overscheduled, Overtested, Underestimated Generation</i> .	Hosting educators & parents at the charter school.	Over 150 attendees, representing eight local districts.	Professionally facilitated group discussion following the film.
<i>Montessori Curriculum</i>	2016	Observation, tour & discussion	Hosting DESE & Legislative officials.	Cliff Chuang & a representative of the House Ways & Means Commissioner.	Shared Montessori model as well as charter school funding conditions.
<i>Montessori Curriculum</i>	2014	Observation, tour & discussion.	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Entire staff and administration from The Friends School, Falmouth, ME.	Evaluated our program to influence implementation of their K-8 program. Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
<i>Montessori Curriculum</i>	2014	Observation, tour & discussion.	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Educators from the Placentino Elementary School, Holliston, MA	Evaluated our program to influence implementation of their K-3 public Montessori program. Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
<i>Montessori Curriculum: RTI</i>	2015	Hosted on-site workshop in collaboration with the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Educators from a variety of public districts and Montessori schools.	Montessori RTI program, materials & exemplars shared.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
Montessori Curriculum	2015	Four-day site visit. Observation, tour & discussions.	Hosting other educators at the charter school.	Educators from Bura, Kenya.	Evaluated our program to influence implementation of their K-8 programs. Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
Montessori Curriculum: Writing	2015	Presentation at the Annual Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Conference: <i>Lessons in Your Pocket—Six Lessons to Make Your Upper Elementary Students’ Pencils Dance!</i>	Presenting at professional conferences.	Montessori educators & administrators.	Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
Montessori Curriculum: Mathematics	2015	Presentation at the Annual Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Conference: <i>Math Mosaics: Making Math Meaningful for the Math-Avoiding Student through Art and other Means.</i>	Presenting at professional conferences.	Montessori educators & administrators.	Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
Montessori Curriculum: Place-Based Education	2015	Presentation at the Annual New England League of Middle Schools Conference: <i>Our Changing Waterfront—A Study through Place-based Education.</i>	Presenting at professional conferences.	District educators & administrators.	Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.
School Policy: Code of Conduct	2015	Charter school Networking	Sharing resources or programs developed at the charter school.	Hill View Montessori Public Charter School.	Much of the RVCS Code of Conduct was adopted by HVMCPS.

Best Practice Shared	Year	Vehicle for Dissemination	Criteria that best aligns to the shared best practice	With whom did the school disseminate its best practices?	Result of Dissemination
<i>Parent Education</i>	2015	Three nationally-known speakers presenting in a Parent Speaker Series	Family Engagement	Local community of parents and educators	The <i>Navigating the Parent Years Speaker Series</i> is a collaborative effort of the Newburyport Public Schools, The Newburyport Youth Services Commission and River Valley Charter School. In addition to the presentation, books and audio tapes are made available.
<i>Montessori Curriculum: Literacy</i>	2014	Presentation at the Annual Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Conference: <i>Crafting Powerful Stories through the Reading-Writing Connection.</i>	Presenting at professional conferences.	Montessori educators & administrators.	Curricular program, materials & exemplars shared.

Charter School Performance Criteria Relating to *Academic Program Success*

CRITERION 5: STUDENT PERFORMANCE

River Valley has consistently met student performance standards for its students as measured by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's statewide accountability system. For the first three years of this charter term, when DESE was using the Level Rating System to rate schools on the performance and growth of students, SY15, SY16, SY17, River Valley was designated a Level 1 School.

State Assessment Results

Students in grades 3-8 participate in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests (MCAS). It is difficult to compare MCAS results over this charter term due to changes made to the tests via the introduction of MCAS 2.0 and because in 2016-2017 RVCS students in grades four and eight took tests in computer-based form for the first time. Students who took the English Language Arts assessment as a paper-based test performed better as a whole than the students who took the test online. In mathematics, the impact of online testing was not as significant.

In general terms, our assessment results have been relatively consistent over this charter term. Although there has not been significant growth in our scores, we have also not seen performance decline while we increased our focus on place-based learning and holistic education during this charter term.

We have consistently noted that the higher the grade level, the better student performance is on statewide testing. We believe that this is related to the fact that students at younger grades work with concrete representations of concepts rather than hurrying to abstraction, an approach believed to be developmentally appropriate by Montessori educators. Third and fourth grade ELA results from the MCAS 1.0 assessments consistently show that approximately 60-75% of students score advanced or proficient. By seventh and eighth grade, 85-97% of students score advanced or proficient in ELA.

Similar results occur in mathematics where about half of our students score advanced or proficient in the earlier grades, and at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of them do when assessed in seventh and eighth grade. We believe our students are developing foundational skills at the earlier grades which translate into abstract pencil-and-paper skills when they reach the higher grades. We continue to encourage our teachers to follow up manipulative-based lessons by noting for students what the lesson might look like in abstract scenarios like MCAS.

Other Assessment Information

During this charter term, River Valley has worked to bring common level assessments to the classrooms. Though our progress with these efforts has been modest, the faculty are increasingly open to using additional common assessment tools. Montessori-based programming suggests that teachers "follow the child", moving children to higher level work as they master skills and concepts. Our K-6 faculty has been reluctant to compromise their commitment to Montessori by instituting

standardized grade level assessments. Our focus during this charter term has been on identifying universal screening tools that are agreeable to our educators, consistent with Montessori philosophy, and provide valuable information about students for teachers.

Last year, River Valley received a Model Demonstration School (MDS) grant from the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association (MCPSA). The grant provided us access to a Response to Intervention (RtI) expert and a project manager from the MCPSA. The goal of our work as a Model Demonstration School was to “create structures, systems, and practices that are viable, sustainable, and accepted by the team, to restructure the SST/RtI process, provide reflective opportunities for teachers to examine their own practices, and enhance their toolkit to ensure that ALL students meet their individual potential.”

Beginning in the last year of this charter term, the 2018-2019 school year, River Valley will adopt the use of universal screeners schoolwide in literacy, math, and social/emotional/academic behavior. The adoption of universal screeners will provide the school with information that is consistent from classroom to classroom for tracking individual student progress. Some form of information aggregated from this data may be shared with the Accountability Committee to replace the Learning Goal Data that was previously used during the beginning of this charter term.

In addition to the adoption of universal screeners, River Valley recently undertook an assessment audit to gather information about assessment tools being used in individual classrooms. This information will be used in many ways: in Level Meetings (similar to Professional Learning Communities) so that teachers can share best practices for teaching and learning; by administration for resource allocation; and in the Teacher Growth work (i.e., in the supervision and evaluation of our educators).

CRITERION 6: PROGRAM DELIVERY

Curriculum

Philosophy

The Montessori curriculum has proven its effectiveness during more than 100 years of implementation around the world. While most curriculums can be contained in the pages of a book, the Montessori curriculum has no limits; we seek to expose the child to the world around them and support their discovery and engagement in “cosmic education.” Dr. Montessori’s educational method is founded on a developmental perspective that employs a child-centered approach. Our curriculum is not centered only on academics, but rather honors the whole child in their journey toward adulthood. Teacher guidance is based upon careful observation, awareness of the needs of the child, and flexibility. As a Montessori school, RVCS believes that when presented with the proper learning environment, children’s innate eagerness to learn will drive their engagement. In these environments, we seek to equally foster the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of each student.

Our curriculum is also driven by our classroom organization. For all but our Kinderhaus students, our classrooms are multi-aged. Physically, our classrooms contain individual work tables, small-group tables, carpeted areas, counters with sinks, and group meeting areas. Rather than a teacher-centered classroom, ours are student-centered, with a strong sense of community and student voice

in learning. The multi-age groupings and physical arrangement provide rich opportunity for student collaboration, peer teaching and active learning. Montessori teachers are traditionally called “guides,” and seek to support student learning rather than control the classroom.

Academics

Along with our deep commitment to whole-child education, we embrace our primary responsibility to establish a strong academic foundation in all subject areas for each student. In the spring of 2016, the RVCS faculty completed a three-year process to align all of our curriculum maps with both the Montessori approach and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The RVCS Curriculum Maps then led to the creation of our Learning Goals for each level of our school, and both sets of documents have been reviewed by faculty in 2017 and 2018. The Learning Goals are posted on the school’s website and are written with the intention of clarifying the curricular expectations for families. Both the Curriculum Maps and Learning Goals were created by all faculty at each level, and overseen by our Academic Program Coordinator to assure both vertical and horizontal alignment and consistency. By creating maps and goals for each of our multi-aged groupings, rather than for each specific grade, we are able to honor the individualized instructional approach for each student, inherently supporting the needs of diverse learners. With a three-year span to reach the learning goals for E1 and E2, our teachers can customize the pace and depth of curriculum to match the needs and abilities of each student. All curriculum maps and learning goals documents are reviewed annually by faculty. Whenever learning goals are updated or revised, they are reposted on our website. Copies of the Curriculum Maps and Learning Goals are also available for review at the school.

Habits of Learning

In 2016 we also completed development of our social/emotional curriculum map, which we call our Peace Education Map. This document is the result of a year-long, school-wide process, involving all stakeholders – families, alumni, Trustees, students and faculty. After thoughtful discussion on what skills and qualities will be most valuable to students as they continue their education into adulthood, the Peace Education Curriculum Map was created and focuses on the following priority areas for durable learning: Curiosity, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Commitment, Communication, Citizenship and Compassion. These “8 Cs” are now referred to as our Habits of Learning. We believe that student success in these core areas is a central part of our mission, and that these life-long skills represent the higher purpose of public education. The Habits of Learning curriculum is described in greater detail in Criterion 7, the Social Emotional and Health Needs section.

Middle School Curriculum

Our middle school curriculum for our 7th and 8th grade students leverages the foundational knowledge and skills established at the lower levels to deepen student engagement and learning. Our students spend significant portions of each day in core subject-area classes, and standardized test scores at these levels are consistently at or above our sending districts. Though the program has proven its success based on these conventional metrics, the learning beyond the core curriculum sets the River Valley middle school experience apart from traditional programs.

Every student participates in a year-long project group, with a weekly two-hour block dedicated to this work. Model United Nations, Destination Imagination, Science Olympiad, robotics, performing arts and literary magazine are among the types of projects offered. Every group is largely student-driven and there is project work containing both a written component and a final performance event. Four hours of each week are dedicated to middle school “spelectives”, the River Valley middle school version of specials. Students participate in music, art, and physical education, but do so in a creative

and unique approach. Selective offerings include such choices as rock climbing, yoga, bucket drumming, weaving, mural painting, gardening, woodworking, cooking, competitive games, school maintenance, coding, knitting, and playing in the middle school folk band. Our middle school students also participate in “buddies” programs with our Kinderhaus students, mentoring them during physical education and art classes.

The middle school learning experience is designed to offer students opportunities to engage in civic work beyond the school walls. As described in Criterion 1, our older students apply their learning to impacting the world around them. With Citizenship listed as one of our Habits of Learning, our middle school teachers embed opportunities into the curriculum, and support student-driven interest to engage in local or broader efforts to impact their world. Middle school students frequently fundraise for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and speak at school assemblies to spread awareness of these causes. The annual 8th grade trip to Washington D.C. provides a culminating opportunity for students to see how their efforts have broader impact.

Every middle school student completes their River Valley experience by presenting a Celebration of Learning (COL). Centered upon the question, “Who am I as a learner?”, these presentations represent a deep reflective dive into each student’s journey as a learner. Students must assemble an evaluative panel that includes at least one adult from beyond the school community, a River Valley Trustee, a River Valley faculty member, and a student peer. Each student prepares a Requirements of Learning portfolio, which is shared with their COL panel, and includes examples of academic and civic work. They then provide a twenty to thirty-minute presentation in which they use school and life examples to discuss their learning style, learning experiences, important influences, and thoughts for future studies or other pursuits. Students respond to panelist questions and include multi-media examples in their presentation. Adult and family response to the River Valley COL process has been overwhelmingly positive throughout the charter term.

Instruction

During the summer of 2017, a faculty team built upon the feedback from the 2016-2017 Educator Growth process to draft the RVCS Professional Practice Framework (PPF). Modeled on the four-quadrant structure of other successful tools (e.g. Danielson, Marzano), the RVCS Professional Practice Framework articulates what effective teaching practice looks like at River Valley Charter School. The four quadrants are: The Prepared Environment (for a shared journey of learning and inquiry), the Craft of Teaching (or the “how” of teaching and learning), Professional Growth (for a mindset of continuous improvement), and Relationships and Communication (to build trust with clarity). During our August meetings, all faculty members reviewed and revised the PPF. There was strong consensus regarding quadrant descriptors, and solid teacher buy-in about the value of the tool.

Every faculty member self-assessed their practice based on the PPF. Quadrant descriptors were mixed into a general survey, and each teacher evaluated their strengths and areas for growth. The descriptors were then transferred back into the framework, providing teachers a visual representation of areas of strength and opportunities for growth based on our common understanding of high quality instruction.

The self-assessment process informed each teacher’s efforts to establish a professional practice goal for the year. Teachers then completed their own RVCS Goal Setting & Professional Growth Plan forms. The forms included:

- the PPF quadrant of focus,
- the specific indicators from the PPF for focus,
- a professional practice goal that addressed the quadrant of focus,
- a description of the expected impact that achieving the goal would have on their practice,
- plans to collect evidence of goal achievement and/or methods for measuring achievement,
- action steps, and
- resources required to support attainment of the goal.

Teachers met with supervisors in the fall to review and refine their goals, and again in the spring to reflect on growth. The premise of this approach is to focus on strengthening professional teaching practice and to ensure that all teachers continually experience relevant professional growth.

As piloted in 2016-2017, each teacher then joined smaller “tribes” of teachers aligned around common goals. Tribes met monthly, and some spent time observing in each other’s classrooms. A major component of the process was written reflection, and faculty meeting time was allocated for all faculty to journal regularly. The tribe meetings helped faculty align their practice to the PPF.

One key element of the success of this process is that it is led by faculty with support from administration. Rather than a top-down approach, faculty are hearing from peers about the successes and challenges of this approach. This has led to increased faculty engagement, and a sense that teacher voice is valued. Two RVCS faculty members have applied to present this approach to fellow educators and administrators at the American Montessori Annual Conference in Washington D.C in 2019.

The Teacher Growth Team also worked to develop a new Educator Observation, Feedback and Reflection Record. Observations maintain a focus on instructional practices, student engagement and the Montessori prepared environment. This form is formatted so that a written conversation can take place between the observer (usually the supervisor) and the teacher. Once the observer provides written feedback, the teacher can provide context, thoughts and other comments. After collecting a year’s worth of observation data, both the supervisor and teacher will write summary reflections, and use that information to draft an initial professional practice goal for the upcoming year.

River Valley is also piloting three coaching initiatives during the 2018-2019 school year to further strengthen our instructional practices. We have contracted with a renowned public Montessori Coach and Consultant to support teachers in their day-to-day Montessori practices. The Montessori coach/consultant will spend one day each month at River Valley and will be available for support conversations in between onsite visits. She will provide feedback to teachers regarding their Montessori practice including curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

We have also contracted with a Literacy Coach and Consultant to provide literacy coaching to all K-3 teachers. The Literacy coach/consultant will provide consultation to school leadership and teachers to promote the expertise of faculty with a focus on implementing rigorous literacy instruction, and the effective use of assessment information to support targeted individualized instruction. The literacy coach/consultant will be at the school one morning each week through the fall and then bi-weekly through the remainder of the year.

A veteran River Valley middle school teacher will be augmenting his teaching role with coaching of our upper elementary and middle school faculty as well during the 2018-2019 school year. Based on an Educator Centered Coaching model, this support will be collaborative, non-evaluative, and

confidential. Tailored to the needs of each individual teacher, coaching will be designed to strengthen professional reflection and practice and will align with the RVCS Professional Practice Framework.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

River Valley has always used both qualitative and quantitative data to improve student outcomes as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching for all students. Beyond the observational assessment by our trained Montessori teachers, teachers have employed a variety of assessment tools, though these have varied between classrooms. As described above, we have recently undertaken an Assessment Audit to better gauge what formal and informal assessment of student learning is happening in every classroom. The goal is to bring more consistency to this work, to provide teachers with references for best practices so that they can improve their assessment practice.

Student observation is a hallmark of Montessori teacher training, and a central component of student assessment. Teachers are constantly observing students and asking informal questions to assess understanding. Teachers do this during small-group lessons as well as when students present their final work to the teacher. In addition to ongoing observational assessment, our Kinderhaus and Elementary 1 teachers use combinations of the following assessments: Quick Phonics Screener (QPS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), Fountas and Pinnell, and Foundations. At the Elementary 2 level, teachers use QPS, DRA, Six Traits, Latin Roots Unit Reviews, Think Alouds, spelling quizzes, math fact quizzes, Four Ops, Jump Math, Finish Line Math and Extra Math. In middle school there is a more traditional approach to assessment and teachers use (graded) quizzes, papers, tests, and projects to assess students during and at the end of unit studies.

As noted previously, River Valley is continuing to build upon the individual teaching and learning done in the classroom by identifying a more centralized method to maintain formative and summative assessment data. With our new progress reporting system, we will be adopting the grade book module from our student information system provider. This will provide more centralized data collection of assessment data. This data can then be aggregated and used for improved program evaluation.

Along with these efforts to diversify our assessment tools, we will continue to rely on the proven assessment strategies inherent in our Montessori method. Nearly all lessons are given in a small group setting, allowing for teachers to employ effective formative assessment strategies for comprehension. Teachers spend considerable time during the work periods working one-on-one with students, allowing for an additional level of direct assessment.

Beyond these embedded assessment approaches, our project-based and place-based curriculums offer opportunities for genuine assessment of student learning. As students present their research, deliver their debate or engage in outdoor learning, the depth of their learning is on display for teacher and peers alike. These events are frequently scored by both teachers and classmates using a four-point rubric, along with debriefing discussions to deepen both assessment and reflection on learning. Our 6th grade students complete their elementary experience with a months-long gateway research project called the Sixth Grade Thesis. Students may research any topic of interest and must partner with an adult mentor from outside of River Valley. Final presentations include a written report and a multi-media presentation made to a panel of adults and in front of a group of peers. Final assessment of preparedness for middle school is strengthened through these projects.

Supports for Diverse Learners

As mentioned previously, River Valley Charter School received a Model Demonstration School (MDS) grant from the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association (MCPSA). The grant provided us access to a Response to Intervention (RtI) expert and a staff member from the MCPSA.

As a result of the grant, a working group of educators and other support staff from River Valley was formed to participate in a yearlong study of our RtI program. The MDS team consisted of representatives from each of our grade levels (with the exception of middle school), the School Counselor, the School Psychologist, Special Education Co-Coordinator, Special Education Teachers, the Assistant Director (who oversees Student Support Services), and the two external members; one from the MCPSA and one from the May Institute, a national leader in the field of applied behavior analysis that services thousands of individuals annually. The Team met multiple times over the past year for extended working sessions. This work is continuing into the new year and we will introduce universal screeners in literacy, math, and social/emotional/academic behavior across all classrooms for the start of the 2018-2019 school year. We created decision rules for each of the screeners as well as an inventory of school-based resources for Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

The yearlong initiative has been very important to the growth of River Valley as a school. Whereas teacher observations and recommendations were previously used to identify students for RtI, the new system ensures reliable and valid data is being used to identify RtI students; there is consistency across classrooms; there is better distribution of RtI resources; and most importantly, increased capacity is being built within the classroom. The MDS initiative has additionally contributed to overall faculty buy-in for common assessment tools and the use of quantitative student data to inform instruction.

During the 2017-2018 school year, River Valley added an additional special education teacher to work 1:1 with a student whose disabilities require individual support. The addition of this special education teacher brings the school's total special education staff to ten dedicated faculty (four special education teachers, a school psychologist, a literacy interventionist, a speech and language pathologist, and two learning assistants). River Valley subcontracts for occupational and physical therapy.

As discussed above, beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, River Valley is hiring a Literacy Coach who will work to increase literacy capacity among our teaching staff, thereby improving learning outcomes for diverse learners. Taken together, these changes represent an increased emphasis on reading and literacy across the school.

CRITERION 7: CULTURE AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Social, Emotional, and Health Needs

Safe and Respectful Learning Environment

Montessori education, at its core, is centered upon the development of the physical, social, emotional and health needs of each student. Holistic education is practiced in every classroom every day, creating an inherently safe and respectful classroom and school environment. (Please refer Criterion

1, the Whole-Child Education section for a detailed description.) Beyond our Peace Education Curriculum and Montessori focus on Grace and Courtesy, we employ a full-time licensed School Nurse to attend to the physical and health needs of all school members; a full-time licensed School Counselor to provide additional support for the social and emotional needs of all students; and a part-time School Psychologist to provide another layer of social/emotional support. In the 2018 Parent Survey, 94% of respondents agreed that their children were in a safe school environment.

Peace Education: The Habits of Learning Curriculum

During the 2016-2017 school year, teacher representatives from each level piloted the implementation of our Habits of Learning curriculum. Based upon the RVCS Peace Education Curriculum Map and rooted in Dr. Montessori's vision of education as a vital tool to promote peace, the RVCS Habits of Learning infuse our core beliefs about life-long learning into the daily work of both students and staff. The curriculum is structured upon the Eight "Cs": Curiosity, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Commitment, Communication, Citizenship, and Compassion.

For the 2017-2018 school year, the entire faculty and all students brought the Habits of Learning curriculum to the center of the daily life of the school. The teacher pilot team shared their experiences and lessons-learned with their colleagues during June and August faculty meetings, providing a common approach to implementation. Students in all classrooms worked to develop student-centered definitions of the Eight Cs; teachers in the lower grades developed Montessori-style hands-on materials; and students in the upper grades posted definitions with clarifying descriptors. As students reflected on their work or their interactions with others, the Eight Cs were consistently referenced. The Eight Cs have become part of the daily lexicon of the classrooms, and student project presentations are often scored with rubrics built upon the Habits of Learning.

The Habits of Learning are intended not only to foster these durable learning characteristics in our students, but also to value the strengths of each child. Rather than defining the success of a student based solely on academic measures, our holistic approach to education enables students to develop self-confidence by identifying their strengths beyond the academic arena. This benefits the social and emotional health of students and enhances the culture of respect within our school.

Family Engagement

The founders of River Valley sought to create a school that would welcome parents, provide opportunities for meaningful engagement and utilize the skills and expertise of the parent body throughout the school. Parents serve on our Board and committees, volunteer in classrooms, organize and staff events, drive and chaperone for fieldtrips, and use or present their professional skills to support classrooms. Parents volunteered thousands of hours during the last charter term, and this contribution has had a substantial impact on the learning experience for our students. Additionally, our Parent's Alliance organization has provided a wide variety of community building, curriculum support, and parent education events. Examples include professional speakers on such topics as the effect of media on youth, and childhood anxiety. The Parents' Alliance also organized Scholastic book fairs, enrichment programming and community meals and the Alliance holds several community building events each year, strengthening school spirit and connections within the school community.

Each summer the RVCS Family Handbook is sent to families. Since the document has grown to over 100 pages, we highlight the priority sections as well as any meaningful changes or updates. Every classroom teacher communicates with families via email during the summer, welcoming them to the class and providing information on reading lists, materials lists and upcoming parent events at the

school. Each September, every classroom holds a parent back-to-school evening, where curriculum, classroom systems and expectations, and Montessori philosophy are shared. Each spring the school holds a parent education event focused on a specific curriculum area, with students and teachers sharing how the Montessori approach translates into learning. The school also hosts Montessori Minutes (regular, short introductions to Montessori materials at monthly board meetings during the school day for parents). Additionally, every classroom sends home a weekly email update throughout the year, providing families with insight on current curriculum work, happenings in the classroom, and information on upcoming curriculum, events, and trips.

In order to provide additional engagement opportunities, the school's Director and Assistant Director hold monthly *Coffee with the Directors* events, where all families are invited to come share their perspective, ask questions, and learn about the current happenings of River Valley.

The school publishes a weekly newsletter, *Happenings*, that has become an essential component of school-to-family communication. Upcoming and current events, communications from the School Health Office or Counselor's Office, and photos of field trips and Parent's Alliance updates are some of the regularly included elements. One central feature of *Happenings* is the *Note from the Director*, a weekly message to the school community. These *Notes* often focus on important elements of Montessori education, providing valuable insight into the work happening in the classrooms. *Notes* also address school safety, policy, and relevant school and community happenings. In the 2018 Parent Survey, 96% of respondents agreed that *Happenings* provides them with relevant and useful information. River Valley also has presence on social media with two Facebook pages (one for current families, one for alumni) and an Instagram account.

River Valley sends student progress reports to families three times each year. These reports have been updated to include evaluation and teacher narratives on our Habits of Learning curriculum as well as in all core academic areas. Input from families was gleaned from our parent surveys as well as through focus groups held with parents. The feedback was used in the creation of the updated progress reports which will be piloted during the 2018-2019 school year. Progress reports are delivered just prior to parent-teacher conferences, which also take place three times each year. Last year, RVCS families had conference attendance levels in excess of 95%.

Over the charter term families have demonstrated increased satisfaction with our program, as measured through the annual Family Survey. Relevant results from the family survey, from the first year of this charter term through 2018 are below and provide an example of growth in parental satisfaction.

Percentage of Respondents that Agree	2014-2015 n=136	2017-2018 n=156
RVCS provides parents with opportunities to learn about its curriculum.	88%	95%
The RVCS learning experience is clearly tied to the mission.	89%	96%
RVCS provides ample opportunities for parents to volunteer.	89%	97%
RVCS communicates the accomplishments of students, staff and the school as a whole to parents.	79%	93%

Charter School Performance Criteria Relating to **Organizational Viability**

CRITERION 8: CAPACITY

School Leadership

The current leadership team entered River Valley in July of 2013. All members of the team remain with the school, with one change in role. The Accountability Committee has collected survey data from parents every year and for each of the years in this charter term, and the majority of results have steadily climbed. The percentage of respondents who agree that the school administration provides effective leadership has grown from 85% in SY15 to 96% in SY18.

The RVCS Board of Trustees rated the School Director at the Proficient or Exemplary level for all standards and domains in the MA School-Level Administrator Rubric, and rated the Director as exceeding the three Board-approved annual goals in the areas of Educator Growth, Montessori Leadership and Staff Recruitment, Retention and Compensation.

The RVCS organizational chart has shifted slightly during the charter term, yet supervisory roles have remained clear. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, there will be a Level Coordinator for every level (Kinderhaus, Elementary 1, Elementary 2, Middle School) as well as for the specialists (art, music, physical education, technology, engineering, etc.). The Level Coordinator role will be fulfilled by a current classroom lead teacher and will be shared among faculty in a rotating manner, i.e., each year a different teacher will serve in this role. Level Coordinators will maintain their classroom teaching responsibilities while assuming minor additional administrative duties related to their level. The Coordinators will attend weekly administrative meetings, represent the perspective and needs of staff, discuss ongoing initiatives, facilitate level meetings, and provide support for some level-related administrative functions.

An additional organizational change was piloted during the 2017-2018 school year and will continue going forward. During 2017-2018, the Assistant Director assumed responsibility for the oversight and supervision of all student support personnel, i.e., the School Nurse, the School Counselor, the School Psychologist, and the Special Education Department. Previously this responsibility was under the School Director. The Assistant Director will continue overseeing this department because of her experience with diverse learners.

Other organizational modifications planned for the 2018-2019 school year include changes to the supervision of middle school staff and specialists. The School Director will resume supervision of Middle School faculty (teachers of seventh and eighth grade language arts, science, mathematics, and humanities). This change is being implemented so that the Middle School Coordinator can function as a peer to the middle school staff rather than in an evaluative position, facilitating the Middle School Team's ability to be a high functioning team. In addition, providing the School Director with supervisory responsibility for all grade K-8 general education teachers ensures curricular and instructional continuity between each of the K-8 general education levels. The Middle School Coordinator will take over supervision of the Specialists (teachers of art, physical education, music, engineering, technology, E2 science, and library studies). This change further integrates specials with the general education curriculum so that students are better equipped to draw connections across the curriculum. With these supervisory changes, the addition of the Level Coordinators, and both a

literacy and a Montessori coach, River Valley is continuing to respond to the needs of students while simultaneously building increased capacity among its faculty.

Professional Climate

For the past several years, the primary professional development work at River Valley has been driven by the faculty. Through the use of faculty teams, the school has developed and implemented the Educator Growth process, based on the RVCS Professional Practice Framework, and detailed in Criterion 6/Instruction. Through this process, RVCS teachers rely on their colleagues as resources to help them improve their professional practice. The Habits of Learning and Peace Education Map were also driven by faculty teams, with regular reporting to and feedback from the whole faculty. This work is reviewed and fine-tuned during weekly level meeting times (the school's weekly schedule includes collaborative meeting times for all levels).

Beyond the internally driven professional development, River Valley occasionally engages outside professionals to support the growth and effectiveness of the faculty. For example, Julie Wilson of the Institute for the Future of Learning, collaborated with faculty on both the Habits of Learning initiative and on implementation of the Clifton Strengths Assessment for all staff. The school also budgets funds each year to allow faculty to attend professional conferences and workshops, take graduate-level courses and attend Montessori training. During this charter term, the school has allocated a minimum of \$40,000 for professional development each year.

As referenced in Criterion 6/Instruction, the Teacher Growth Team worked during the 2017-2018 school year to develop a new Educator Observation, Feedback & Reflection Record. This document has evolved during the charter term based on feedback from faculty. Observations maintain a focus on instructional practices, student engagement and the Montessori prepared environment. River Valley, as a non-Race to the Top school, does not participate in the state's Educator Evaluation System to evaluate teachers at the end of each year. Instead, and in keeping with our Montessori philosophy, our goal is to support teacher growth and improvement throughout the year.

River Valley staff consistently provide positive feedback regarding the culture and working climate of the school. Below are results from the quantitative questions on the 2018 Staff Survey, with over 90% of full time faculty responding anonymously.

Percentage of Faculty and Staff that Agree	
Our school is moving in a positive direction.	98%
Our school community (staff, students, families, Board of Trustees) is working together toward a common vision.	89%
RVCS has a collaborative professional climate.	95%
There is a high level of trust among staff members.	80%
There is a high level of trust between staff and administration.	84%

CRITERION 9: GOVERNANCE

The River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees

River Valley Charter School has benefitted from an active, engaged and competent Board of Trustees since its inception, and especially during the most recent charter term. The RVCS Board has a strong track record regarding proven loyalty to the school and acting in the best interests of the organization. In accordance with its bylaws, the Board of Trustees provides governance for the school through three primary responsibilities:

- 1) Hiring, oversight, and performance review of the Executive Director;
- 2) Creation and periodic update of the school's policies & procedures; and,
- 3) Oversight of the school's annual budget, quarterly financial performance, and annual audit.

The Board also provides input and perspective to the Executive Director regarding strategic direction, priority focus areas, and operational questions raised by the Director. New Trustees participate in an orientation by current Board members to educate them on their legal and ethical responsibilities. During the 2017-2018 school year the Board's Committee on Trustees began the process of revising the Board's bylaws and expect to complete this process in the fall of 2018. Through adherence to the bylaws and effective orientation, the RVCS Board of Trustees holds a clear understanding of their governance-only role, and effectively avoids participating in the management of daily operations or staffing matters.

Board Systems and Procedures for Effective Decision Making

All RVCS Board and Committee meetings are posted in compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. RVCS Board meeting agendas always include opportunities for public comment at the beginning and end of each monthly meeting. Meetings follow Robert's Rules, encouraging participation from all Trustees, and resulting in a clear path and record for each decision. With highly engaged Board membership, discussions are consistently thoughtful and thorough, with dissenting or questioning voices welcomed. All Board meetings include reports from each Board Committee, as well as a report from the Director. Board minutes are posted on the school website and available at the front office of the school for review by any member of the public.

Board Oversight

The Board is the hiring authority for the school's Director, and in 2013 engaged KOYA Consulting to assist in a nationwide search for the new leader. The Board collaborates with the Director each year to set and approve annual goals for the Director and engages in a thorough review of the Director's performance against these goals as well as against the MA School-Level Administrator Rubric.

The Board's Finance Committee meets monthly with the School Director and Business Manager to review all relevant financial reports, and to compare budget to actual progress. They meet with the auditors to review each year's audit report. The Finance Committee also engages in the budgeting process, reviewing draft budgets and assuring that educational priorities are being met. All Trustees review the proposed annual budget prior to final approval.

The Board's Accountability Committee meets monthly with the School Director and Assistant Director to review a wide range of data and policies. The Accountability Committee brings particular focus to Criteria 4, 5, 6 and 7, focusing on one criteria at separate monthly meetings. They review MCAS data, student progress report data, and the assessment practices at the school. The Committee further reviews the school's master policy list and the annual Montessori Audit. The Accountability

Committee, in collaboration with the administration, write, administer and review the annual Parent Survey.

The Board's Committee on Trustees focuses its attention on board continuity and internal health. This committee identifies and recruits new Board and committee members with attention to balancing expertise and perspective. The committee on-boards incoming members and facilitates required DESE tasks. The committee organizes and facilitates an annual retreat to review the past year and bring focus to priorities for the upcoming year. Twice during the recent charter term, the Board hired Julie Wilson of the Institute for the Future of Learning, to facilitate these retreats. These events always foster thoughtful conversation, build perspective, and help set Board and Director goals and priorities for each upcoming year.

Strategic Successes

In SY15, the RVCS Board reviewed the existing strategic plan and collaborated with the school administration to develop a new plan for the 2015-2020 timeframe. This process included a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats) analysis, as well as consideration of how best to successfully pursue effective implementation of the school's mission. Based on these efforts, the group decided to focus on revitalizing the school's Montessori practices, in conjunction with defining the larger purposes of a River Valley education. This was the springboard to what eventually became the new Peace Education Curriculum Map and the Habits of Learning Curriculum. Through regular reports from the Director at Board meetings, the annual Parent Survey and the annual Staff Survey, the Trustees have monitored this ongoing work.

During SY17, the Board helped lead the initiative to renovate the RVCS middle school space. Through thoughtful design and financial planning, Trustees played a vital visionary and fiduciary role in this successful effort.

During SY18, the Board collaborated with the school Director to address recruitment, retention and compensation conditions for RVCS staff. Trustees provided analysis of scenarios to employ available cash reserves to impact compensation and met with several lending institutions to consider the possibility of refinancing the school's mortgage debt. These efforts resulted in the RVCS Foundation signing a commitment letter with a new lender to lock in a low interest rate for the next 15 years. In combination with a modest investment from the school's cash reserves, this plan will lower the school's annual facilities costs by approximately \$75,000 for each of the next 15 years allowing the school to reallocate funds from plant to people in future budgets.

CRITERION 10: FINANCE

The school maintains a sound and stable financial condition and operates in a financially sound and publicly accountable manner.

Key Indicator #1

Through excellent financial management and procedures, River Valley Charter School has maintained a positive financial condition throughout the charter term. For the past three years, all metrics on the DESE Dashboard have been rated low risk. Only three indicators over the charter term were rated moderate risk, and these were driven by the temporary impact of the school's purchase of the building in 2012.

Key Indicator #2

RVCS develops conservative financial budgets that are carefully reviewed by the Board's Finance Committee and rely only on enrollment funding and sustainable revenue sources. Over 78% of the 2018 budget was dedicated to personnel and related costs, with an additional 5% dedicated to direct student services. The Board of Trustees is engaged in an effort to further reduce facility costs by restructuring the school's mortgage debt.

Key Indicator #3

The Board's Finance Committee holds monthly meetings at which the Business Manager presents and reviews all relevant financial reports, including cash positions, budget-to-actual reports, revenue projections, and quarterly financial statements. The Administration and Business Office begin budget planning each March and present the preliminary budget to the Finance Committee in May. The Board reviews the preliminary budget at the May meeting, and votes on the final budget at the June meeting.

Key Indicator #4

As supported by clean audit reports, the school has historically implemented and maintained strong internal financial controls and systems. In 2018, the Business Office updated the RVCS Fiscal Policies and Procedures Guide, as well as the RVCS Internal Control Manual for Federal Grants. Both of these documents were reviewed by the Finance Committee and approved by unanimous vote of the Trustees at the June Board meeting.

Key Indicator #5

RVCS has engaged Alexander, Aronson & Finning CPAs to conduct the annual audit. All financial audits have returned unqualified opinions, free from any findings, non-compliance issues or questioned costs.

PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

After nearly twenty years of successful operation, the Board, administration and faculty of River Valley Charter School feel more confident than ever in the value of our mission to bring Montessori education into the public domain. As we adapt the Montessori approach to fit the demands and context of the 21st century, we see enduring and increasing value in our commitment to whole child education, grounded in place-based learning, and dedicated to developing informed and engaged young citizens. Our original charter application set forth ambitious goals, and as the school has matured we have made significant progress toward achieving these high standards.

As referenced in the cover letter, River Valley Charter School has made important advances in all program areas during the past charter term. Enhanced and updated curriculum maps & learning goals, greater consistency and instructional strength across classrooms, improved assessment and RTI programs, effective communication systems & family engagement, updated and forward-thinking policies and governance, improved teacher compensation, enhanced dissemination efforts, and multiple facility upgrades are examples of the recent progress of River Valley.

Given this strong track record of improvement and success, the central plan for the next five years is to continue to build upon these results so that our faculty and students can thrive in a highly engaging and effective learning environment. Our central focus will be continuous improvement of our teaching and learning programs, supported through focused enhancement of our Educator Growth process and our internal assessment and RTI practices. Our efforts to attract, retain and fairly compensate our staff will also be central to our improvement strategy, as will continued financial support for Montessori training. We will also continue to pursue dissemination opportunities both

within and beyond our sending districts. In order to achieve these results, River Valley Charter School has set the following goals:

Strengthen the Educator Growth process & systems for all faculty

- Fully implement the Educator Observation, Feedback & Reflection forms, with a minimum of four written observations per year for all teachers.
- Further develop the Clifton Strengths approach to educator growth.
- Provide Montessori, literacy, and peer coaching support to faculty.
- Implement a peer-to-peer observation protocol that includes training and an observation schedule for all teachers.
- Restructure the teacher growth “tribes” to utilize level teams as the basis for educator growth work.
- Provide dedicated teacher growth collaboration time at least twice monthly throughout the school year.

Strengthen the school’s internal assessment and student data collection systems.

- Implement common screener assessments in literacy, math, and social, emotional behavioral at appropriate grade levels.
- Aggregate and share screener results across levels.
- Employ dedicated educator growth collaboration time to focus on student learning.
- Broaden the assessment strategies across grade levels, focused on best practices and effective data.

Continue Dissemination Efforts

- Share the school’s proven practices with districts and at professional events.
- Host “EdCamps” for districts and other educators.
- Continue to host the annual New England Public Montessori Convening event.
- Publish articles and papers in educational journals.
- Share resources and programs with districts and other educators and institutions.

Prioritize Staff Recruitment, Retention and Compensation

- Build upon the success of the 2018-2019 budget impact on compensation
- Complete the refinancing contract with East Boston Savings Bank to reduce facility costs
- Steward strong donor relationships and employ RVCS Foundation support to offset programmatic costs
- Continue to use fiscal year-end surplus cash to provide staff bonuses

Continue Proactive Capital Improvement Funding

- Continue to fund the Capital Reserve Account annually
- Remain proactive in the maintenance of the building and systems
- Prioritize maintenance of the Montessori prepared learning environments

Additional Notes:

- RVCS currently has no plans to expand enrollment.
- RVCS currently has no plans to consider major changes to our academic program, as we are fully committed to our public Montessori mission.
- No major charter amendments are anticipated for the next five years.
- No significant physical plant or site initiatives are currently planned for the next five years.

APPENDIX A: ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PERFORMANCE

Faithfulness to Charter

	Charter Term Performance				Evidence
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	
Objective 1: River Valley Charter School will provide a high-quality Montessori learning environment for all students.					
Measure 1A: River Valley will alternate internal and external audits of its Montessori program every year. Both audits will assess the school's Montessori programming against the American Montessori Society's (AMS) "Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector". (A summary of "Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector" is included as ACCOUNTABILITY ATTACHMENT FOR MEASURE 1A: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	met	met	met	met	<p>River Valley has had a school audit every year of this charter term. Auditors have included the following Montessori experts:</p> <p>Elizabeth Slade of New View Montessori Consultancy (and the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector)</p> <p>Gary Davidson, the Director of the Seacoast Center for Montessori Teacher Education</p> <p>Rob Keyes, Montessori teacher at the Cornerstone School and teacher trainer at the Seacoast Center for Montessori Teacher Education</p> <p>On alternative years, the school's administrative team has conducted internal audits utilizing the same format as the external auditors.</p>

Measure 1B: Annually, River Valley will be found to be in compliance with a minimum of 18 of the 20 applicable American Montessori Society's (AMS) "Elements of a Successful Montessori School in the Public Sector"*. <i>* Exception: The document contains 22 elements. Two elements require a 2.5-6 year old multi-age grouping that is not possible due to MA public school design limitations. RVCS excludes these two elements from the measurement.</i>	met	met	met	met	River Valley has consistently demonstrated at least 18 of the 20 elements deemed necessary to be a successful Montessori school in the public sector.
Measure 1C: At the end of each academic year, at least 90% of lead teachers in grades K-6 will be Montessori trained by an accredited training institution.	met	met	met	met	At least 90% of all grade K-6 lead teachers are Montessori trained by an accredited training institution.

Objective 2: Every River Valley Charter School student will demonstrate their learning about 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 about the history, culture or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.	met	met	met	met	Every class has participated in at least three place-based learning experiences. River Valley Charter School is well-known as a school that gets students out to both learn and to apply their learning to the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.
Measure 2B: Annually, every student in grades 3 through 8 will demonstrate their place-based knowledge to a group of peers and adults through written, oral or multi-media presentations. A minimum of 85% of students at each grade level will earn a score of 3 or better, on a 1 to 4 scale, on an assessment rated against a standardized place-based learning rubric for their grade level. Rubrics will include specific language designed to assess the level	not met	met	partially met	partially met	Every year students have participated in learning opportunities beyond the school grounds. Field trips were carefully chosen to extend classroom learning and well over 150 trips were booked each year. We are confident that student learning is enhanced and enriched from these field trips. Our efforts to

of student learning about the history, culture or ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.					successfully assess this learning will require further development by administration and faculty.
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Objective 3: Every graduating student will demonstrate the ability to critically self-reflect and to assess their academic strengths and challenges.

Measure 3A: Annually, 100% of graduating students will successfully create and deliver a River Valley Celebration of Learning (COL). Every COL will include a portfolio of student work with corresponding reflections for selected artifacts, as well as a formal presentation to peers and adults.	met	met	met	met	All graduating 8 th grade students have delivered a Celebration of Learning to peers and adults. The Celebration of Learning process has remained consistent, but the content and expectations have been refined over this charter term. Most recently, the Celebration of Learning was adjusted to also include the Habits of Learning curriculum.
Measure 3B: 90% of graduating students will earn a final score of 3 or better, on a 1 to 4 scale, on rubrics specifically designed to assess the student's ability to critically self-reflect. Rubrics will be completed by a minimum of four jurors, including both internal RVCS staff and external, non-RVCS jurors.	met	met	met	met	Every student has received a three or better on their Celebration of Learning rubric.

Objective 4: RVCS will share its Montessori curriculum with other schools in Massachusetts over the course of its charter term.

Measure 4A: By the end of this charter term, RVCS staff will lead at least ten workshops or presentations for non-RVCS teachers to disseminate best practices in public Montessori education. RVCS staff will average two workshops or presentations per year toward this objective.	met	met	met	met	RVCS faculty and staff have presented at thirteen workshops or conferences to date over this charter term. Presentations have been given at regional and national conferences held by: The New England
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					League of Middle Schools (NELMS), Montessori Schools of Massachusetts (MSM), Cambridge College, DESE (DissemiNATION Fair), and the American Montessori Society (AMS) National Conference.
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APPENDIX B: GENERAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES

As the authorized representative of the charter school, I hereby certify under the penalties of perjury that the information submitted in this application for renewal of a public school charter for **RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL** located at **2 PERRY WAY NEWBURYPORT, MA** is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and further, I certify that the school:

1. Will not charge tuition, fees, or other mandatory payments for attendance at the charter school, for participation in required or elective courses, or for mandated services or programs (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(m), and 603 CMR 1.03(3)).
2. Will not charge any public school for the use or replication of any part of their curriculum subject to the prescriptions of any contract between the charter school and any third party provider (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(l)).
3. Will permit parents to enroll their children only voluntarily and not because they must send their children to this school (The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, Title V, Part B, Subpart 1 — Public Charter Schools Section 5210(1)(h)).
4. Will enroll any eligible student who submits a timely and complete application, unless the school receives a greater number of applications than there are spaces for students. If the number of application exceeds the spaces available, the school will hold a lottery in accordance with Massachusetts charter laws and regulations (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71 § 89(n), and 603 CMR 1.05).
5. Will be open to all students, on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or academic achievement (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(m)).
6. Will be secular in its curriculum, programs, admissions, policies, governance, employment practices, and operation in accordance with the federal and state constitutions and any other relevant provisions of federal and state law.
7. Will comply with the federal Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
8. Will adhere to all applicable provisions of federal and state law relating to students with disabilities including, but not limited to, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws.
9. Will adhere to all applicable provisions of federal and state law relating to students who are English language learners including, but not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, and chapter 71A of the Massachusetts General Laws.
10. Will comply with all other applicable federal and state laws including, but not limited to, the requirement to offer a school nutrition program (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 69, § 1 (c)).

11. Will meet the performance standards and assessment requirements set by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for all students in public schools including, but not limited to, administering the state assessment test (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(v), and 603 CMR 1.04(3)(k)).
12. Will submit an annual report to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on or before the required deadline (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71 § 89(jj)).
13. Will submit an accountability plan following the school's renewal, establishing specific five year performance objectives as specified in the state regulations (603 CMR 1.04 (3)(l)) and guidelines.
14. Will submit an annual independent audit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Office of the State Auditor no later than November 1st of every year, as required by the charter school statute (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(jj), or at such other time as designated in 603 CMR 1.08 (3)).
15. Will submit required enrollment data each March to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the required deadline (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(o), and 603 CMR 1.08(5)).
16. Will submit required waitlist report data as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by the required deadlines (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(n), and 603 CMR 1.08(6)).
17. Will operate in compliance with state requirements regarding designer selection, public bidding, and prevailing wage when constructing or renovating a facility.
18. Will operate in compliance with generally accepted government accounting principles (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(jj)).
19. Will maintain financial records to meet the requirements of Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89 and 603 CMR 1.00.
20. Will participate in the Massachusetts State Teachers' Retirement System (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(y)).
21. Will employ individuals who either hold an appropriate license to teach in a public school in Massachusetts or who will take and pass the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) within their first year of employment and meet all applicable staff requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71 § 89(ii), and 603 CMR 1.06(4)).
22. Will provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with written assurance that a criminal background check has been performed, prior to their employment, on all employees of the school who will have unsupervised contact with children (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 38R, and 603 CMR 1.04(7)(d)).
23. Will obtain and keep current all necessary permits, licenses, and certifications related to fire, health, and safety within the building(s) and on school property (603 CMR 1.04(7)(e), 1.04(7)(f), 1.05(7)(g), and 1.05(7)(h)).
24. Will maintain uninterrupted necessary and appropriate insurance coverage (603 CMR 1.04(7)(h)).

25. Will submit to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the names, home addresses, and employment and educational histories of proposed new members of the school's board of trustees for approval prior to their service (603 CMR 1.06(1)(b)).
26. Will ensure that every member of the school's board of trustees shall meet all training as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and any other requirements by other state agencies, including the requirements under the Commonwealth's open meeting law and conflict of interest law (603 CMR 1.06).
27. Will ensure that all members of the school's board of trustees file with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the State Ethics Commission, and the city or town clerk where the charter school is located completed financial disclosure forms for the preceding calendar year according to the schedule required by the Office of Charter Schools and School Redesign (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(u)). The disclosure is in addition to the requirements of said chapter 268A and a member of a board of trustees must also comply with the disclosure and other requirements of said chapter 268A.
28. Will recognize, if applicable, an employee organization designated by the authorization cards of 50 percent of its employees in the appropriate bargaining unit as the exclusive representative of all the employees in such unit for the purpose of collective bargaining (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(y)).
29. Will provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with a federal taxpayer identification number issued solely to the charter school and all required information regarding a bank account held solely in the name of the charter school (603 CMR 1.04(8)).
30. Will, in the event the board of trustees intends to procure substantially all educational services for the charter school through a contract with another person or entity, submit such contract for approval by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide for any necessary revisions and approval prior to the beginning of the contract period (Mass. Gen. Laws c. 71, § 89(k)(5)).
31. Will notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education immediately in writing of any change in circumstances that may have a significant impact on the school's ability to fulfill its goals or missions as stated in its charter (603 CMR 1.08(11)).
32. Will submit in writing to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education a request to amend its charter if the school plans to make a change to its operations as defined in 603 CMR 1.10.

Signature: 
Title: DIRECTOR
Date: JULY 28, 2018

Renewal Application Certification Statement

Name of School:	RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL
Location:	NEWBURYPORT MA

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application for renewal of a public school charter is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; that this application has been approved by the school's Board of Trustees; and that, if awarded a renewed charter, the school shall continue to be open to all students on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement. This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.



7/25/2018


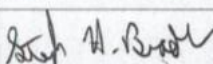

Signature: Chair of Board of Trustees

Date

Print/Type Name:	MARK BELANGER
Title (if designated):	CHAIRPERSON RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Date of approval by Board of Trustees:	JULY 25, 2018

APPENDIX C: DOCUMENTS

Certificate of Occupancy/Occupancy Permit/Certificate of Use and Occupancy Fire Inspection Certificate/Fire Department Field Inspection Report Building Safety Inspection/Certificate of Inspection

 <div style="text-align: center;"> The Commonwealth of Massachusetts City of Newburyport New and Renewal Certificate of Inspection </div>						
In accordance with 780 CMR, Chapter 1 (The Sixth Edition of the Massachusetts State Building Code) and Chapter 304 of the Acts of 2004 (an Act to further enhance fire and life safety), this certificate of inspection is issued to the premise or structure or part thereof as herein identified.						
Issued to	Identify Name of Establishment					Certificate No.
	River Valley Charter School					PSC 303
Located at	Identify property address including street number, name, city or town and county					Certificate Expiration
	2 Perry Way Newburyport MA Essex					8/24/2018
Use Group Classification(s)	Basement	First Floor	Second Floor	Third Floor	Fourth Floor	Other
Allowable Occupant Load						
288 Students, 46 Adult Staff This certificate of inspection is hereby issued by the undersigned to certify that the premise, structure or portion thereof as herein specified has been inspected for general fire and life safety features. It shall be framed behind clear glass and/or laminated and posted in a conspicuous place within the space as directed by the undersigned inspectors. <i>Failure to post or tampering with the contents of the certificate is strictly prohibited.</i>						
Name of Municipal Deputy Fire Chief	Stephen H. Bradbury	Name of Municipal Building Commissioner	Peter Binette	Date of Inspection	8/24/2017	
Signature of Municipal Deputy Fire Chief		Signature of Municipal Building Commissioner		Date of Issuance	8/24/2017	

Flammable Compound and Liquids Certificate

None on site.

Health Inspection/Health Permit

River Valley Charter School has been exempted by the local Health Inspector due to the fact that the school does not prepare food.

Insurance Certificates

PI-CXL-002 (04/13)	
POLICY NUMBER: PHUB630076	
 <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;">PHILADELPHIA INSURANCE COMPANIES</div> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">A Member of the Tokio Marine Group</p>	<p>One Bala Plaza, Suite 100 Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania 19004 610.617.7900 Fax 610.617.7940 PHLY.com</p>
COMMERCIAL UMBRELLA LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY DECLARATIONS	
Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company	<p>28471 Eastern Insurance Group, LLC PO Box 590 65 Parker St Newburyport, MA 01950 (978) 462-4434</p>
NAMED INSURED: River Valley Charter School	
MAILING ADDRESS: 2 Captain Perry Way Newburyport, MA 01950-4001	
POLICY PERIOD: FROM 07/01/2018 TO 07/01/2019 AT 12:01 A.M. STANDARD TIME AT YOUR MAILING ADDRESS SHOWN ABOVE	
IN RETURN FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE PREMIUM, AND SUBJECT TO ALL THE TERMS OF THIS POLICY, WE AGREE WITH YOU TO PROVIDE THE INSURANCE AS STATED IN THIS POLICY.	
LIMITS OF INSURANCE	
EACH OCCURRENCE LIMIT (LIABILITY COVERAGE)	\$ 5,000,000
PERSONAL & ADVERTISING INJURY LIMIT	\$ 5,000,000
	Any one person or organization
PRODUCTS COMPLETED OPERATIONS AGGREGATE LIMIT	\$ 5,000,000
GENERAL AGGREGATE LIMIT (LIABILITY COVERAGE) (except with respect to Auto Liability and Products Completed Operations)	\$ 5,000,000
RETAINED LIMIT	
RETAINED LIMIT:	\$ 10,000
Page 1 of 5 Includes copyrighted material of Insurance Services Office, Inc., with permission.	



PHILADELPHIA
INSURANCE COMPANIES

A Member of the Tokio Marine Group

One Bala Plaza, Suite 100
Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania 19004
610.617.7900 Fax 610.617.7940
PHLY.com

Philadelphia Indemnity Insurance Company

COMMON POLICY DECLARATIONS

Policy Number: PHPK1823427

Named Insured and Mailing Address:

River Valley Charter School
2 Captain Perry Way
Newburyport, MA 01950-4001

Producer: 28471

Eastern Insurance Group, LLC
PO Box 590
65 Parker St
Newburyport, MA 01950

Policy Period From: 07/01/2018 **To:** 07/01/2019

(978)462-4434

at 12:01 A.M. Standard Time at your mailing
address shown above.

Business Description: Other Specialty School

IN RETURN FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE PREMIUM, AND SUBJECT TO ALL THE TERMS OF THIS
POLICY, WE AGREE WITH YOU TO PROVIDE THE INSURANCE AS STATED IN THIS POLICY.

THIS POLICY CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING COVERAGE PARTS FOR WHICH A PREMIUM IS
INDICATED. THIS PREMIUM MAY BE SUBJECT TO ADJUSTMENT.

	PREMIUM
Commercial Property Coverage Part	
Commercial General Liability Coverage Part	
Commercial Crime Coverage Part	
Commercial Inland Marine Coverage Part	
Commercial Auto Coverage Part	
Businessowners	
Workers Compensation	

Total \$

FORM (S) AND ENDORSEMENT (S) MADE A PART OF THIS POLICY AT THE TIME OF ISSUE
Refer To Forms Schedule

*Omits applicable Forms and Endorsements if shown in specific Coverage Part/Coverage Form Declarations

CPD- PIIC (06/14)

Secretary

President and CEO

Asbestos Inspection and Management Plan



RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL
montessori made public

River Valley Charter School AHERA Designated Person Statement

As the Designated Person for the River Valley Charter School, I assure that the responsibilities assigned to the Local Education Agency (LEA) pursuant to the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), 40 C.F.R. §763.84 have been or will be met.

Andrew Willemssen
Director
River Valley Charter School
2 Perry Way, Newburyport, MA 01950
awillemssen@rivervalleycharter.org
978-465-0065

2 Perry Way, Newburyport, MA 01950
Phone 978-465-0065 Fax 978-465-0119
rves@rivervalleycharter.org



RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

montessori made public

ANNUAL ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT LETTER For School Year 2017-2018

May 23, 2018

Dear Staff and Families,

A copy of the River Valley Charter School's Asbestos Management Plan is available at the school's front office for your review during regular school hours. The school building was constructed in 1999, at which time the use of asbestos containing materials was prohibited. Nevertheless, RVCS is committed to assuring the safety of all persons within the school building, and has developed an Asbestos Management Plan accordingly.

Inquiries regarding the management of asbestos-containing materials in our school should be directed to the school's Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) Designated Person, Andy Willemsen, who can be reached at 2 Perry Way, Newburyport, MA, and awillemsen@rivervalleycharter.org, or at 978-465-0065.

Andy Willemsen
Director
River Valley Charter School

2 Perry Way, Newburyport, MA 01950
Phone 978-465-0065 Fax 978-465-0119
rvcs@rivervalleycharter.org

SAVA.ARCHITECTS

19L. Inn Street, Newburyport, Ma. 01950 .

978.417.9324

Ms. Janet McKenna
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development
Department of Labor Statistics
One Federal Street, Building 101-3
Springfield, MA 01105

Dear Ms. McKenna,

I was an original architect in the design and construction of the River Valley Charter School, 2 Perry Way, Newburyport, MA in 1999. I was also the principal architect for the addition to the school in 2010.

To the best of my knowledge, no asbestos containing materials were specified or used in the original construction of the school building or the construction of the 2010 addition.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Regards,

John Sava



John Sava Architects
19 L Inn Street, Newburyport,
Massachusetts, 01950
(978) 417-9324

JOHN@JOHNSAVAARCHITECTS.COM

JOHNSAVAARCHITECTS.COM

Lead and Copper in Schools Maintenance Checklist



Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Water Resources – Drinking Water Program
Lead & Copper in Schools Maintenance Checklist

Instructions:

This checklist should be completed for each school or childcare facility (Early Education and Care program) in the Commonwealth. This checklist is designed to help determine if Lead or Copper is likely to be a problem in your facility's drinking water and will enable you to determine appropriate remediation actions if needed.

Important:
When filling out forms on the computer, use only the tab key to move your cursor - do not use the return key.




A. General

River Valley Charter School
Name of School or Early Education and Care Facility (EEC)

River Valley Charter
School District or EEC Headquarters

2 Perry Way
Street Address of School or EEC Facility

Andrew Willemsen
Contact Person's Name at School, Program, or Facility (for LCCA Program)

978-465-0065
Phone #

EEC Regional Office
Newburyport
City/Town

01950
Zip Code

awillemsen@rivervalleycharter.org
Email Address

Is part of your Facility at another location (other than the one listed above)? ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, please provide the following information:

Name of off-site facility/building	Street Address	City/Town	Zip Code
------------------------------------	----------------	-----------	----------

Is your school/facility a "Hosted" facility, i.e., does your school/facility share the space it occupies with another school/facility that is also submitting a Lead & Copper in Schools Maintenance Checklist? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF NO, SKIP TO SECTION C

B. Host Facility Information

Name of "Host" facility that your facility is located within.

Contact Person's Name Phone # Email Address

SKIP TO SECTION F

C. Public Water System

Is your school/facility a Public Water System (PWS), i.e., do you have your own well which supplies 25+ people per day? ☐ YES ☒ NO

IF YES, SKIP TO SECTION E

D. Drinking Water Practices (2005-Present)

Have you previously submitted a lead & copper checklist to MassDEP? ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, what was the date of the last lead & copper checklist submitted?
mm/dd/yyyy

Has your public water system (PWS – supplying water to your facility) collected lead & copper samples at your school/facility? ☒ YES ☐ NO

If yes, what was the date of the last sample?
08/22/2015
mm/dd/yyyy

checklist_52080_1546 • 04/2016

Page 1 of 3



Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Water Resources – Drinking Water Program
Lead & Copper in Schools Maintenance Checklist

Beside your PWS samples, has your school/facility or another party hired by your facility taken lead & copper sample(s) in the last 12 months? ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, what was the date of the last sample?

mm/dd/yyyy

If yes, who conducted the sampling?

Do you have a plumbing profile of your school or facility? (e.g. a map of all the plumbing lines and equipment with the type of material noted.) ☒ YES ☐ NO

Has your school or facility prepared a sampling plan showing all fixtures, their ID numbers, and the last date they were sampled for lead or copper? ☐ YES ☒ NO

Do you keep your lead & copper testing results and other records in a file onsite? ☒ YES ☐ NO

If no, where are the records kept?

Name of off-site facility/building

Street Address

City/Town

Zip Code

Has every LCCA fixture at the location been sampled for lead & copper at least once? ☐ YES ☒ NO

Did any samples exceed the Action Level for lead (0.015 ppm) or copper (1.3 ppm) ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, check all remediation actions taken:

☐ Fixtures Removed

☐ Retesting

☐ Re-piping

☐ Flushing

☐ Bottled Water (Temporary)

☐ Bottled Water (Permanent)

☐ Treatment Unit Installed

☐ Notice Sent to Parents

Does your school or facility use bottled water as your main source of drinking water for students? ☐ YES ☒ NO

If yes, are students required to bring bottled water with them to your school or facility?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Does your school or facility use bottled water as your main source of drinking water for staff? ☐ YES ☒ NO

Does your school or facility use bottled water as your main source of drinking water for visitors? ☐ YES ☒ NO

Does your facility have water coolers? ☒ YES ☐ NO

If yes, has your school or facility checked the bands and models of water coolers, and compared them to the listing of "banned" water coolers in Appendix E of the [EPA 3Ts Toolkit](#)? ☒ YES ☐ NO

Have all EPA "banned" water coolers found at your facility been disconnected and removed? Disconnecting "banned" water coolers is only an interim measure. They must be removed from the facility so they are never inadvertently reconnected in the future.

☐ Disconnected and removed

☐ Disconnected but not removed

☐ Neither disconnected nor removed

☒ No "banned" water coolers found on site

Is the service line a "lead" service line? The service line is the pipe leading from the PWS main line in the street outside your facility into your facility. ☐ YES ☒ NO

Describe your current school/facility lead & copper in drinking water program. Please provide a short description in the box provided and attach a copy.



Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Water Resources – Drinking Water Program
Lead & Copper in Schools Maintenance Checklist

School built in 1999. No lead in the plumbing system.

E. Co-Located Facilities

Do you have any other schools, programs (collaborative, special education, etc.) or Early Education and Care Facilities (covered by your checklist and sampling plan) within your school or facility?

☐ YES

☒ NO

If yes, provide the following information about the school, program, or facility.

Name of School, Program, or Facility

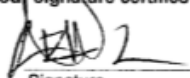
Contact Person's Name

Phone #

Email Address

F. Signature

Your signature certifies that all information provided above is current and accurate to the best of your knowledge.


Signature

Andrew Willemsen
Print Full Name

Director
Job Title

07/18/2018
Date
(mm/dd/yyyy)

APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

RVCS Board of Trustee Membership

School Year	Total Membership	Members Joining	Members Departing
2014-2015	16	8	5
2015-2016	15	3	1
2016-2017	14	5	2
2017-2018	15	4	3

APPENDIX E: APPLICATION CONTENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Cover page labeled “Application for Renewal of a Public School Charter” that lists the following information:
 - ✓ School name
 - ✓ School address
 - ✓ School contact information: name, title, telephone, and email address
 - ✓ Date that the school’s board of trustees voted approval of the Application
 - ✓ Application submission date
- ✓ Cover letter (optional)
- ✓ Table of contents listing all major sections and appendices
- ✓ Introduction to school (Table)
- ✓ Performance and plans section
 - ✓ Faithfulness to Charter
 - ✓ Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements
 - ✓ Criterion 2: Access and Equity
 - ✓ Criterion 3: Compliance
 - ✓ Criterion 4: Dissemination
 - ✓ Academic Program Success
 - ✓ Criterion 5: Student Performance
 - ✓ Criterion 6: Program Delivery
 - ✓ Criterion 7: Culture and Family Engagement
 - ✓ Organizational Viability
 - ✓ Criterion 8: Capacity
 - ✓ Criterion 9: Governance
 - ✓ Criterion 10: Finance
 - ✓ Plans for the Next Five Years
- ✓ Appendices
 - ✓ A. Accountability Plan Performance
 - ✓ B. Statement of Assurances and Certifications
 - ✓ Statement of Assurances
 - ✓ Renewal Application Certification Statement (required of Commonwealth and Horace Mann charters)

- ✓ C. Documentation of compliance with all building, health, safety, and insurance requirements.:
 - ✓ Up-to-date Certificate of Occupancy/Occupancy Permit/Certificate of Use and Occupancy
 - ✓ Up-to-date Fire Inspection Certificate/Fire Department Field Inspection Report
 - ✓ Up-to-date Building Safety Inspection/Certificate of Inspection
 - ✓ Up-to-date Flammable Compounds and Liquids Certificate (if applicable)
 - ✓ Up-to-date Health Inspection/Health Permit
 - ✓ Up-to-date Insurance Certificate(s)
 - ✓ Asbestos Inspection and Management Plan (if applicable)
 - ✓ Lead Inspection Certification (if applicable)
 - ✓ Lead and Copper in Schools Maintenance Checklist
- ✓ D. Additional Information, as required in these *Guidelines*
 - Board of trustees turnover

ACCOUNTABILITY ATTACHMENT FOR MEASURE 1A: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY education that transforms lives

Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public School Sector

Montessori Teachers

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

Administration

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

Recruitment/Parent Education

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

Curriculum/Environment

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

Assessment

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

Professional Development

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

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

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