

River Valley Charter School Annual Report

2011-2012

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INTRODUCTORY DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

River Valley Charter School, situated in Newburyport, is a regional school serving Newburyport, Amesbury, Salisbury, Newbury, and West Newbury. The school has been in operation for 13 years and is chartered to serve a maximum of 288 students in grades K through eight, with its current charter term ending on June 30, 2014. As of August 1, 2011, River Valley served 288 children in kindergarten through grade eight, which is the current grade span. In the elementary grades, each head teacher works with a full-time assistant teacher. The Middle School (grades seven and eight) consisted of 55 students, as well as a team leader and five full-time teachers. Our full-day kindergarten program served 32 students.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to present the River Valley Charter School Annual Report for 2011-2012. As a public Montessori school, our challenge is to remain faithful to the Montessori philosophy while meeting the requirements placed on all Massachusetts public schools, including the Massachusetts Common Core Standards, the MCAS, and No Child Left Behind. I am pleased to report that River Valley continues to meet this challenge. As shown in this Annual Report, River Valley maintains a highly qualified, Montessori-trained faculty and adheres to the Montessori tradition in its teaching and learning activities. In addition, its students consistently score well on national and state-level standardized tests.

River Valley families remain highly engaged in the school community. Seventy-two percent of River Valley families reported a total of 7,377 volunteer hours, and 52 percent made a donation to the River Valley Foundation.

I am also happy to report that River Valley is financially sound. As a public charter school, River Valley receives the bulk of its funding in the form of per-student quarterly tuition payments from the state of Massachusetts. Since the school's founding, the administration and Board of Trustees have continued to practice conservative fiscal management. This has allowed the school to accumulate estimated net assets of \$1,625,921 as of June 30th, which will ensure organizational viability in the face of uncertain future funding levels.

Interest in attending River Valley remains strong. This year, 144 students entered our enrollment lottery for the 2011-2012 school year. As a result, our waiting list continues to grow and currently stands at 830 students, which will ensure that River Valley will continue at our Charter-authorized full enrollment of 288 students.

River Valley currently leases our school building at 2 Perry Way. Over the years, there have been several formal efforts to identify a new, better home for the school. None of those efforts were successful in identifying an appropriate site – which could provide an improved physical environment, in a centralized location, at a price that River Valley could afford. The most recent effort resulted in a decision to expand the school at the current site by creating a gymnasium, art room, music room, and an expanded library. Completed early last year, this addition has proven invaluable in supporting River Valley's academic program, and it has brought the facility to a condition that will allow it to fulfill the school's long-term needs over the next 10 years.

This year, the Board of Trustees began a process to evaluate purchasing the existing school building. Given the current real estate market, and historically low interest rates, we believe that a purchase of the building now will allow River Valley to reduce total annual facility costs and devote more resources to the academic program within the constraints of annual tuition payments. The Board is early in the process, but we hope to complete the purchase as early as next year.

This year has also seen a transition in leadership of the River Valley Board of Trustees. In January, Chairman Scott Jordan stepped down after serving in that role for three and a half years. As a community, we are indebted to Scott for his tireless dedication and strong leadership during a critical time in the life of River Valley. His tenure as Chairman included the hiring of a new school Director, renewal of the school's charter, and expansion

of the current school facility. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the entire school community, I want to thank Scott for his service.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I also wish to thank Jeanne Schultz and the faculty and staff of River Valley for their daily hard work and dedication. Finally, I wish to thank the parents who have entrusted River Valley Charter School with the education of their children.

Dana Lowell, Chair
River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

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.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PLANS

The following sections report on our progress toward Accountability Plan goals and provide additional data in regards to the Common School Performance Criteria. The numbered items correspond to the River Valley Charter School Accountability Plan, dated September 29, 2009, on file at the school and at the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Faithfulness to the Charter

River Valley's mission is to provide an authentic and complete Montessori program within the public sphere. It is also to integrate regional history, culture, and ecology into the learning process, so that students become aware of both the larger world beyond school and their places in it. This, in turn, is key to the last part of the school mission, which is preparedness for future schools, careers, and civic life.

Accountability Plan Objective 1: Meet nationally recognized standards for high-quality Montessori education

Measurement 1.1: Eighty percent of the pedagogical criteria will be met as determined by an independent Montessori audit done every two years.

Elizabeth Slade, a nationally recognized Montessori consultant, conducted our Montessori audit in January 2011. Ms. Slade used the Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools checklist to evaluate our program and found that we met 95 percent of the criteria listed. Below is a summary of her commendations.

- Environment is one of the key aspects of a Montessori program and is seen as an integral part of the students' education. River Valley has a lovely, warm feeling throughout. Spaces are clean, organized and welcoming. Parents, children and staff all seem to feel at home in the school, with a positive and happy countenance. The children clearly owned the space, offering unsolicited directions or assistance as hosts and hostesses of the building.
- Another essential aspect of a Montessori program is the trained guide who holds a deep understanding of the mission. All of the classrooms in the school are led by teachers with or in Montessori training, the majority of whom have been at the school for more than three years. In addition, they all have an assistant teacher or a co-teacher working with them full time.
- Dr. Montessori describes in her writing a process a child goes through called "normalization." A "normalized" classroom environment then is one where all or most of the children have come to a place of self-regulation with a focus on learning. This is a great achievement for any classroom or any school. Throughout each classroom visit, it was evident that River Valley has reached normalization within the

classrooms and throughout the school as a whole. There were no students who were intentionally disruptive to the classroom, with a majority focused on learning.

- All human beings have a need and a tendency towards order, and Montessori schools respect and reflect this need through the creation of a predictable and established routine. This keeps the emphasis on the learning and student energy focused on solving academic problems instead of environmental problems. Procedures and routines of the school, as well as in each classroom were clearly understood and embedded into daily living. The students knew and followed them without reminders from adults, often reminding one another.
- The value on the arts is apparent, with beautiful spaces for Art and Music as well as high quality instruction.
- It is evident that significant resources have been invested in supporting struggling students. Support is available at each level in both math and literacy, as well as a full time school counselor and a full special education staff.
- Parents are very happy with the school and the quality of education their children are receiving. They appreciate the school's intimate climate and that their children are known and cared for at River Valley.

Measurement 1.2: Maintain membership affiliations with the American Montessori Society

As required by our Accountability Plan, we are a professional affiliate school member of the American Montessori Society (AMS), taking advantage of the resources available nationally from this organization for the benefit of teachers and parents. In addition, River Valley is also a member of the Montessori Schools of Massachusetts and the North American Montessori Teachers' Association.

Accountability Plan Objective 2: Acquire and maintain community partners for both curriculum and service in our surrounding region. River Valley teachers will individually cultivate curriculum partners, as well as create opportunities for community service.

Measurement 2.1: School records will reflect the development of at least three curriculum partners for each level as well as the involvement of the school in community service.

Partnerships are a key component for the teachers, students and parents of River Valley Charter School. It is through the interactions with community organizations within our region that we are able to enrich our curriculum and, in turn, serve our community. Through the relationships we develop, we are meeting the goals of our mission: to be rooted in the history, culture and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.

We identify two types of partnerships as part of our Partnership Program. The first type of partnership is the classroom curriculum partnership, which is developed and established with environmental and historical associations and human service organizations both national and international in scope. Partnerships in this area are within individual classes or are school-wide in nature. The second type is a school-wide partnership. This type consists of relationships with schools and universities, local community groups, Montessori organizations and training centers, and human services groups. These partnerships address the school-wide community and benefit both the partner and River Valley.

This year, we continued our partnership with the Newburyport Tree Committee. Elementary 2 (E2: grades four through six) students surveyed possible sites and then planted approximately 40 trees throughout Newburyport. Our students have planted close to 600 trees since this project began in 2005.

Middle School students worked with the Global Art Project to create a peace-themed work of art, which was exchanged with a school in Morocco. They also created a "hands across the world" piece for a large Global Art installation. This group of students also worked with a local parent/activist to develop a curriculum based on activism and current events.

In a school-wide partnership with Next Step Living, our school participated in an energy assessment. This service was also offered to families and employees of the school.

Pen pals connect our children to others in the world. Kinderhaus students have a partnership through the Journey North program, a pen-pal project through which students learn about the annual migration pattern of the monarch butterfly throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Our Kinderhaus students also maintain a partnership with the Newburyport Fire Department. The students visit the local fire station, and firefighters also come to the classrooms to talk about health, safety and community.

Middle School students organized a school-wide Walk for Water, in which students in grades one through eight walked from the school to a local pond to gather water and return to the school. This event was to show students the plight of those who must walk miles daily just to obtain clean water.

Elementary 1 (E1: grades one through three) students have a partnership with Donna Seim, a local author in Newburyport, who has connections with Providenciales Primary School in Turks and Caicos Islands. Through this partnership, students have learned about another culture by exchanging letters. Donna also visited this class several times during the school year to read her own works and those of the children.

River Valley hosted author Tony Abbott this April in our Kinderhaus and elementary classrooms. Mr. Abbott discussed reading, writing, and storytelling, as well as how to use one's imagination to generate ideas. He then answered questions posed by the students. Mr. Abbott is known for works such as "Firegirl" and "Danger Guys."

Our Middle School students participated in a model United Nations simulation at Northeastern and Bentley Universities, debating and providing leadership for their representative countries.

Our partnership with the Salvation Army enabled us to use their facilities for the Middle School's Stop Hunger Now event, and, in turn, students volunteered to ring bells during the holiday season.

Elementary 2 students prepared and served meals through the Newburyport soup kitchen program. They participated in serving both lunch and dinner to the elderly and underserved population on an ongoing basis.

The Art of Expression group in our Middle School visited the Peace, Love Studio in Providence, Rhode Island, during their spring trip to establish a new partnership. Next year, they will work on strengthening their ties to this organization. These students also participated in a day of student poetry through MassPoetry.org at MIT in Boston in celebration of Poetry Month in April.

One of our E1 classes worked with the Audubon Society to study migration and hibernation, and to learn what happens to the animals when we can no longer see them. The class published a book called "Who Am I?" that was inspired by their studies.

An E2 class partnered with the organizers of Water Day 2012 to benefit Charity Water, a non-profit organization committed to bringing clean drinking water to countries in need. Water Day organizers came to the school to talk to the students, who, in turn, volunteered at their June 9 event by hosting booths and games and performing a water play.

A group of Middle School students worked as mentors to our Kinderhaus students throughout the school year. They visited the younger students every Thursday morning to help them complete work and practice their reading skills. This same group of Middle School students also worked with the Audubon Society on the Salt Marsh Science Project. In the fall, students helped to collect information on the fish, salinity and plant species in the salt marsh. They used this data to analyze trends and presented their findings in a poster display at the Salt Marsh Science Conference.

Our Kinderhaus and E1 students participated in a peace project called "Sing Peace Around the World" in honor of the United Nations' International Day of Peace in September. They walked to Waterfront Park in Newburyport to share their message of peace. These students also gathered for a multi-cultural festival of lights in celebration of the winter solstice in December.

Our partnerships strengthen our ties to the community, and our students develop skills in becoming self-reliant, productive members of society. These partnerships fulfill the requirements laid forth in our charter: to acquire and maintain curriculum and community service partnerships in the community. Teachers and students are actively involved in the development of the partnerships and share ownership of the work done for the community at large.

Classroom Curriculum Partners 2011-2012						
Curriculum Partner	Focus Areas	School-Wide Involvement	Kinderhaus	E1	E2	Middle School
American Montessori Society, NYC	Professional Development, Dissemination	X				
Amoskeag Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NH	Marine/Estuarine Ecology (salmon nursery and release program)			X		
Bentley Model UN, Bentley University, Waltham	Global Studies, Leadership Initiative					X
Custom House Maritime Museum, Newburyport	Community Outreach	X				
Sue Doyle, Naturopathic Physician, Newburyport	Personal Health and Wellness, Education	X			X	
Free the Children	International Children's Rights Organization					X
Global Art Project	Peace Studies; Exchange Program with School in Morocco					X
Heifer International	Global Studies, Leadership, Culture, Hunger Awareness Meal					X
Historic New England, Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm, Newbury	History, Ecology, Agriculture, Culture				X	
Joppa Flats Education Center, Mass. Audubon, Newburyport	Bird Banding, Research, Ecology, Salt Marsh Science Project		XX	X		X
Journey North	Ecology (monarch butterfly migration), Cultural Exchange (pen pals)		XX			
Kids as Peacemakers, Newburyport	Peace Education	X				
Maudslay State Park, Newburyport	Ecology (forests and fields study)				XX	
Montessori Schools of Massachusetts	Professional Development, Dissemination	X				
Newburyport Fire Department	Health, Safety, Community		XX			
Newburyport Tree Committee	Ecology (tree planting project)				XXXX	
Next Step Living	Energy Assessment	X				
Opportunity Works, Newburyport	Community Building, Cultural Awareness					X

Curriculum Partner	Focus Areas	School-Wide Involvement	Kinderhaus	E1	E2	Middle School
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Newbury	History, Culture, Ecology			XX	X	X
Pennies for Poverty, Newburyport	Community Service Opportunities for Students			X		
Port Rehabilitation, Newburyport	Community Service Opportunities for Students					X
Rotary Club, Newburyport	Community Service, Reading Partnership	X				
Salem State University	Collaborative Faculty Grant*, Dissemination, Interns**, Reading/Writing Course Site	X		* **	* **	
Salvation Army, Newburyport	Community Service Opportunities for Students					X
Donna Seim, Newburyport Author, and Providenciales Primary School, Turks and Caicos Islands	Literacy, Cultural Exchange (pen pals)			X		
Soup Kitchen, Newburyport	Community Service Opportunities for Students				X	
Turning Point, Inc., Newburyport	Community Service Opportunities for Students			X		
UNICEF	Global Awareness		XX	XXXX	XXXX	X
United Nations Association of Greater Boston	Global Studies, Leadership					X
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary	Boating Safety					X
United States Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Parker River Wildlife Refuge	River Study, Ecology (Pepperweed Pull), Geology				XXXX	
United States National Guard	Flag Etiquette				X	
Water Day 2012	Global Awareness, Community Service				X	X
Totals		8	8	14	23	13

As required by our charter and Accountability Plan, River Valley students remain highly committed to community service. They have greatly exceeded their goals for community service hours again during the 2011-2012 school year. This can be seen when looking at the hours reported for our exit-level students (Kinderhaus, grade three, grade six, and grade eight). Our 33 Kinderhaus students had a total of 164.25 hours this year, which averages to about five hours per child. Our 33 E1 students performed 5,823.5 hours, for an average of 176 hours per child. Our 32 E2 students had a total of 4,138.75 hours, for an average of 129 hours each. Finally, our 25 Middle School students performed 3,267 hours of community service, for an average of 131 hours per student.

Overall, our exit-level students performed a total of 13,393.5 hours of community service this year. While this number is impressive, it does not even include non-exit-level students in grades one, two, four, five and seven.

River Valley students are genuinely interested in using their talents and resources in service to their school and home communities. The modeling by parents and faculty in their service to the school and the community at large has been an inspiration to our students, who have become involved in humanitarian work through both classroom activities and personal endeavors. Their involvement is a work of the heart that has helped create a school culture for generosity for other humans' needs and for the care of the environment both near and far.

Our school community is committed to the concept of giving both time and money. Closely related to many of our curriculum partnerships, these outreach activities are diverse and also meet a particular need of the partnership. The philosophy behind community service at River Valley is that the projects are student driven and grow from their work in the curriculum. This approach leads to experiences of substance for our students. The widely held view of community service as a service-learning component in education best describes these experiences. Following are examples of community service projects completed by our students during the 2011-2012 school year.

Environmental Projects

- Weekly recycling by our Green Team, an interactive program for students and teachers to learn how to reduce, reuse, and recycle classroom materials.
- An E1 classroom raised salmon fingerlings and released them into the Merrimack River. They also participated in two river clean-ups this year.

Humanitarian Projects

- Our E1 students collected donations of gift wrapping for the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center in Newburyport, and a group of Middle School students volunteered to wrap gifts at a local shopping area.
- Middle School students volunteered at Port Media, working on public service announcements for local non-profit organizations.
- A class coordinated a school-wide weekly collection of food for the Pettengill House, a local food pantry for those in need.
- Middle school students from our local service project group worked on a local farm to help make the property ready for their alpacas.
- An E1 class continued its work in intergenerational activity at Atria Merrimack Place, a retirement facility in Newburyport. Students read with the elders and listened to stories about their life experiences.
- Our Middle School students donated more than \$300 each to Heifer International and the Salvation Army through their fund-raising efforts.
- All of our E2 students took part in a pepperweed pull with the Parker River Wildlife Refuge to help rid the local area of the invasive plant species.
- Our school served as a site for the filming of a public service announcement by the Sodexo Foundation. The PSA was aimed at raising awareness of the issue of childhood hunger in the United States by educating the public about the negative impact of hunger on the development of children. Two teachers and about a dozen students participated in this project.
- Our Director is a member of the Rotary Club of Newburyport, and she worked on several community service initiatives throughout the year.
- E1 students raised awareness and funds for Pennies for Poverty, organized two food drives, and donated more than 300 cans of food to the Salvation Army.
- Middle School students worked with disabled clients of Opportunity Works in Newburyport to design and facilitate a movement/exercise program to address a variety of physical and social needs.
- One E1 class worked with Turning Point Inc. to support homeless families by raising money, making cards and crafts for children in need, and assembling Easter baskets.

- Middle School students provided activities for residents at Port Rehabilitation, such as playing board games, and providing craft projects.

International Projects

- Middle School students once again participated in the Free the Children project. Students hosted a Hunger Awareness Dinner and took part in a fast to raise money for Free the Children.
- Our K-grade eight students' 2011-2012 trick-or-treat efforts resulted in a gift of close to \$350 to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. The money helps children in developing countries survive through the provision of vaccines, nutrition, and shelter.

Also, there are many ongoing community service projects within the school. Volunteer efforts included: classroom-to-classroom "reading buddies," set-up for concerts and other events, our "flag team" (students who raise and lower the American flag on the school's front lawn each day), and older students acting as escorts for Kinderhaus children during dismissal.

The relevance of curriculum partnerships and community service learning projects is ultimately global in perspective. The work focuses on leadership, implications for peace education, and connections for learning about cultures, governments and peoples of nations throughout the world and their relationships to the Merrimack River Valley region.

Implementation of Mission, Vision, and Educational Philosophy

River Valley Charter School provides a 21st century Montessori education that prepares students to be compassionate citizens with the skills to be effective, responsible leaders in a rapidly changing, deeply interconnected world. Our students are known for their academic strengths, self confidence, critical thinking and enthusiasm for learning, and they excel at the high schools of their choice. Our educational program exemplifies academic excellence as a nationally recognized public school that demonstrates faithfulness to Montessori methodology while delivering the academic rigor defined in the Massachusetts Common Core Standards. Our ongoing curriculum partnerships provide students with opportunities to learn about the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley.

Implementation of the Governance/Leadership Structure

The River Valley Board of Trustees may consist of up to 17 members, as well as three non-voting, ex officio members (including the school Director and a faculty representative). The work of the Board is done through eight committees. These committees are: executive, grievance, director evaluation, committee on trustees, accountability, finance, development and site. Board members usually participate on at least one committee, which generally meets once a month, or as needed. The Board developed a five-year strategic plan in 2009-2010, and has implemented the second phase of this plan during the 2011-2012 school year.

Academic Program Success

The River Valley Assessment Toolset combines the Montessori Scope and Sequence with the Massachusetts Common Core Standards and provides integrated learning objectives for each of the planes of development served by the school. Our assessment system measures a set of character-building and developmental skills that promote student success as well as academic achievement.

Accountability Plan Objective 3: RVCS students will realize their individual potential in academic, personal and social development.

We've seen our alumni students realize their individual potential as they move forward in their academic careers after graduating from River Valley. These students benefit from a high-quality Montessori education as they move on to other schools. This is evident in the many accomplishments of our graduate students. Outcomes expected from a Montessori education include academic preparation, intrinsic motivation, civility,

social responsibility, autonomy, leadership skills, confidence, creativity, originality, and spiritual awareness. We define spiritual awareness as a basic appreciation for life and the human condition.

Students from the River Valley graduating class of 2012 have been accepted at some of the top regional private schools, including Pingree School, St. John’s Prep, Phillips Exeter, and Berwick Academy.

Measurement 3.1: We expect at least 80 percent of our students exiting each level to meet or exceed the documented learning objectives for each of the four levels (Kinderhaus, Elementary 1, Elementary 2, and Middle School) in each of the following areas: mathematics, language arts, cultural (science and humanities), critical thinking, creative problem solving, and personal and social development (self-motivation, self-reliance, respect for the prepared environment, and community service).

In 2011-2012, River Valley students have exceeded exit-level goals in all areas. Students reached over 80 percent across all levels and in all areas.

These assessments are determined by the classroom teachers based on information from student portfolios, daily observations and recordings, curriculum tracking sheets, and progress reports, all components of the River Valley Toolset.

A whole-child approach to assessment, which includes the River Valley Toolset as well as external standardized tests, is used to measure a child’s progress throughout the year as well as to determine student retention. Comparisons of internal assessments against external test data show strong correlations, indicating evidence of the viability of our Assessment Toolset. In other words, a Kinderhaus student with low TerraNova test scores will most likely demonstrate similar performance weaknesses on his progress report, student portfolio and other Toolset documentation. Based on this evidence, this child may be retained or be considered a candidate for additional support services.

The results for 2011-2012 are as follows.

Percent of Students Who Met or Exceeded Documented Learning Objectives				
	Kinderhaus	Elementary 1	Elementary 2	Middle School
<i>Mathematics</i>	94	97	94	100
<i>Language Arts</i>	91	97	91	96
<i>Cultural (Science and Humanities)</i>	94	97	91	100
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	94	97	94	100
<i>Creative Problem Solving</i>	94	94	94	100
<i>Personal and Social Development</i>	97	97	91	92
• <i>Self-Motivation</i>	97	97	91	92
• <i>Self-Reliance</i>	94	94	91	96
• <i>Respect for the Prepared Environment</i>	97	97	94	100
• <i>Community Service</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	100

Notes to the table:

Cultural (Science and Humanities): All of our Middle School students have met or exceeded the documented learning objectives for both science and humanities.

Critical Thinking: Teachers use their observation logs and student portfolios to support their evaluations of these life skills.

Creative Problem Solving: Teachers use their observation logs and student portfolios to support their evaluations of these life skills.

Self-Motivation: This information is derived three times a year from individual student progress reports, and it is based on teacher observations. In Kinderhaus, this information comes from the progress report section called “work habits.” For E1 students, this information comes from the progress report sections called “personal development” and “work/study habits.” For E2 students, this information comes from the progress report sections called “personal/social development” and “work habits.” For Middle School students, this information comes from the progress report section called “personal development and life skills.”

Self-Reliance: This information is derived three times a year from individual student progress reports, and it is based on teacher observations. In Kinderhaus, this information comes from the progress report sections called “work habits.” For E1 students, this information comes from the progress report sections called “personal development” and “work/study habits.” For E2 students, this information comes from the progress report sections called “personal/social development” and “work habits.” For Middle School students, this information comes from the progress report section called “personal development and life skills.”

Respect for the Prepared Environment: By this we mean exhibiting appropriate behaviors so that every student can focus on learning, respect for the learning environment and materials, respect for others, and completion of the work cycle. This information is derived three times a year from individual student progress reports, and it is based on teacher observations.

Community Service: The River Valley Charter School Accountability Plan requires that students perform a total of 50 community service hours before graduation (pro-rated for students new to the school). All of the 25 graduating Middle School students acquired the desired number of hours, which means that 100 percent of the students had achieved the goal.

Measurement 3.2: Eighty-five percent of students will meet or exceed the national average on the TerraNova test annually.

River Valley administers the TerraNova test every year to every student. We use test results as an analytical tool to aid in setting future goals with the child. These results are also monitored over time to see the child’s progress and to determine appropriate instructional strategies.

Analysis of TerraNova testing for the 2011-2012 school year indicates that the Median National Percentile scores for River Valley students had a low range of 53 (which occurred in third-grade language) to a high range of 95 (which occurred in first-grade science). One hundred percent of our students scored at 50 percent or higher, exceeding our standard of having at least 85 percent of students meet or exceed the national average on each test.

Median National Percentile 2011-2012 – River Valley					
	Reading	Language	Math	Science	Social Studies
Kinderhaus	80	N/A	77	N/A	N/A
1st Grade	75	N/A	65	95	75
2nd Grade	66	N/A	76	76	65
3rd Grade	72	53	68	76	75
4th Grade	78	79	66	77	83
5th Grade	68	65	70	69	73
6th Grade	83	82	87	82	79
7th Grade	89	88	86	83	80
8th Grade	87	93	89	85	82

TerraNova Achievement Test, Version 3 – this test was norm-referenced in 2007.

MCAS

A total of 190 River Valley students in grades three through eight participated in the MCAS test in spring 2011. The results of these tests have been compared to state averages, as well as analyzed longitudinally to identify strengths and weaknesses of our academic programs.

Using the CPI calculations from the 2011-2012 No Child Left Behind Report Card for River Valley Charter School and for the state, one can see that River Valley students outperform their state peers on 11 of the 14 tests.

Following is a table of scores for the spring 2011 MCAS for both River Valley and the state. Note the small sample size (*n*) for River Valley, which is between 27 and 34 students.

Percentage of Students' Scores on MCAS in Each Category									
	River Valley					State			
	<i>n</i> =	A	P	NI	W	A	P	NI	W
3 rd -Grade Reading	33	3	76	21	0	11	50	30	9
3 rd -Grade Mathematics	33	3	58	27	12	14	52	25	10
4 th -Grade ELA	34	0	38	56	6	10	43	35	12
4 th -Grade Mathematics	34	3	15	71	12	15	32	42	11
5 th -Grade ELA	34	9	74	15	3	17	50	24	9
5 th -Grade Mathematics	34	24	38	26	12	25	34	26	15
5 th -Grade Science and Technology/Engineering	34	6	41	47	6	14	36	36	15
6 th -Grade ELA	34	24	65	12	0	17	51	23	9
6 th -Grade Mathematics	34	38	38	24	0	26	32	25	16
7 th -Grade ELA	27	30	63	7	0	14	59	21	6
7 th -Grade Mathematics	27	33	44	15	7	19	32	27	22
8 th -Grade ELA	28	21	71	7	0	20	59	15	6
8 th -Grade Mathematics	28	32	29	39	0	23	29	27	21
8 th -Grade Science and Technology/Engineering	28	0	43	57	0	4	35	42	19

(Key: A= Advanced P= Proficient NI= Needs Improvement W= Warning)

River Valley vs. State (CPI Scores)														
Grade	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	8
Test	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	Sci.	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	Sci.
River Valley	93.2	80.3	72.8	66.2	93.4	80.9	80.1	97.1	94.1	98.1	88.0	97.3	86.6	80.4
State	83.9	84.7	79.4	78.4	86.0	79.8	77.0	86.6	79.6	89.5	73.8	91.1	74.2	70.3

- On ELA tests, River Valley students scored an average of 8.175 CPI points higher than their state peers in grades five through eight.
- On Math tests, River Valley students scored an average of 10.55 CPI points higher than their state peers in grades five through eight.
- On Science and Technology tests, River Valley students scored an average of 6.6 CPI points higher than their state peers in grades five and eight.

Comparative Grade-Level Data: River Valley vs. Sending Districts and State

River Valley draws the majority of its students from Newburyport and Amesbury; these sending districts account for 58 percent and 16 percent of River Valley’s overall student enrollment, respectively. Following is a table of CPI scores for the spring 2011 MCAS for River Valley, its sending districts, and the state.

River Valley vs. District and State (CPI Scores)														
Grade	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	8
Test	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	Sci	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	Sci
Amesbury	87.9	87.3	85.0	84.2	90.9	80.6	86.9	90.9	73.8	90.8	72.6	89.9	79.2	75.7
Newburyport	88.7	87.7	83.1	78.0	91.2	79.1	82.5	93.6	80.2	94.9	81.1	97.6	87.4	82.6
Pentucket	89.5	91.2	87.3	80.9	93.8	85.4	86.8	95.7	89.7	92.5	77.0	93.2	78.3	76.2
Triton	86.1	87.6	84.3	82.9	90.1	86.0	86.1	94.7	92.5	94.0	84.2	94.0	82.8	80.7
River Valley	93.2	80.3	72.8	66.2	93.4	80.9	80.1	97.1	94.1	98.1	88.0	97.3	86.6	80.4
State	83.9	84.7	79.4	78.4	86.0	79.8	77.0	86.6	79.6	89.5	73.8	91.1	74.2	70.3

- River Valley students outperformed their Amesbury peers in 10 out of 14 tests.
- River Valley students outperformed their Newburyport peers in seven out of 14 tests.
- River Valley students scored higher than their state peers and peers from all sending districts on the following tests: third-grade ELA, sixth-grade ELA, sixth-grade math, seventh-grade ELA, and seventh-grade math.

Median Student Growth Percentile

In 2011, River Valley Charter School’s median student growth percentile (SGP) in the aggregate for English Language Arts was 52.5 for students across all grades, according to the No Child Left Behind Report Card. Students with disabilities had an SGP of 53.0 for ELA.

The aggregate SGP for all students in Math was 58.0 in 2011. Students with disabilities had an SGP of 71.0 for Math.

Measurement 3.3: School will meet federal criteria of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts each year.

River Valley did make AYP in English Language Arts, according to the 2011-2012 No Child Left Behind Report Card. In addition, the school has been identified as “no status” in ELA for accountability purposes.

Measurement 3.4: School will meet federal criteria of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Math each year.

River Valley did not meet AYP in Math on the 2011-2012 NCLB Report Card, but the school has been identified as “no status” in Math for accountability purposes.

Curriculum

In a Montessori education, curriculum, instruction and assessment are purposefully integrated. The River Valley curriculum integrates the Montessori Scope and Sequence with the Massachusetts Common Core Standards. This allows us to demonstrate clearly our accountability to public education standards and assures that our students will be fully prepared to enter the next phase of their education – public or private – when they graduate from River Valley. The whole-child approach of the Montessori curriculum integrates the development of self-reliance, independence, and respectfulness with academic work. As the child matures, he begins to use his personal and social skills to inform and evaluate his own work through individual and group self-assessment.

An interdisciplinary approach arises naturally from Montessori’s Five Great Lessons and from the project orientation of the Montessori curriculum. For example, two of the lessons are the Story of Language and the

Story of Numbers. As young elementary children study the Story of Language, they develop an understanding of grammar, imagining the first words that were uttered and what parts of speech they might have been. As they study the Story of Numbers, they might practice writing and computing in Egyptian, Chinese, and Roman numerals. This work is also integrated into continent studies.

In the summer of 2010, Montessori Made Manageable worked with the school to provide a K-8 curriculum correlation between the National Common Core Standards and the Montessori Scope and Sequence. In June 2011, faculty realigned the document with the Massachusetts Common Core Standards.

A pilot program in Spanish was conducted for Middle School students during the 2010-2011 school year. Scheduling prompted the cancellation of this pilot program for the 2011-2012 school year, and a technology course was instead added for Middle School students.

In the summer of 2011, using grants from local banks, we were able to reconfigure our Kinderhaus space and program by creating two classrooms from the one existing classroom. Previously, two teachers shared one space with a classroom of 32 students. Now, we have two distinct classroom spaces, with approximately 16 students each, and a lead teacher and assistant teacher in each classroom.

Instruction

Students are respected as both unique and competent, with an innate desire to learn. They are empowered to direct their own learning within the structure of the curriculum, with the close guidance of the teacher, and with an understanding of their individual learning styles. (In many Montessori schools, teachers are referred to as guides.) Each student has an individual learning plan, the design of which he takes an increasingly active role in as he matures.

Long work periods are a primary means of enabling focused, self-paced work in a Montessori school. Students are given a three-hour block of time devoted to learning, preferably in the morning. Despite the limited school day, the demand for special subjects (art, music, and physical education), and the difficulties in juggling schedules of part-time specialist teachers, all classrooms have the mornings undisturbed.

River Valley utilizes multi-age classrooms with three-year age spans in the elementary program and two-year spans in the Middle School to maximize curriculum options, encourage cooperation, and foster self-confidence in students who serve as role models. Our Elementary 1 program has had the full spectrum of 6- to 9-year-olds since opening. Elementary 2 started with 9- to 11-year-olds and expanded to ages 9 to 12 in the second year. Middle School started in 2001-2002 with seventh grade and reached its full capacity of seventh and eighth grades in 2002-2003. The Kinderhaus is a one-year program due to current early childhood funding restrictions.

Classrooms are arranged in learning centers, with clusters of student-sized tables and open areas for floor work. Students are allowed to move about the classroom and choose resources, working individually or in small groups. We were fortunate to be able to specify the build-out of the property we are leasing and so could design classrooms that are large, open, and light-filled and that include a “practical life” area with a sink, counters, and a tiled floor. Each class has the flexibility to set up its space as desired. While each classroom has a distinct personality, they all include live plants and animals, beautiful aesthetics, space divided according to areas of study, and a peace corner or quiet area.

Montessori materials are designed for many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract. Materials are self-correcting and reinforce autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation. We budgeted for and acquired a full complement of the beautiful and scientifically designed Montessori materials before opening in September 1999; our budget provides for maintaining this inventory. Our teachers and Montessori auditors have been pleased with how well stocked our classrooms are.

“Going out” is a basic Montessori element of experiencing the world outside the classroom in a meaningful way. Depending on the age of the student, this can mean anything from counting fish stock in a local river or serving meals at a soup kitchen to taking stewardship of farmland or apprenticing to a tradesperson or artisan.

River Valley teachers are expected to track individual student progress using the River Valley Toolset, which will be outlined in the Program Evaluation section. They must also guide students in their mastery of the concepts required for our documented learning objectives. These are conveyed to teachers through ongoing faculty meetings and to students through individualized learning plans and progress reports.

Classroom and School Environment

River Valley students must abide by a Code of Conduct that embraces the Montessori philosophy of grace and courtesy. Furthermore, faculty and parent handbooks set the tone for behavior and involvement. The Montessori environment is a balance of two interdependent elements: students' freedom to explore and think for themselves and their responsibility to work and learn within the community. With the autonomy to manage time and make choices, students acquire a sense of ownership for their own growth and development. They accept responsibility for setting goals and completing assignments, as well as for being contributing members of the group.

The classroom culture helps free teachers from constant disciplining and allows the students to concentrate on their work. This culture promotes an atmosphere of order, calm, and civility. There are three overriding expectations for students' behavior while at school:

- **Purposeful activity:** Students are engaged in their studies. Positive attitudes toward work develop as part of the classroom culture and are inculcated from the first day.
- **Responsibility:** Students take an active role in their own education. They help create their individual learning plans and weekly work plans. They learn to contribute to the maintenance and management of their own communities. They are expected to contribute to the larger community.
- **Respect:** Students are respectful of themselves, others, each other's work, their classrooms and materials, and the environment.

In continuing with a multi-year plan of establishing a school-wide behavior management system, we continued to implement an Open Circle program in our Kinderhaus and elementary classrooms. This program promotes a common language of behavior and communication between students and adults. Our Middle School uses a similar process to enable students to meet weekly to discuss their needs as a community.

During the 2011-2012 school year, there were no instances of student disciplinary actions such as suspensions or expulsions.

Diverse Learners

Our Montessori philosophy strives to focus on the individual strengths of students, including those who may be at risk. This year, our special education coordinator trained our faculty and staff on Response to Intervention principles. A group of teachers received additional state training and will share their knowledge with the entire faculty.

In order to support all learners, River Valley has a pre-referral process which is initiated through the Student Support Team (SST) with information gathered through RTI. Specific accommodations such as provision of graphic organizers or study guides, use of instructional technology, and tutoring are discussed as options to improve student success and achievement prior to a special education referral. An inclusion model is successfully used to integrate services into the classroom setting.

We do not currently have any ELL students, but our school Director and a special education teacher will be participating in World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment training in order to comply with new state regulations. If necessary, we will assess the English language proficiency of any student whose home language is not English.

Our special education program continues to be assessed annually through a self-study as well as through feedback from the Parent Survey. On April 13, 2011, the River Valley Charter School participated in its site

visit for the Special Education Mid-Cycle Review from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The summary report indicates one criterion which was not implemented. The Special Education Department has already put in place steps for corrective action, including further professional development for staff who lead the IEP meetings. The next Coordinated Program Review will be in 2014.

In addition, a special education assessment was conducted by Johanna Morgen from Salem State University to determine how the interaction between special education and classroom teachers affects student success. Recommendations for recording and communicating student progress have been implemented. Subsequently, in spring 2012, special education consultants Mary Koert and Sally Smith conducted an additional program review, which commended the quality of our faculty and administration and also gave recommendations for strengthening behavioral assessments and RTI protocols.

Professional Climate

Teacher Evaluation

At River Valley Charter School, teacher evaluation is a formative process. Teachers are given feedback as a means of improving instructional skills and overall student performance.

As part of the faculty evaluation process, the Board, along with the Director, developed a five-year Strategic Plan for the school. Within this plan, strategic goals were identified in five areas: student outcomes, staff, leadership, facility, financial resources, and community. In 2011-2012 these goals were further defined as communication, consistency and compliance. The Director worked closely with the faculty to include these concepts in the goal-setting process. Examples of this include the development of consistent portfolio protocols and ILP standards to communicate student progress, the use of MCAS data in creating lesson plans, and the opportunity to perfect the combination of Montessori and standards-based practice.

In addition to faculty goal-setting, and recommended through our Montessori audit, administrators implemented a Montessori observation document in both informal and formal teacher observations to provide feedback on Montessori principles, i.e., prepared environment, sensorial lessons, student interaction with materials, and classroom management.

Also, Montessori training center supervisors visit and assess our teachers who are in the process of completing Montessori training. And, our Middle School teachers participate in peer evaluation discussions on effective teaching methods. Additional evidence pertaining to the capabilities of our teachers can be found in our Montessori audit reports and in the NCLB Report Card, which shows that 100 percent of our teachers are highly qualified.

Professional Development

In 2011-2012, River Valley had a multi-faceted focus for professional development, including RTI, Montessori methods, guided reading, technology, and bullying prevention and intervention.

Our Kinderhaus and E1 teachers participated in a year-long study of Fountas and Pinnell's Continuum of Literacy Learning. Additionally, our E2 teachers discussed concepts from the Six Traits Writing program.

In the area of technology, teachers continued to focus on Google Docs and SmartBoard use. Our leadership team also attended Edline and Administrator's Plus information sessions and webinars to learn more about our student management software. Teachers also took part in continuing professional development in the use of our record management systems, MRX and ESPED.

Montessori Consultant Elizabeth Slade delivered seven days of workshops on Montessori philosophy and methods throughout the school year. Three teachers complete their Montessori training online, and three others are working toward Montessori certification at the Seacoast Center. One teacher is pursuing Kinderhaus certification through Gordon College.

One of our elementary teachers attended regular Department of Elementary and Secondary Education community service board meetings.

Our Director and Special Projects Manager attended the Tech Forum Boston 2012 in April.

Throughout the year, teachers participated in classroom observations at local Montessori schools in order to observe best practices and for training purposes.

Our Assistant Director attended regular Montessori Schools of Massachusetts board meetings. She also took part in a Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association workshop in March.

Our Office Manager attended webinars on data collection and reporting throughout the year, and our Special Projects Manager attended a demonstration to learn more about the capabilities of our student information system software.

Our Director attended an Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development leadership seminar in Boston in December and was part of the Delegate Assembly for the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association in November.

Our Business Office Manager attended an employment law seminar in November, and the Business Office Clerk attended a two-day workshop on charter school procurement in Boston in December.

Our Special Education Director took part in a special education and 504 law seminar in November.

The Massachusetts National Guard presented training in October aimed at providing support to military families, which our Guidance Counselor attended.

Our school nurse attended a Children's Hospital conference on IEPs, IHCPs and 504 Plans in April. She also took part in regular Northeast Regional Consultation Meetings for Essential School Health Services. Additionally, she presented information on electronic record management to other Newburyport school nurses in February and attended a bullying prevention workshop by the DESE in November. Also in November, she took part in the Northeastern University School Health Institute's Update for School Nurses.

Our teachers and staff attended the following professional development courses and workshops: Montessori training and observations, Integrating Science Through the Arts and Experiential Learning, Creating a Community of Character, workshop on autism/spectrum disorders with Temple Grandin, MCAS administrative training, Picturing Writing, Response to Intervention, workshop on open-response questions, , and Six Traits of Writing.

In the spring, many of our teachers attended the annual Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Conference in Franklin.

The Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center provided a half-day workshop for teachers on bullying prevention and intervention. A companion program was also presented to the entire student body. Our guidance counselor also provided general information about our anti-bullying policy to all faculty and staff at the start of school in September.

Our Director and literacy coordinator attended leadership workshops through the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association. Our Director was also elected to a second three-year term on the MCPSA board.

As part of our professional development and to foster collaboration, teachers meet four times a month to discuss curriculum, program, and practice. One monthly meeting is for the entire faculty, the second monthly meeting is a grade-level curriculum meeting facilitated by our literacy and math coaches, the third meeting is a grade-level program coordination meeting, and the fourth meeting is a collaboration between the lead teacher and her assistant. The special education case managers meet twice a month with the special education coordinator and with classroom teachers to discuss program needs.

Throughout the year, teachers attended conferences, seminars and webinars pertaining to their individual professional goals. We ended the year with a Montessori refresher course that allowed teachers to reflect on their year's practice and to use that information to provide inspiration for the coming year. This creates a purposeful learning environment among teachers and students and also helps us to retain quality faculty and staff.

Assessment and Instructional Decision-Making

As a Montessori school, River Valley uses formative assessment daily to inform instruction for each child. Observational data is recorded to track a child's progress through the Montessori lessons. Feedback is bidirectional, and is used to adjust the child's lessons to his or her current need. Twice a year, students in grades one to three are given the DRA test as a benchmark assessment. Results are used to redefine reading instruction and provide additional tutoring services as needed. In math, we collect data from online programs ALEKS and Study Island in grades three through eight to monitor student progress and to provide additional support.

As a form of external assessment, River Valley uses standardized test scores such as TerraNova and MCAS to determine student and school performance. Thorough and ongoing analysis of this test data by the school director and faculty is conducted in order to review our academic programs for quality and effectiveness.

After a continuing review of our Middle School program, we know that students are in need of additional mathematical support. Therefore, as a means of improving individual student performance, River Valley continued the use of ALEKS. These programs help Middle School students to improve their knowledge of pre-algebra and algebra and to operate at an individualized pace. From each student's results, teachers and administrators used the evidence to guide and inform future instruction.

Program Evaluation

The River Valley Toolset is an internal assessment system based on our documented learning objectives. The Toolset integrates the Massachusetts Common Core Standards with the related Montessori lessons to provide learning objectives for each of our exit levels: Kinderhaus, grade three, grade six and grade eight. Our learning objectives are in line with those of the state, yet we establish an individualized rate of learning based on the understanding that each child learns at his or her own pace.

As part of a Montessori teacher's training, they build their own albums of lessons for each subject area. These albums are comprehensive lesson plans that are systematically arranged to maximize learning. The lessons within these albums are listed on the curriculum tracking sheets used by teachers to document individual academic success in relation to learning objectives.

Each Montessori lesson has prerequisites that the child must meet, and these accomplishments must be observed and recorded by the teacher prior to introduction of a new lesson. This year, teachers focused on the observation component of our assessment system to provide consistency in data collection. Specific aims, or learning objectives, for each lesson are identified, which explicitly state the targeted skills that should be demonstrated by the student. Over time, the instructor utilizes a three-period lesson: introduction of new material, observation of the student successfully using the material, and a student presentation to the teacher or peers to show the student's mastery of aims set forth in the lesson.

The standards for measurement within the River Valley Toolset are based on the Montessori lessons, the learning objectives, and the curriculum tracking sheets. We use a four-point scale to define levels of proficiency on our progress reports. A four-point system is used consistently at all levels, K-8, on the tracking sheets and the progress reports. The four-point scale for Middle School progress reports is based on numbers. We saw a need to convert to a numerical system so that high schools receiving our transcripts could easily translate our standards of measurement and levels of proficiency. Middle School tracking is accomplished by using learning objectives and the Montessori Scope and Sequence in conjunction with progress reports.

The definitions of our four-point scale are listed here for clarification.

River Valley Charter School Standards for Measurement	
I	Introductory Level -The student is developing a knowledge base for further exploration.
W	Working Level -The student has a knowledge base for further exploration. The student is moving towards independent practice of skills.
P	Proficient Level -The student consistently demonstrates skills and understanding. The student is capable of self-directed exploration.
A	Application Level -The student is internalizing and assimilating knowledge. The student is able to effectively share knowledge and creatively apply understanding.

Organizational Viability

River Valley strives to provide a strong and reliable infrastructure to support the school’s learning community in both the short and long term.

Accountability Plan Objective 4: River Valley strives to provide sound financial management with progress toward financial independence from economic and political climates.

Measurement 4.1: Consistent demonstration of sound fiscal practices through annual independent financial audits with no material findings

The Board of Trustees and school leadership implement effective internal controls and systems to enable responsible financial oversight of the School. School administration and trustees follow applicable federal and state guidance in performing their duties. The School’s financial statements are audited annually by an independent auditor, and its fiscal year results are also reported to the DESE through its Charter School End-of-Year Financial Report. The School’s audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2011, performed by independent auditors, was issued with no material findings, reportable conditions or instances of noncompliance.

The financial position of the School continues to be stable, with no need for borrowing to fund operations anticipated at this time. Since inception, through conservative budget practices and fiscal responsibility, the School has accumulated net assets of \$1,625,921 and a total cash position of \$1,548,337 as of June 30, 2012 (unaudited). As of June 30, 2012, the School is holding an overpayment of Charter School Tuition in the amount of \$376,876 which will be adjusted by DESE in fiscal year ended June 30, 2013. This cash position provides the School with protection from possible negative impacts from local and state economic conditions for tuition revenue, the major revenue source. The School has no long-term debt. Liabilities are largely limited to short-term accruals. Cash flows have always been adequate to support the academic and administrative operations on a quarterly basis. The Board of Trustees approved a total budget of \$3,455,736 for the year ended June 30, 2012 that included \$15,000 for interior classroom changes to our Kinderhaus space.

Measurement 4.2: Consistently balanced annual budgets that demonstrate careful management of resources with a three-month cash reserve for operating expenses

The School uses conservative budget techniques and develops a budget that is realistic and in support of student academic achievement. The Executive Director seeks the input of the School’s leadership team in assessing and determining the School’s areas of priority for the upcoming school year. The budget planning process begins in February each year with the Finance Committee meeting to discuss the financial outlook and strategic decisions determined by the Board of Trustees. Due to the uncertainty of the upcoming tuition revenue projections, three budget scenarios were created based upon information from the Massachusetts Charter School Association as well as the general information provided by the DESE. Expenses for the coming year are level funded based on actual and historic data. A draft budget was discussed at the April Board Meeting, when the Board of Trustees

approved the salaries line to begin hiring for the next school year. The budget is refined as more information is received. The final budget is approved and voted on by the Board of Trustees at their monthly meeting in June.

The budget presented for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013 school year reflects a planned enrollment of 288 students. Revenues have been budgeted at \$3,570,062 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013, an increase over the fiscal year ended June 30, 2012 budget of \$114,326. The Board of Trustees have approved an operating budget for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013 with expenditures of \$3,570,062, an increase from the fiscal year ended June 30, 2012 budget of \$114,326. The budget will include \$15,000 for several interior classroom changes.

The School will continue its record of fiscal responsibility through conservative budgeting, accurate fiscal management and continued development efforts toward future independence and sustainability.

Accountability Plan Objective 5: River Valley strives for long-term retention of highly qualified faculty and administration.

Measurement 5.1: Minimum 75 percent per year retention of faculty and administration, exclusive of life changes

Two teachers left during the course of the 2011-2012 school year. Our art teacher and our physical education teacher each left the school due to personal reasons.

Six faculty members finished the 2011-2012 school year but, due to life changes, will not be returning in the fall; one lead teacher accepted a position at a private Montessori school; another lead teacher and a Middle School teacher both left to be home with their children; a Kinderhaus teacher has moved on to open her own Montessori preschool; and a special education teacher and guidance counselor left to work closer to home.

We did not lose any members of our administrative team this year.

Thus, our 2011-2012 faculty retention rate is 95 percent, exclusive of life changes, and our administrative retention rate is 100 percent.

Accountability Plan Objective 6: River Valley will provide professional development opportunities for faculty and administration to meet the needs of the school.

Measurement 6.1: Minimum 75 percent of faculty meeting their individual professional development goals each year, with documentation (Faculty Goal Setting and related documents) thereof on file.

Our global goal for all faculty this year was preparation for and participation in a Montessori refresher course and a special education program assessment. One hundred percent of our faculty and administration met this goal. Professional development is designed around faculty input, and documentation of professional development activities and faculty goal setting is on file at the school.

Measurement 6.2: Minimum 80 percent of the Kinderhaus and Elementary lead teachers Montessori trained or in training for the level they are teaching.

This past year, 100 percent of our Kinderhaus and elementary lead teachers were Montessori certified and/or in training for the level at which they taught.

Accountability Plan Objective 7: River Valley's wait list will continue to be adequate to meet the school enrollment objective.

Measurement 7.1: Minimum of two applications per opening each year

In June 2011, 28 students graduated from River Valley. Withdrawals over the summer of 2011 equaled 12. An additional two students transferred after the school year began in September. This created a total of 42 openings for the 2011-2012 school year.

Applications that were lottered in February 2011 totaled 144. The existing wait list prior to this lottery numbered 655. The total number of applications available for this school year was 799. For 42 openings, that is a ratio of 19 applications per opening in the school; this well exceeds our requirement of having two applications per opening. Significant local advertising, opportunities for parent observations, and a strong reputation in the community have resulted in large numbers of applications. We expect the interest in River Valley to remain high in future lotteries.

Accountability Plan Objective 8: River Valley will have a high rate of returning students.

Measurement 8.1: At least 85 percent of non-graduating students returning each year, excluding relocation

Twelve non-graduate students completed the 2010-2011 school year but did not return for the 2011-2012 school year, for a student retention rate of 96 percent. This well exceeds our goal of 85 percent. We feel that our strong academic program and school culture continue to promote the reputation of our school, which results in high rates of retention.

Accountability Plan Objective 9: Board of Trustees that provides appropriate stewardship of the school, conducting an external audit of Board operations every two years

An external audit of the Board of Trustees was conducted in August 2010 by Marci Cornell-Feist of The High Bar. The full Board, including the school Director, participated in a self-assessment in the form of an online survey. The assessment was designed to be a tool to: define excellence in charter school governance; provide a clear path to reaching “the high bar”; calibrate the Board perceptions and those of the school Director; provide a backdrop for creating annual Board level goals; and track progress over time. The next audit will take place in the coming school year.

Measurement 9.1: Achievement of 75 percent of goals as set during annual Board retreat

The Board continued to work on its five-year Strategic Plan, redefining its focus as communication, consistency and compliance. Each committee achieved 100 percent of the following goals set at the July 2011 annual Board retreat:

- **Board Leadership:** Build and sustain an effective Board with the skills and capacity to drive the school to a full realization of its mission and vision. The Board added seven members, developed and implemented an orientation program, and developed processes to ensure best practices in governance. Board members participated in two retreats during this school year.
- **Development:** Create a sustainable development culture for the school community. The Development Committee created a comprehensive development plan and budget.
- **Finance:** Operating in a transparent, fiscally responsible manner through the application of financial best practices. The Finance Committee reviewed and approved the annual budget.
- **Educational Program:** Our educational program exemplifies academic excellence as a nationally recognized public school that demonstrates faithfulness to Montessori methodology while delivering the academic rigor defined in the Massachusetts Common Core Standards. The Board prepared for and participated in the special education audit, approved the revised Enrolment Policy, and continued to support the school Director in articulation of our Montessori program within the public school context.
- **Student Outcomes:** Our students possess a love of learning, commitment to community, and academic skills to excel at the high school of their choice. In 2011-2012, the Board continued to support academic excellence: *River Valley Charter School provides a 21st century Montessori education that prepares students to be compassionate citizens with the skills to be effective, responsible leaders in a rapidly changing, deeply interconnected world.*

Measurement 9.2: Seventy-five percent intra-term trustee retention

The Board of Trustees had an intra-term trustee retention rate of 87 percent, as two Board members stepped down prior to the end of their terms for personal and professional reasons. We began the 2011-2012 school year with a strong group that included seven new Trustees.

Accountability Plan Objective 10: We will continue to foster River Valley Charter School as a model for public Montessori programs through dissemination of best practices.

Please see “Dissemination” on page 24.

Accountability Plan Objective 11: We will expect high levels of family participation at all levels of school life.

Measurement 11.1: Minimum of 80 percent of families contributing volunteer hours

Families are a critical component of River Valley’s organizational viability. Family support helps us provide many school activities and programs that would not occur otherwise. This year, 72 percent, or 137 families, recorded a combined 7,377 hours of service. We believe that this number may be low due to families that have given time but not recorded their hours.

Measurement 11.2: Minimum of 60 percent of families meeting the 40-hour volunteer service requirement

This year, 52 percent (72 families) completed 40 hours of volunteer parent participation.

Measurement 11.3: Minimum 70 percent of families contributing money to the annual giving program

This year, approximately 52 percent of River Valley families donated to the Annual Fund. Year-end audit processes have not yet been completed. We believe that a poor economy may account for lower levels of participation this year.

Policy Decisions

The Director communicates with the Board Chair and Executive Committee regarding suggested policy changes. Requests for revisions or new policies are submitted to the appropriate Board committee. The committee makes a recommendation to the full Board, which votes to approve or amend the policy. The Board made the following major policy decisions in 2011-2012.

- Approved the SY2010-2011 Director Evaluation of Jeanne Schultz (September 2011).
- Accepted financial audit for the year ended June 30, 2011 (October 2011).
- Approved the 2011-2012 Development Strategic Plan (December 2011).
- Approved the 2011-2012 development budget (December 2011).
- Nominated new Board of Trustees Chair, effective Dec. 14, 2011 (December 2011).
- Accepted nomination of Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees for the 2011-2012 school year (January 2012).
- Re-activated the Site Committee (January 2012).
- Approved the 2012-2013 school calendar (March 2012).
- Engaged Alexander, Aronson and Finning as auditor for the 2012 financial audit (March 2012).
- Approved tentative preliminary staff salary budget (April 2012).
- Approved Site Committee spending up to \$10,000 for three quotes for the building and grounds assessment from capital reserve funds (April 2012).
- Approved salary increase (2 ½ percent) for school Director consistent for 2012-2013 (May 2012).
- Accepted the following: AED Procedures 2012, AED Guidelines, Medication Administration Policy, RVCS Standing Orders 2012, RVCS Wellness Policy/RVCS Wellness Appendix May 2012 (June 2012).
- Accepted new trustees for SY2012-2013 (June 2012).
- Accepted new officers for SY2012-2013 (June 2012).
- Approved budget for FY2012-2013 of \$3,570,062 (June 2012).
- Accepted revised Enrollment Policy (June 2012).

Amendments to the Charter

No amendments were made to the school's charter in 2011-2012.

Complaints

The Grievance Committee of the Board of Trustees received one formal complaint this year. A former family questioned the school's special education program. The Board of Trustees Grievance Committee commissioned a third-party special education program audit, and both commendations and recommendations were shared with the full Board. The Director will review the report with faculty in the fall and implement recommended changes.

Oversight

The school and the school's leader are evaluated annually by the Board of Trustees. In April, the Board issued an online anonymous survey to families of students at the school. The Board's Executive Committee evaluated the school's leader using input gathered through separate online surveys issued to trustees. The Board Chair met with the Director to review the findings.

Board Planning

In 2011-2012, the Board of Trustees continued to work on its goals of communication, consistency and compliance. Progress toward these goals is described above in Measurement 9.1. The Board attended a fall retreat facilitated by consultant John Tarvin to discuss Board responsibilities and procedures. A second retreat was held at the end of the school year to assess the effectiveness of the Board's governance and to review year-end reports from each committee as well as the Director.

Family Engagement

River Valley conducts an annual parent survey to measure the rate at which families are satisfied with the school's programs. A total of 148 parents participated in our 2011-2012 survey. The results stated that 87 percent of the parents strongly agreed or agreed that the school's mission is clearly focused on desired student learning. Additionally, the survey showed that 73 percent of parents would recommend RVCS to another parent for their child.

The school involves families as partners in the education of their children by providing parent education, as well as ample volunteer opportunities in the classroom, on field trips and through school-wide activities. All parents are members of our Parents' Alliance and are encouraged to become members of the Board of Trustees and its committees

Safety

River Valley uses its Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to clarify the definition of bullying and identify steps toward corrective action. Through education, discussion, training, and supervision, we provide a safe environment for students and staff. Additionally, we have a school-wide safety plan that is reviewed each year, and we collaborate with MEMA on evacuation plans in case of an event at the Seabrook nuclear facility. River Valley addresses the social, emotional and health needs of its students through comprehensive health, guidance and psychological services.

Employee Qualifications

The school employs faculty who are highly qualified and Montessori certified. River Valley also provides certification opportunities for teachers and administrators. Documentation of employee credentials are kept on file at the school. Additionally, all employees must undergo a CORI background check.

Financial Oversight

In order to establish priorities within each year's budget, the Director and Business Manager collect information. The school Director and Business Manager each track and collect local economic and political news in order to carefully plan their upcoming revenue sources. River Valley Charter School has the added challenge of drawing students from five local districts and, thus, must look at news from each area. The Director uses a faculty budget survey tool to assess the needs of the teachers and their classrooms. The Business Manager reviews technology needs with our IT consultant, and those needs are also factored into the overall budget process. The Director also performs research and analysis of comparable salaries in the local area. Based on all of this information, the Director and Business Manager collaborate to identify priorities and allocate funding.

The information is presented to the finance committee, and all Board of Trustee members are invited to participate in the discussion. As a result of these meetings, the school prepares an annual operating budget of revenues and expenses. The budget is reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees at the June Board meeting and modified throughout the year, as necessary. The Board's finance committee meets to review a report of the actual revenue and spending compared to the budgeted amount each month and also to discuss cash management. Financial statements displaying budget vs. actual results, cash flow and a statement of net assets are prepared quarterly by the Business Manager and reviewed by the finance committee and presented to the full Board of Trustees at a monthly Board meeting.

Dissemination

Measurement 10.1: River Valley will open its classrooms to observers from October to June with an average of 10 visitors/month.

This year, River Valley welcomed an average of 9 visitors per month into its classrooms.

Measurement 10.2: River Valley will make at least one presentation at regional and/or national conferences annually.

In March, one of our teachers presented "Knit, Weave, and Felt: Fiber Arts in the Montessori Curriculum" to more than 100 participants at the American Montessori Society National Conference in San Francisco. The presentation demonstrated how fiber arts can expand practical life material in the elementary classroom and increase brain development through motor control. This teacher has also been invited to present at next year's conference to speak about botany in the Montessori classroom.

Measurement 10.3: River Valley will support 100 percent of requests from state, national and international organizations for information regarding charter/Montessori pedagogy.

An important part of River Valley's charter is dissemination of information about our "Montessori made public" pedagogy throughout the local and national community. River Valley Charter School defines best practices as activities that contribute to developing high-quality curriculum, instructional strategies, forms of assessment and leadership for the school that promote the ideals of our mission statement. In sharing our educational practices with outside educators, institutions, and the general public, we have become a model for Montessori education in the public and private sectors.

We continue to distribute our DVD, "Building the Future," to highlight our "Montessori made public" program. A copy was sent to a group in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, working to open the newly chartered Coastal Montessori Charter School.

Three visitors from the Pike School in Andover sat in on our E2 classrooms as part of their internship.

Our school Director spoke about how grace and courtesy are important components in the Montessori curriculum at a Spring Tea event for children and adults in Newburyport. One of our teachers wrote a Montessori book, "Spring Tea," that documents a Kinderhaus unit on the preparation and implementation of a

tea ceremony for parents. This teacher presented her book at the Montessori Schools of Massachusetts state conference and at the tea event in Newburyport.

Our Director was a presenter at the 17th Annual Peace Prize Ceremony held by the City of Newburyport's Commission for Diversity and Tolerance in May. Two of our students were also award recipients during this ceremony.

River Valley hosted a Spring Open House and Grandparents' Day event on May 11. Visitors were able to tour the school and visit classrooms to learn more about our Montessori program. Our Director and Board Chair presented a state-of-the-school address to visitors, along with student musical performances.

We shared information on data collection and our CORI policy with the MLK, Jr. Charter School of Excellence in Springfield, MA.

Our school nurse met with Newburyport Public School nurses to share information on electronic health records and the use of social media. She also participated in Communities of Practice for Nurses to share policies and guidelines with attendees such as the Deputy Director for Innovation and Excellence and members of the Massachusetts Charter School Nurses.

During a joint event at the Custom House Maritime Museum in Newburyport, presentations were made by our school Director, the Board Chair of the museum and a River Valley founder to Kinderhaus and eighth-grade parents, and members of both Boards. The purpose was to build upon our relationship with a community partner and to allow an opportunity for our eighth-grade parents to share experiences with our new Kinderhaus parents.

Our Director attended a meeting of the Rotary Club of Newburyport and the U.S. Coast Guard, Merrimack Station, in May. This meeting was also attended by the Mayor of Newburyport, Donna Holaday, and U.S. Congressman John Tierney.

The Director attends local Chamber of Commerce meetings. She also sits on the board of the Massachusetts Charter School Association and speaks regularly on local radio station WNBK to discuss educational matters with the public.

Alumni students from Newburyport High School worked with our Middle School teachers and students this year as part of a math club. We also hosted student teachers from Salem State University.

The Director is also a member of the Newburyport Rotary Club. Her involvement led to River Valley hosting an author for a day as part of the Newburyport Literary Festival and also resulted in an additional \$2,500 Foundation grant this year. Additionally, members of the Rotary Club participated in "Read Across America" at River Valley, a program in which volunteers came into the school to read to our students, and also presented dictionaries to our third-grade students.

Our guidance counselor and Middle School coordinator visited public and private high schools in the area for the purpose of disseminating materials about our curriculum and programs in anticipation of those schools receiving applications from our graduating students. Our guidance counselor also visited local preschools to disseminate information under our Recruitment and Retention Plan.

River Valley Views, monthly tours of the school, are offered to various members of the community and local region as a means of sharing our best practices. Visitors spend time in classrooms at each grade level, observing students and seeing public Montessori in action. We have invited other educators from private and public schools, executives, higher education faculty, politicians, local school committee members, and local and state government leaders to both River Valley Views and private school tours throughout the year.

One of our teachers continued to disseminate best practices through her participation in Harvard University's educational rounds. Our Assistant Director also participated on one occasion.

Our Director completed a survey for the American Montessori Society to help develop a public Montessori school agenda. The Director and faculty also participated in a DESE survey on Common Core Standards.

In June, the assistant principal from the Nock Middle School in Newburyport toured our school and observed a Celebration of Learning event with one of our Board members.

River Valley also participated in other dissemination activities, including continuing our community outreach program and providing teacher training and professional development opportunities.

FINANCIALS

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

Statement of Net Assets

June 30, 2012

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Cash:	
Unrestricted	\$ 1,436,456
Capital reserve	111,881
Total cash	1,548,337
Accounts receivable	846
Prepaid expenses	21,786
Total current assets	1,570,969
Capital Assets, Net	638,200
Other Assets	
Investments, at fair value	32,892
Deposits	41,579
Total other assets	74,471
Total assets	\$ 2,283,640
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable	\$ 20,667
Accrued payroll	254,551
Charter school tuition payable	376,876
Deferred grant revenue	2,025
Other current liabilities	3,600
Total current liabilities	657,719
Net Assets	
Unrestricted:	
Operating	875,840
Capital reserve	111,881
Invested in capital assets	638,200
Temporarily restricted	-
Total net assets	1,625,921
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 2,283,640

** Please note that this statement is preliminary (unaudited).
River Valley Charter School's financial statements for
year end June 30, 2012 may require additional adjustments.

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL
Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets
As of June 30, 2012

July, 2011-June, 2012

Operating Revenues:	
State allocation for tuition	\$ 3,209,698
Federal government grants	98,021
Program service fees	83,502
State government grants	23,200
Private grants	4,459
Total operating revenues	3,418,880
Operating Expenses:	
Salaries	2,034,807
Occupancy	501,390
Fringe benefits	197,940
Payroll taxes	104,719
Other instructional services	73,905
Direct program contract professional services	70,978
Depreciation	57,342
Instructional supplies and materials	49,302
Maintenance of buildings and grounds	47,046
Utilities	46,066
Information management and technology	42,775
Contract professional services	38,202
Insurance	28,624
Staff professional development	24,858
Legal fees	18,666
Supplies and consumable expenses	15,611
Dues and association fees	13,108
Office supplies and materials	12,201
Equipment lease and rental	7,677
Maintenance of equipment	7,088
Postage and printing	6,298
Travel	4,422
Advertising and recruitment costs	1,974
Meals and lodging	1,416
Contributions to outside organizations	860
Total operating expenses	3,407,275
Operating income	11,605
Nonoperating Revenues:	
Contributions	64,854
Miscellaneous income	2,452
Interest income	4,909
Fundraising	3,975
Investment income	589
Total nonoperating revenues	76,779
Nonoperating Expenses:	
Bad debt expense	1,346
Loss to investment value	519
Investment expense	178
Total nonoperating expenses	2,043
Change in net assets	86,341
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	1,539,580
Net Assets - End of Year	\$ 1,625,921

** Please note that this statement is preliminary (unaudited).
River Valley Charter School's financial statements for
year end June 30, 2012 may require additional adjustments.

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

Approved School Budget - Passed June 12, 2012

Fiscal Year July, 2012 - June, 2013

	Approved Budget Overview 2012-2013 July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013	% of Total Budget 2012-2013 July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013	
STUDENT ENROLLMENT	288		
Operating Revenue:			
State allocation for tuition	\$ 3,282,962	91.96	%
Federal government grants	77,900	2.18	
State government grants	21,200	0.59	
Program service fees	18,000	0.50	
Total operating revenue	3,400,062	95.24	
Nonoperating Revenue			
Private grants and fundraising	165,000	4.62	
Interest income	5,000	0.14	
Total Nonoperating Revenue	170,000	4.76	
Total Revenue	3,570,062	100.00	
Expenditures:			
Instructional services	1,914,866	53.64	
Operation and maintenance of plant	649,950	18.21	
Administrative expenses	473,074	13.25	
Benefits and other fixed charges	398,300	11.16	
Other student services	74,997	2.10	
Non operating expenses	21,025	0.59	
Community service	500	0.01	
Total Expenditures	3,532,712	98.95	
Capital and Other Budget:			
Other expense	22,350	0.63	
Capital expenditures	15,000	0.42	
Total Capital and Other Budget	37,350	1.05	
Total Expenditures including Capital and Other Budget	3,570,062	100.00	
Change in Net Assets	-	-	%
Unrestricted net assets, June 30, 2012	1,539,580		
Unrestricted net assets, June 30, 2013	1,539,580		

CAPITAL PLAN

Introduction

River Valley Charter School's Capital Plan has been developing over the past seven years. The Board of Trustees set up a site committee in 2006 to design a school for the future that would allow for expansion, meeting the needs of a Montessori curriculum with classrooms that have an outdoor component and playground space. The underlying criterion was that it be in Newburyport, a community that students interact with on a daily basis and is in the center of our five towns. Concurrently, the administration looked at the needs of an aging building and began planning for future repair and/or replacement of building systems in our 2 Perry Way school building, such as the roof, HVAC system, building envelope, plumbing and electrical systems, and telecommunications systems. As our technology needs expand, that infrastructure was also reviewed and updated.

Description of the Project

In 2011-2012, the Board of Trustees made a decision to explore acquiring the building at 2 Perry Way. The site committee was reconvened to discuss the feasibility of the purchase to include financial, site and building considerations. Part of this discussion includes site and building improvements. Consultants have been hired to provide recommendations and oversight throughout the process.

The Current Status of the Project

The site committee will present its findings at the September 2012 Board meeting. As part of a grant from a local bank, a new elementary science/multi-purpose classroom was created within existing space in summer 2012. This improvement is essentially part of the process of assessing our needs in relation to acquiring the building.

The Current Estimated Schedule for the Completion of the Project

If the school moves forward with the acquisition, the project is estimated to be completed by spring 2012.

The Current Estimated Cost for the Project

The anticipated cost for acquiring the building has not yet been determined, but it will be in the range of \$3.8 to \$4.8 million. Specific costs will be known upon completion of the site committee's work.

The cost of the new science/multi-purpose room was \$13,000.

Information on How the School Plans to Finance the Project

An RFP was submitted to several banks to provide funding for the acquisition project.

The science/multi-purpose room project was supported by a grant.

Capital Project Reserve Account

The Board of Trustees established a Capital Reserve Fund in 2009 with a current balance of \$111,881.25. We will continue to populate the Capital Reserve Fund each year to provide for high-cost maintenance items and/or property acquisition.

DATA SECTION

<i>Instructional Time:</i>	
Total number of instructional days established in the school's charter or subsequent amendments:	180
Total number of instructional days for the 2011-2012 school year:	180
First and last day of the 2011-2012 school year:	Sept. 6, 2011- June 15, 2012
Length of school day (please note if schedule varies throughout the week or the year):	8:30 a.m.- 3:10 p.m.

<i>Student Enrollment Information:</i>	
Number of students who completed the 2010-2011 school year but did not reenroll for the 2011-2012 school year (excluding graduates):	12
Total number of students enrolled as of October 1, 2011:	288
Total number of students who enrolled during the 2011-2012 school year, after October 1, 2011:	2
Total number of students who left during the 2011-2012 school year, after October 1, 2011:	2
Total number of students enrolled as of the June 30, 2012 SIMS submission:	288
Number of students who graduated at the end of the 2011-2012 school year:	25
Number of students on the waitlist as of June 30, 2012	830

Reason for Departure	Number of Students
Not satisfied with special education services	1
Moved out of state	4
Moved out of country	1
Looking for more structure	1
Family Decision	3
Needs more academic support and social opportunity	1
Wanted more options for friendships in child's grade level	1
Needs language-based classroom	1
Wanted to be in school with sibling	1

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND SUBGROUP INFORMATION

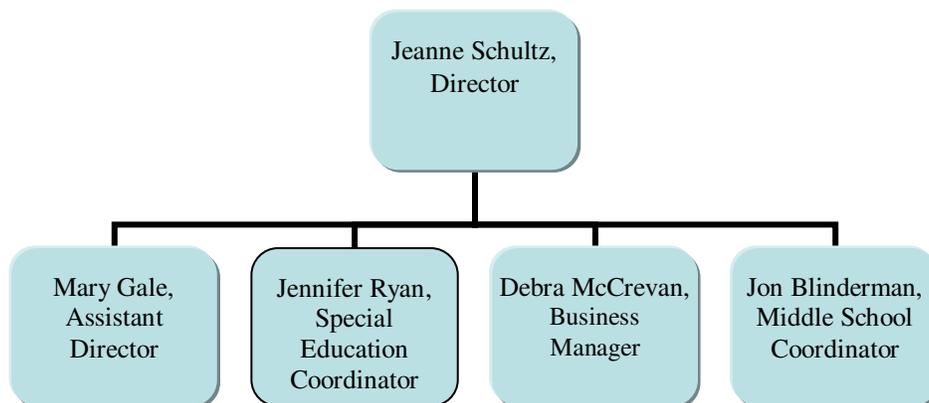
(for students enrolled as of the June 2012 SIMS submission)

Race/Ethnicity	# of students	% of entire student body
African-American	2	1
Asian	8	3
Hispanic	9	3
Native American	0	0
White	254	88
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	0
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	15	5
Special Education	44	15
Limited English Proficient	0	0
Low Income	1	.35

ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER FOR THE 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR

Title	Brief Job Description	Start date	End date (if no longer employed at the school)
Director	Acts as superintendent of school	07/01/2009	N/A
Assistant Director	Acts as principal of school	08/30/2011	N/A
Special Education Coordinator	Supervises special education program	8/15/2011	N/A
Middle School Coordinator	Manages Middle School students, plans trips, and coordinates classes	9/01/2007	N/A
Business Manager	Maintains financial oversight	01/01/2000	N/A

In addition to completing this table, please provide an organizational chart including administrators' names and titles.



TEACHER AND STAFF ATTRITION FOR THE 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR

	Number as of the last day of the 2011-2012 school year	Departures during the 2011-2012 school year	Departures at the end of the school year
Teachers	40	2	6
Other Staff	17	0	0

Two teachers left during the 2011-2012 school year for personal reasons. Six teachers left after the end of the 2011-2012 school year for the following reasons: accepted a position at a private Montessori school; to open a Montessori preschool; two to work closer to home; and two to be home with their children.

BOARD MEMBERS FOR THE 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR

Name	Position on the Board	Committee affiliation(s)	Area of expertise, and/or additional role at school (parent, staff member, etc.)	- Number of terms served; - Length of each term, including date of election and expiration
Steven Brzozowski	Vice-Chair	Committee on Trustees, Executive	Program Administrator, Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
Cleti Cervoni	Trustee	Accountability, Grievance	Ph.D., College Professor, Non-Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
Kate Donlin	Secretary	Accountability, Committee on Trustees, Executive	M. Ed, Charter School leadership, Literacy Consultant, Parent	1 term; 3 years served: 7/09 – 6/30/12
James Finnerty	Trustee	Development	Development, Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
John Giordano	Trustee	Accountability	Art Teacher, Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
Charlie Grossman	Chair, Grievance	Grievance	Public School Principal, Non-Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
Tomas Havrda	Chair, Web Site Committee	Accountability	IT Business Owner, Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
Christopher Horan	Chair, Site	Site	Commercial Real Estate, Parent	2 terms; 5 years served: 10/5/07-6/30/13
Scott Jordan	Trustee	Executive, Finance, Grievance	MBA, Finance, Government, Parent	2 terms; 5 years served: 10/5/07-6/30/12
Germaine Koomen	Ex-Officio Trustee		Faculty Rep.; M. Ed & Master's in Reading; 6-12 Montessori	1 year: 7/10/10-6/30/12
Dana Lowell	Chair	Finance, Executive, Committee on Trustees, Site	Senior Consultant, Environmental Services, Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
John Martin	Trustee	Committee on Trustees, Site Committee	Sales & Marketing, Parent	1 term; 2 years served: 7/10-6/13
Hilary O'Connor	Chair, Development	Development	Finance, Parent	1 term; 1 year served: 7/11-6/30/14
Francesca Pomerantz	Chair, Accountability	Committee on Trustees; Accountability	Ed.D; Associate Professor & Chairperson, Education, Parent	1 term; 2 years served: 7/10-6/13
Eric Powers	Treasurer; Chair, Finance	Finance Committee	Operations, Technology, Parent	1 term; 2 years served: 7/10-6/13
Jeanne Schultz	Ex-Officio Trustee	Finance, Executive, Accountability, Development, Site	Director, RVCS	3 years served; 7/1/09-6/30/13

Recruitment Plan – Report on Implementation

Group	Strategy	Evidence of Implementation Provide evidence that each strategy was implemented as described in the 2011-12 plan.	Proposed strategy changes (if applicable) for SY12-13
Demographic Group: A. Special education students	1. Send flyers to special education departments of each of our sending districts. 2. Guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.	1. Flyers were sent to special education departments Jan. 11, 2012. 2. Guidance counselor visited seven area preschools in fall/winter 2011. Flyers were also mailed to 19 preschools.	1. No changes required 2. No changes required
Demographic Group: B. Limited English-proficient students	1. Guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.	1. Guidance counselor visited seven area preschools in fall/winter 2011. Flyers were also mailed to 19 preschools.	1. No changes required
Demographic Group: C. Students eligible for free lunch	1. Make a better effort to collect eligibility data from all families. 2. Have a presence at meetings of the Hugh Doyle Resource Center. 3. Guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.	1. All families were required to complete a lunch program form to inform the school of their potential eligibility. 2. We kept in contact with the Hugh Doyle Resource Center via e-mail throughout the year. Meetings were scheduled during school hours, making them difficult to attend. 3. Guidance counselor visited seven area preschools in fall/winter 2011. Flyers were also mailed to 19 preschools.	1. No changes required 2. We will make a better effort to send a school representative to these meetings. 3. No changes required
Demographic Group: D. Students eligible for reduced price lunch	1. Make a better effort to collect eligibility data from all families. 2. Have a presence at meetings of the Hugh Doyle Resource Center. 3. Guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.	Please see above.	Please see above.

<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>E. Students who are sub-proficient</p>	<p>River Valley mainly enrolls students at the kindergarten level each year. Therefore, this category does not apply.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>F. Students at risk of dropping out of school</p>	<p>River Valley is a K-8 school, therefore, this category does not apply.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>G. Students who have dropped out of school</p>	<p>River Valley is a K-8 school, therefore, this category does not apply.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Demographic Group(s):</p> <p>H. Other subgroups of students who should be targeted to eliminate the achievement gap</p>	<p>River Valley provides a full-day kindergarten program at no charge, as well as a before/after-care program. We feel that this helps to recruit both low-income families and families with two working parents.</p>	<p>We continued to provide services appealing to low-income families.</p>	<p>No change required</p>

Student Retention Goal

Goal for student retention (during SY2011-12) (%)		Actual student retention SY2011-12¹	
85 percent of non-graduating students, excluding relocation.		River Valley's student retention rate for the 2011-2012 school year was 96 percent.	
Group	Goal/Strategy	Strategy Implementation Provide evidence that each strategy was implemented as described in the 2011-12 plan.	Proposed strategy changes (if applicable) for SY12-13
A. Special Education	1. Provide a strong academic program	1. Provided annual reviews, SST meetings throughout the year (as needed), three parent reports, portfolio assessments, communication protocols between special education and classroom teachers	1. Provide consistency with RTI protocols
B. Limited English-proficient students	1. Our enrollment lottery did not bring in any ELL students	1. We have a teacher who is certified in ELL, in the event that we have an ELL student enrolled.	1. Our Director and one teacher will attend WIDA training in July.
C & D. Students eligible for free or reduced lunch	1. Provide a strong academic program	1. Provided tutors and additional academic supports from math and/or literacy coach	1. No changes required
E. Students who are sub-proficient	1. Provide a strong academic program	1. Review previous school records for incoming students and provide additional academic support	1. No changes required
F. Students at risk of dropping out	1. This does not apply to River Valley	N/A	N/A
G. Students who have dropped out of school	1. This does not apply to River Valley	N/A	N/A
H. Other subgroups of students who should be targeted to eliminate the achievement gap	1. This does not apply to River Valley	N/A	N/A

I. Recruitment Plan for the 2012-1013 School Year

A. Describe the school’s general recruitment activities, i.e. those intended to reach all students.

General Recruitment Activities	
List recruitment activities undertaken each year which apply to all students.	
	At least one month prior to the enrollment lottery, the school advertises the lottery in a local newspaper with distribution in all of our sending districts.
	The school submits press releases with lottery and enrollment information to appropriate local newspapers.
	The school posts its lottery and enrollment information on its public web site.
	The school submits public service announcements about its lottery on local cable access stations.
	The school distributes flyers to area preschools and public libraries within our sending districts.

B. List the goals and strategies the school will implement during the upcoming school year to attract and enroll specific groups of students in order to promote a student population that reflects the demographics of the school’s sending district(s). Create specific goals and strategies for each of the following categories. **Do not repeat strategies.** Each group should have its own specific and deliberate strategy.

- A. Special education students
- B. Limited English-proficient students
- C. Students eligible for free lunch
- D. Students eligible for reduced price lunch
- E. Students who are sub-proficient (as determined by a previous score of “Needs Improvement” or “Warning/Failing” on the mathematics or English language arts examinations of the MCAS for the previous two years)
- F. Students at risk of dropping out of school
- G. Students who have dropped out of school
- H. Other subgroups of students who should be targeted to eliminate the achievement gap

Recruitment Plan – Goals and Strategies	
List goals and strategies for recruitment activities for <u>each</u> demographic group.	
Demographic Group:	According to our 2012 demographic data from our sending districts, we have a similar percentage of special education students (15.3 percent) as the comparison median (16.8 percent).
A. Special education students	In 2012-2013, we plan to send flyers to the special education departments of each of our sending districts. Our guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.

<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>B. Limited English-proficient students</p>	<p>The 2012 data shows little difference between River Valley’s rate of Limited English Proficient students (0 percent) and that of the comparison median (0.4 percent).</p> <p>Our guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>C. Students eligible for free lunch</p>	<p>According to our 2012 demographic data from our sending districts, we have a lower percentage of students eligible for free lunch (0.3 percent) than the comparison median (10.2 percent). We do provide food to any student without a lunch, but families who may have been eligible for free lunch preferred to opt out of the program.</p> <p>In 2012-2013, we will collect eligibility data from all families.</p> <p>In 2012-2013, we will make a better effort to send a school representative to meetings of the Hugh Doyle Resource Center, a clearing house of local non-profit organizations serving families in need in our communities.</p> <p>Our guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>D. Students eligible for reduced price lunch</p>	<p>According to our 2012 demographic data from our sending districts, we have a similar percentage of students eligible for reduced price lunch (0 percent) than the comparison median (2.4 percent). We do provide food to any student without a lunch, but families who may have been eligible preferred to opt out of the program.</p> <p>In 2012-2013, we will collect eligibility data from all families.</p> <p>In 2012-2013, we will make a better effort to send a school representative to meetings of the Hugh Doyle Resource Center, a clearing house of local non-profit organizations serving families in need in our communities.</p> <p>Our guidance counselor will visit area preschools to inform families about our educational program.</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>E. Students who are sub-proficient</p>	<p>River Valley mainly enrolls students at the kindergarten level each year. Therefore, this category does not apply.</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>F. Students at risk of dropping out of school</p>	<p>River Valley is a K-8 school, therefore, this category does not apply.</p>
<p>Demographic Group:</p> <p>G. Students who have dropped out of school</p>	<p>River Valley is a K-8 school, therefore, this category does not apply.</p>

<p>Demographic Group(s):</p> <p>H. Other subgroups of students who should be targeted to eliminate the achievement gap</p>	<p>River Valley provides a full-day kindergarten program at no charge, as well as a before/after-care program. We feel that this helps to recruit both low-income families and families with two working parents.</p>
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II. Retention Plan

Identify the retention goals and strategies the school will implement during the upcoming school year to maximize the number of students who successfully complete all school requirements and to prevent students from dropping out. The retention plan *may* include activities that address the needs of all students in the school, but *must* be designed to impact the target groups identified above.

<p align="center">Overall Student Retention Goal</p>	
<p>Annual goal for student retention (percentage):</p>	<p>According to the River Valley Charter School Accountability Plan, our goal is for at least 85 percent of non-graduating students to return each year, excluding relocation. We have reached this goal for the past several years.</p>
<p align="center">Retention Plan Goals and Strategies -- List goals and strategies for retention activities for each of the target groups A through H</p>	
<p>Successful Academic Program</p>	<p>River Valley will provide a strong Montessori-hybrid academic program to promote student success.</p> <p>The school provides progress reports three times a year to measure student attainment of school requirements. After analyzing the MCAS data, students are assigned academic supports such as tutoring, after-school math club, and online skills practice.</p> <p>River Valley provides a DRA assessment twice a year for students in grades one through three to help inform instruction and identify struggling learners.</p> <p>Consistent RTI protocols will be utilized across grade levels.</p>
<p>Parent Education and Involvement</p>	<p>River Valley will provide parent education and opportunities for involvement. The school allows for parent input in an annual parent survey.</p>
<p>Student Activities</p>	<p>River Valley will provide opportunities for student involvement in community service and partnerships with local organizations.</p> <p>The school also offers a before/after-care program to support students and families.</p>