

River Valley Charter School

Greater Newburyport Region

Final Application

Submitted by the Founding Alliance

December 11, 1998

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Commonwealth Charter Applicant Information Sheet

Name of Proposed Charter School: River Valley Charter School

School Address: Not yet known

School Location: Greater Newburyport Region

Name of Group Applying for Charter: Founders of the River Valley Charter School

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The proposed school will open in September of school year 1999-2000

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	1-5	160
Second Year	1-6	192
Third Year	1-7	224
Fourth Year	1-8	256
Fifth Year	1-8	256

Will this school be a Regional Charter School? Yes

School districts from which students are expected to come:

Newburyport, Newbury, Amesbury, Salisbury and West Newbury

**Commonwealth Charter School
Certification Statement**

Proposed Charter School Name: River Valley Charter School

Proposed School Location: Greater Newburyport Region

I hereby certify that the information submitted in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; that this application has been or is being sent to the superintendent of all districts from which we intend to draw students; and further, I understand that, if awarded a charter, the proposed school shall be open to all students, on a space available basis, and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, ancestry, athletic performance, special need, or proficiency in the English language, and academic achievement. This is a true statement, made under the penalties of perjury.

Signature of

Authorized Person _____ Date _____

Print/Type Name: Leigh Olson Snow

I. ABSTRACT

Mission

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.

Educational Philosophy

The River Valley Charter School educational program will be based on the Montessori philosophy, a proven educational approach that is widely available in the private sector and increasingly present around the nation as a public alternative. It is based on the idea that each student is competent, unique, and has an innate desire to learn. To implement this philosophy, River Valley Charter School will do the following:

- Create a challenging interdisciplinary curriculum combining the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* with the *Montessori Scope and Sequence*;
- Provide an abundance of learning materials specifically developed for the Montessori classroom;
- Empower the student to direct her own learning within the structure of the curriculum and with close guidance of the teacher;
- Facilitate inquiry, exploration, critical thinking, and creative problem solving;
- Understand and capitalize on individual learning styles;
- Educate the whole child by integrating the development of self-reliance, independence, and respectfulness with academic work.

Consistent with the Montessori method, River Valley Charter School will provide integrated studies of the local region, capitalizing on its vast historical, cultural, and natural resources.

Key Goals and Expected Outcomes

- **High Academic Achievement.** The River Valley Charter School curriculum will be unique to the school. It will merge the *Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks* with the *Montessori Scope and Sequence* and then integrate studies of our region's history, culture, and natural environment. The richness and depth of this curriculum, combined with the motivating factors of the Montessori method, will engage and challenge students so that they work at their full capacity. Students will advance at least one grade level per year and will be given standardized tests to demonstrate their progress.
- **Strong Links with the Community.** Local organizations and businesses will provide ongoing field study, workshops, and, for middle school students, internships integrated with the curriculum and pursued over the long term.
- **Social Growth and Emotional Development.** Students will realize the non-academic outcomes of the Montessori philosophy, such as respect, motivation, and self-reliance.
- **Successful Montessori Program.** Our program will satisfy the requirements of an accredited Montessori school by hiring Montessori certified teachers and implementing the Montessori curriculum. This will insure students' academic, social, and emotional needs are met.
- **Active Parent Participation.** Parents will feel committed to the school and their children's education and will contribute on a variety of levels.

II. NARRATIVE

1. *Mission*

What is the purpose of this school?

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.

2. *Statement of Need*

Community Need

Why is this particular school needed in this community?

The schools in our region face serious challenges that the local school districts have not adequately addressed. River Valley Charter School will be uniquely qualified, by virtue of its philosophy and design, to meet the following needs:

- **Elevate Academic Performance**

Achievement in area schools generally hovers around the state and national averages. Given the low ranking of U.S. schools compared to other nations, this is not good enough.

The River Valley Charter School will establish and maintain high academic standards. We will implement a demanding interdisciplinary curriculum that combines the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* with the traditional Montessori curriculum and studies of the region. Studies show that the 200 public Montessori schools currently operating around the country consistently test well above local and national norms. (See Appendix D for more evidence of the efficacy of the Montessori method.)

- **Link the School to the Community**

Our region boasts unrivaled historical and natural resources. It also hosts a thriving arts community. The potential for hands-on learning in the subjects of history, economics, social studies, math, science, and the arts is enormous but barely tapped by the local schools. Current school programs that attempt to do this are popular but isolated, and they are not integral to the curricula.

River Valley Charter School will form ongoing partnerships with a variety of local organizations that will immerse students in the resources of our community. (See Appendix A.) This will integrate their work with the curriculum and draw the community into the education of its future citizens. Study in the early grades will develop into internships in the middle school years. Ultimately, students will emerge from RVCS with a deep understanding of this region and its relationship to the larger world, as well as a sense of stewardship.

- **Provide a Distinct Choice within the Greater Public School System**

Our region currently has no alternative public schools. The few private schools in the area are generally beyond the economic means of the population.

River Valley Charter School will help alleviate this problem. The school's focus on the individual will make it particularly suited to educating children with a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, learning styles, and special needs. The Montessori method is a proven alternative that works for all kinds of children.

- **Establish an Orderly and Respectful Learning Environment**

Local schools lack an integrated approach to discipline, conflict resolution, and social development.

At RVCS, appropriate conduct and respect for others will be an integral part of the curriculum and the environment. The teachers and staff will promote self-discipline by modeling behavior and by setting clear guidelines, limits, and consequences. Students will feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them. This is a basic tenet of the Montessori method.

- **Provide Individualized Instruction**

Students in local schools receive minimal individual instruction. Programs that serve differences in learning, such as Gifted and Talented and Readiness, have been eliminated. School and class sizes are not optimal. Teachers assess students individually but teach to the class as a whole. This leads to disillusionment both for those whose needs aren't met and for those who are overlooked as teachers tend to more pressing demands.

Addressing individual needs is the core of the Montessori philosophy. At RVCS, each student will have an individual learning contract (ILC), created with the teacher and within curriculum parameters. The teachers will have ample time to guide students individually due to low student/teacher ratios and minimal whole-class activity.

- **Prepare Students for a Rapidly Changing World**

Rapid technological and social changes make it difficult to predict what particular knowledge and skills will be needed in the future. Traditional school models, originally designed for the 19th century, do not teach students how to solve current and future problems. Students need to know how to continually learn and apply this knowledge in the world beyond school.

River Valley Charter School students will master the traditional curriculum knowledge and go beyond to learn how to question; think clearly and creatively; analyze issues; conduct research; express themselves well in both writing and speech; solve problems; make decisions; and put their knowledge to practical application.

Necessity of a Charter

Why is a charter necessary in order for this school to succeed?

Some Montessori ideas have filtered piecemeal into local classrooms. But the changes are slow, vulnerable to reversal with the next trend, and not supported on a school-wide basis.

The way to get substantial, lasting results is to implement a comprehensive educational philosophy that is consistent throughout a child's school years. Public Montessori schools in other states are demonstrating excellent results through testing and are experiencing waiting lists far beyond their capacity.

We need a whole school to create a complete Montessori program. It can't be done classroom by classroom, and there is no visible movement toward a pilot school in the local districts. The only way to attain our mission in the near future is through a Commonwealth charter.

Demand

What evidence exists that there is a sufficient demand for the educational program you are proposing?

The founding alliance held a public information session in early November 1998 that generated a very positive response from the community. There have been many follow-up inquiries and demonstrations of support. Over 360 people in the region have written letters or signed petitions stating their support for the proposed school, representing over 350 children they would enroll. In addition, we have letters of support from five city councilors and Representative Kevin Finnegan, and letters of intent from six Community Partner organizations, with more promised. Letters and petitions are available upon request.

The experiences of other public-sector Montessori programs show that demand quickly outpaces capacity. For example, the Holliston, Massachusetts school district, which started two Montessori kindergartens within its elementary school in 1982, now has eight classrooms of six-to-nine year-olds in addition to the kindergartens. The only public Montessori in Massachusetts, it had to turn away 24 families this year. In Cincinnati, Ohio, there are three public Montessori magnet schools, which collectively had more than five times as many applicants as spaces in 1998.

3. Educational Program

What educational theory will be the foundation of the program and how does it align with the school's mission?

Montessori Method

The River Valley Charter School educational program will be based on the philosophy and methods developed early in this century by Dr. Maria Montessori in her work with underprivileged children. Dr. Montessori found that by providing carefully designed materials and by following the child's lead in pursuit of knowledge, she could in fact educate children thought to be uneducable. Her methods were based on a fundamental trust in each child's instinctive desire to learn. They were also informed by theories of child development and learning that were rather new in her time. Most of these ideas are now generally accepted, but they are not successfully implemented in many of our public schools. The basic principles of these theories are as follows:

- Cognitive development follows a predictable **progression from the concrete to the abstract**. There are specific moments when children are most ready to develop and acquire certain skills. Educators must understand these levels and introduce material at appropriate times.
- Academic, social, and emotional development are interdependent; education must center on the **development of the whole child**.
- Every child has an **inner drive to explore** and discover the world around him. This innate curiosity will lead to productive learning if given the proper environment, resources, and guidance.
- Learning is most productive when **self-directed** and founded on individual interest.

- Learning is most effective when it takes place through **direct sensory experiences** and interaction with objects in their natural context.
- Information should be presented in a pattern of **whole-to-part**, and integrated through **interdisciplinary study**, so students can place it in context and understand how things are related.
- Learning must be enhanced and **applied**, especially in later years, by **going out** and doing relevant work in the community.

Implemented together as a comprehensive methodology, these principles form a foundation for motivated learning and high achievement, thus meeting our mission to produce graduates who reach their full academic potential and are self-reliant, productive citizens adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving.

Middle School

The RVCS middle school will continue with the Montessori approach, but will focus on the specific issues of early adolescence. Students 12-14 years old undergo dramatic physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. They experience conflict between their individuality and societal expectations. They are highly preoccupied with their social lives. For these reasons, they require a stable environment, close adult relationships, opportunities to collaborate, and work that is challenging and relevant in the real world.

Educators working within the traditional middle-school model have acknowledged the necessity of many of the elements we intend to incorporate. The National Association of Secondary School Principals, in their 1985 report "Schools in the Middle," noted the benefits of applied learning; focus on total growth and development (not just intellectual); differentiated learning; correlated and integrated curriculum; exploration; individualized instruction; interdisciplinary programs and teaching teams; multi-age grouping; and peer teaching. These are all time-tested basics of the Montessori method and will naturally be included in middle-school education at River Valley Charter School.

Motivation

Experience has shown that the Montessori environment exerts a powerful positive influence on a student who is disruptive, unhappy, or unmotivated. Such a student will become productive in the RVCS program because he will be empowered to direct his own activity; peers and teachers will model appropriate behavior and respect; the curriculum and materials will address his particular learning style; and teachers will have the time to work with him individually.

Early adolescents are particularly vulnerable to motivation problems in school. The RVCS program will be uniquely qualified to address the following issues commonly found in middle schools, as follows:

- It will provide **ample opportunities for success**, so students who think they can't do the work compete against themselves and learn from their mistakes.
- It will **match academic study to students' interests and their abilities**. Students will have individual learning contracts (ILCs) structured to their developmental level. Students will have many opportunities to choose from teacher-designed options, to select special-interest topics for independent study, and to try a variety of presentation techniques.
- RVCS **students will actively participate in setting their own goals** through their ILCs, which motivates them to follow through even on their less favorite work. Time to complete tasks will be made available.
- RVCS will provide ample opportunity to do **relevant work** both in school and through the Curriculum Partners Program, which will connect their classroom learning to the real world.
- Our program will provide many **venues for social interaction**. Every school day will include time for study in small groups and collaboration on team projects, in addition to the informal socializing that occurs over lunch and during free time.

Because RVCS will acknowledge and deal with these issues, unmotivated students will have help to take risks with new work, to achieve success, and to build the confidence they need to be engaged in school. If a student does not respond in a reasonable time, the school will take steps within its discipline policy toward more active intervention (see the Discipline section below).

School Design

What will be the design of the school in terms of: (a) pedagogy and teaching materials; (b) curriculum design and sources of the curriculum; (c) organization of students and faculty; (d) school schedule and calendar?

(a) Pedagogy and Teaching Materials

Pedagogy and teaching materials will be the most compelling difference between River Valley Charter School and traditional public schools. Although the basic content of the curriculum will be the same, with a strong emphasis on core subjects, the following elements will distinguish the RVCS classroom from traditional ones:

- **Multi-age Classrooms.** Students will be grouped in multi-age clusters spanning three years in the elementary program and two in the middle school. Multi-age classrooms maximize the curriculum options available to students, minimize competition, encourage cooperation, and foster self-confidence in students who serve as role models. They also provide for long-term teacher/student relationships.
- **Interdisciplinary Approach.** Subjects are taught thematically in order to strengthen their relationship to all disciplines. Students are taught to use reading, writing, and math as tools for the pursuit of knowledge and skills. This approach will motivate students to master the basic skills and use them in understanding the region's unrivaled historic, natural, and cultural resources.
- **Montessori Materials.** Scientifically designed manipulative materials are at the heart of a Montessori classroom. Each one focuses on a particular concept or skill but addresses many levels of understanding, beginning with the concrete and moving to the abstract. The materials are self-correcting and provide the student with feedback, thus reinforcing autonomy, confidence, and self-motivation. (See Appendix C for examples.) Extensive written materials in each area of the classroom support the Montessori emphasis on research from reference books and primary and secondary sources (including the Internet) rather than compilations and textbooks.
- **Teacher's Role.** RVCS teachers will rarely be the center of attention in the classroom. Instead, the teacher is one source of information among many. This departure from the traditional format, combined with low teacher/student ratio, frees the teacher to spend time observing, guiding students, and making notes on progress. In addition, RVCS teachers will actively model appropriate, respectful behavior and positive conflict resolution.
- **Individual Learning Contracts.** Students will work according to individual learning contracts (ILCs) that they develop with their teachers and update three times a year to reflect progress and standardized test results. These contracts set forth how the student will complete the curriculum requirements. Students will track weekly work to ensure they are fulfilling their ILC.
- **Long Work Periods.** Whole-class instruction time will be minimal, usually limited to the beginning and end of the day. The school day will be structured to allow students to spend long blocks of time on work that they choose within the framework of their ILC. This enables students to explore a topic or material thoroughly and to carry it through to completion.
- **Mastery Learning.** Students will go beyond memorization and repetition to true understanding and application of knowledge, skills, and concepts. The individual student will progress at her own rate, either moving ahead without having to wait for the rest of the group, or taking the time she needs to internalize the material.
- **Classroom Design.** RVCS classrooms will be designed to encourage exploration. Classrooms will be arranged in study centers, with clusters of student-sized tables and open areas for floor work instead of individual desks. Each study center will be surrounded by shelves of books and materials pertaining to a particular area of study: language arts, math, history, and so on. Students will be allowed to move about the classroom and choose resources as they pursue their work plan. They will have the option to work individually or in small groups.
- **Curriculum Partners Program.** River Valley Charter School will take advantage of the vast resources available in the Merrimack River Valley. Students will use the community as both a source of knowledge and as a means of applying what they learn. Partnerships will directly connect to and enrich the curriculum. This commitment to our community is a logical extension of the Montessori philosophy.

As the child advances through the last years of Elementary II and into Middle School, the pedagogic emphasis reflects his changing needs. The projects become longer term and more collaborative, with less reliance on the Montessori materials and more use of reference books, textbooks, computers, experiments, model building, mapping, drawing, music, and drama. There is more direct instruction from the teacher and the day is more tightly structured. Learning outside the school expands into internships and community service.

(b) Curriculum Design and Sources

The River Valley Charter School curriculum will be unique to the school. Using the services of a qualified education consultant, we will correlate the Montessori *Scope and Sequence* with the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*. (See Appendix F for a sample correlation from Montessori Made Manageable, Inc.) This comprehensive correlation will ensure full coverage of all the material in both curricula. The school will update and re-evaluate its curriculum yearly based on input from test results and school audits.

The RVCS curriculum will be overlaid to relate and apply the history, ecology, and culture of the Merrimack River Valley through our Curriculum Partners Program. This program will serve as the medium for connecting subjects among each other and to the larger community. It will also be a vehicle for older students' internships and community service. Partnering organizations will participate in developing this aspect of the RVCS curriculum.

Elementary Curriculum

While the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* are organized into learning standards within content strands, the Montessori *Scope and Sequence* is based on the *Five Great Lessons*, which present the emergence of the universe and the progression of human civilization. The RVCS curriculum will fully cover all the *Frameworks* content strands, while adhering

to the Montessori principle of presenting information in a whole-to-part progression. For example, the first Great Lesson introduces the beginning of the universe, the emergence of matter, and the formation of the earth. Students take in this lesson and explore details according to their individual learning contract. Within this structure, the physical, earth, and space sciences sections of the Massachusetts *Science and Technology* curriculum are covered but students also comprehend the information within the larger context. See Appendix E for a complete description of the *Five Great Lessons*.

The elementary curriculum strongly emphasizes math and language, then uses them thematically to study other subjects. Literature is an integrating link for all academic disciplines. Emphasis is on open-ended research and in-depth study using primary and secondary sources, as opposed to textbooks and other summaries.

Mathematics will initially be taught with manipulative materials that demonstrate the interrelatedness of geometry, arithmetic, and algebra. Students must understand how to work with the manipulatives as well as how their findings translate into accurate conventional math computations. Students identify relationships, theorems, and formulae themselves. In addition, they learn about the people who first made these discoveries.

Language Arts will emphasize basic reading skills, using a combination of whole language and phonetics. Early in the elementary program, students will be introduced to the mechanics of the English language, the etymology of words, syntax, and parts of speech with the aid of the Montessori materials (see Appendix C). In addition to the written word, the language arts curriculum emphasizes other forms of communication, including debate, oral delivery, and group discussion.

Social Studies and Sciences integrate anthropology, astronomy, biology, chemistry, economics, geography, geology, government, history, philosophy, physics, political science, and sociology rather than teaching them as separate subject matters. The *Five Great Lessons* set the stage so the child can see and understand the extent of human labor necessary to accomplish all that is here in the present. For example, biology instruction provides the nomenclature needed to structure and relate facts and processes in order to develop an ecological view of life and a feeling of responsibility for the environment. Geography is presented to illustrate the ways in which topography and land forms have affected the histories of peoples and their civilizations. The study of human civilizations focuses on the material and spiritual “fundamental needs:” food, shelter, transportation, defense, clothing, art, religion, friendship, and character. The use of timelines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids supports the temporal sequences and the interrelationships of these disciplines.

Music, Art, Drama, Movement, Physical Education, and Foreign Language will be integral to the curriculum, with specialty classes for each. These subjects will correlate with and enhance themes currently under study. For example, while studying ancient civilizations, children research the development of music in a timeline; relating instruments, composers, musical forms, and literature to the country of origin, art, architecture, and politics of the times.

Curriculum Partners Program Example

“Local Children from Years Past” Project. One year in Newburyport’s past will be chosen by the students to become a multidisciplinary theme spanning a semester. The starting point of immersion into the past will be a photograph of a class from the nation’s first Free School in Essex, Massachusetts, founded in 1725, or the Kelley School, a local elementary school founded in 1873. Each student will be given the name of one child in the picture to research.

Each student will be expected to extrapolate details from the past to prepare an historical fiction about an actual child. The report will include the following topics: make-up and genealogy of family; family’s livelihood stance on current political and social issues; location, style, and size of house; activities, interests, and responsibilities of child. Students will also create something from the period in a manner typical of the period. This could include whittling a musical instrument, needlepointing a sampler, weaving a scarf, singing a song, creating and/or playing a child’s game (and comparing and contrasting it to a modern game), making a doll, planting a period garden, or preparing a period meal. Students will wear customary dress for an oral presentation of their findings, including the topics covered in the written report and a description and demonstration of their creations.

Primary sources for research will include historical fiction and biographies of children from our country’s past, diaries, newspapers, and other records found in the history archives in the Hamilton Room at the Newburyport Library. Secondary sources will include: tours of homes of the chosen period, such as the Coffin House; the Cushing House Museum (which contains a beautifully preserved child’s bedroom and playroom, including period toys); local cemeteries; items unearthed in a dig at Spencer Pierce Little Farm; and historians as guest speakers.

Lessons to be further developed with the aid of the teacher include geography, architecture, math (timelines, population, geographic distribution, commerce and trade) and literature of the chosen period.

Middle School Curriculum

The RVCS Middle School curriculum will build upon the elementary curriculum, covering all Massachusetts *Frameworks* learning standards for 7th and 8th grades. The process and presentation will be geared toward the specific demands of this age group, bringing together the benefits of the Montessori method and community partnerships that provide relevant work in which students can apply their learning.

The middle school will operate on a ten-week cycle, of which there will be eight over the two-year span. Each cycle will explore a broad theme within which the curriculum requirements will be fulfilled. The work will consist of a balance among classroom study, field work, research, internships, and projects. Final presentations will be made in week ten.

Teachers will provide students with a cycle plan that clearly defines the components of the cycle. Plans will be structured as follows:

- **The Overview** introduces the theme and creates motivation by relating it to the life of the adolescent.
- **Guiding Questions**, recurring throughout, help students think about what they are learning and can be used in journal writing, reading response journals, and class discussions.
- **What You Will Learn** lists what students will be accountable for at the end of the project. This information will be covered with more teacher direction, such as class lectures with note-taking.
- **What You Will Do** outlines projects and research related to the theme. Resources include a wide variety of instructional media, research materials including textbooks, field research, and the Curriculum Partners Program.
- **Presentation of Work** defines options for how the work is to be presented.
- **Rubric for Assessment** defines how students' work will be assessed.

For example, RVCS might include a cycle whose theme is "Independence and Interdependence." Two projects could be developed within the theme: one at the region's town halls to compare the mayoral and town meeting forms of local government, and one through the Curriculum Partners Program to examine the interdependent, microscopic life of a tidal river with its alternating fresh and salt water environments. The town hall project would cover the language arts, history, and geography curricula, while the river project would cover the physical science, life science, and math curricula. See Appendix H for a sample plan for this cycle.

Skills and knowledge that are not covered by themes or projects will be addressed in each student's individual learning contract. Whether within themes and projects or during classroom study, the following subjects will be covered by the RVCS Middle School Curriculum:

Mathematics will continue to address the individual's developmental needs by moving systematically from concrete introduction to abstract understanding. Middle school will focus on pre-algebra and algebra by using commercial textbook programs as a primary resource. Geometry will be viewed as the tool that reveals and clarifies the relationships and processes in mathematics and algebra. A daily block of time will be devoted to mathematics and include regular cycles of tests and evaluations to insure mastery.

Language Arts will continue as a unifying thread through the other disciplines. It will include the study of vocabulary, literature, grammar and mechanics, and writing. In response to the early adolescent's need to develop appropriate relationships with others, the program will focus on four communication strategies: acknowledging others, "I" messages, problem solving (goal setting, decision making, win/win solutions), and active listening. In addition, this daily communications lab will stress manners, listening skills, note-taking, active participation in group discussions, articulating ideas, and making formal presentations.

History, Geography, Physical Science, and Life Science will be presented across two-year cycles. All Massachusetts *Frameworks* content areas will be covered but they will be organized thematically to emphasize their relevance to students' lives. The year-one focus on humanities will include themes of exploration and new beginnings, identity, independence/interdependence, and the circle of life. The year-two focus on physical science themes will include balance, change, force, and movement. Students will ask large questions, look for patterns, and place information into the larger context.

World Languages One or more foreign languages will be offered.

Computer Literacy will focus on the impact of computer technology on human society, and will emphasize the use of computers and the Internet as tools for tasks that cannot be performed as effectively by other means. Students will learn to use the Internet and email for research and communication; database software for organization and retrieval of data and research results; spreadsheets and graphing tools for the evaluation of these results; and word processing, Web page design, and presentation software for communication of ideas and research results. In addition, well designed simulation software will be used to enhance students' abilities to explore, discover, and develop problem solving strategies.

Physical Education and Health Physical education will focus on cooperative games, team sports, individual sports, aerobic activities, and fitness. Health will be devoted to issues pertinent to the needs of early adolescence. Topics will include belonging, friendship, adolescent development, stress management, self-esteem, peer pressure, drug education, sexuality, nutrition, and balanced living.

Fine Arts will be integrated throughout the curriculum as well as part of a weekly elective period during which students select an area of exploration. Projects will vary depending on student interest.

Character Development will be a regular and explicit theme of class discussions. It will be continually reinforced through situational problem-solving, role-playing, the learning contracts, collaborative work, mentoring, and the multi-year

relationships with teachers. RVCS teachers will have the Montessori training to be alert for “teachable moments,” the circumstantial or developmental moments in which a student is especially open to a particular lesson. Character development will be woven through every other curriculum area. Literature, for example, can be used to observe and discuss protagonists’ characters in relation to personal choices and environmental influences. History and current events illustrate the impact of personal character traits on society and posterity, for example those of Clinton, Hitler, or Ghandi.

Internships will provide experiences that build confidence and help our early adolescent students develop a broader view of their place in society. Our ongoing partnerships with a variety of local organizations will immerse students in the resources of the community, as well as draw the community into the education of its future citizens.

Each student will participate in an internship program. Seventh graders will rotate through assignments as classroom assistants in the Elementary I and II programs. Eighth graders will work with local partnerships or businesses completing mutually agreed-upon projects.

Each student will make two major presentations or exhibits each year about their internship. These will be based two different site categories (environmental, cultural, governmental, or architectural) and use two different presentation techniques (narrated tours at a facility, role-playing presentations, video productions, or interactive computer productions). The content of the presentation will involve a cross-curriculum approach to include: the presentation, a written information packet for the audience, calculation and a report of production costs, and the development of an evaluation tool to be completed by the audience after the presentation.

(c) Organization of Students and Faculty

River Valley Charter School will consist of Elementary I for ages 6-9, Elementary II for ages 9-12, and Middle School for ages 12-14. Our goal is an even distribution of ages within each group.

The elementary faculty will consist of one lead teacher and one assistant teacher in each classroom of about 23 children. In the middle school, there will be two teachers (one with a humanities background and one with a math/science background) and one assistant per 32 students.

(d) School Schedule and Calendar

The River Valley Charter School day will be six and one-half hours, from 8:30 to 3:00, with fee-based day care provided before and after school hours. The school calendar will follow the existing public school calendar--180 school days with observance of federal, state, and principal religious holidays. Vacation schedules may vary somewhat from the public schools, but the school year will contain at least the state minimum hours of instruction. Some vacation day care will be provided.

Assessment

How will student progress be assessed?

Student performance will be assessed with the following tools, all designed to determine and report individual progress toward specific benchmarks defined in the RVCS curriculum.

Standardized tests

- Terra Nova tests will be given at admission to establish baseline performance, then yearly to measure progress.
- The IOWA reading test will be given to students in grade 3.
- The MCAS test will be given to students in grades 4 and 8.

Test-taking skills will be incorporated into the curriculum to be sure students are prepared for these tests. Test results will be used to periodically update students’ individual learning contracts and the school curriculum.

Individual Assessment Tools

- Individual learning contracts, as the basis for meeting curriculum objectives
- Weekly work contracts, which outline specific tasks for meeting the ILC
- Quizzes, tests, and exams
- Reports and essays
- Oral presentations and portfolios, to meet benchmarks defined in the curriculum.
- Daily observations and recording by teacher
- Progress reports, prepared in detail by the teacher twice yearly.

The Middle School will use the following additional assessment tools:

- Bi-weekly progress reports
- Student-led conferences held twice a year with teachers and parents, with the student responsible for the following:
 - Develop a work portfolio
 - Self-evaluate work and work habits
 - Communicate strengths and weaknesses
 - Invite questions regarding progress
 - Clarify and engage in goal setting

Annual Outside Audits

- An impartial educational consultant will assess students' academic performance in the context of the nation's public schools.
- A representative from a recognized Montessori training institute will assess academic performance in the context of the American Montessori Society.

Special Needs

How will students with special needs and those who cannot speak English proficiently be served in accordance with state and federal law?

RVCS will fully comply with state and federal regulations governing special education. The school budget will include funds to cover the services of a qualified special needs coordinator/instructor and a contract psychologist. There will also be contracted services by occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech and language therapists as needed.

If a new special needs student comes into the RVCS with an IEP, a team meeting will be held immediately with SPED staff and parents to determine how best to meet the child's needs in the new school setting. With the parents' consent, certain goals and objectives may be modified to fit the RVCS curriculum and inclusion model. The special education team will reconvene as often as necessary to monitor the student's progress.

The special needs coordinator/instructor will function according to an inclusion model, providing extra assistance in the classroom to children on Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). There will be ongoing consultation between teachers and SPED staff. When necessary, direct services in the form of a "pull-out" from class will occur. Generally, students will be able to participate in the classroom activities because the Montessori educational model is well suited to children with different needs and learning styles. There is an emphasis for all children to work at their own pace, using an individualized program, and multi-sensory materials. Every child who attends RVCS will have an individual learning contract, as noted above. The ILC is quite similar to the IEP.

The school psychologist will evaluate children to determine special needs. If a student presents with a learning or behavioral problem in school, the pre-referral process will be initiated. A short-term intervention will be developed and used by the teacher, parents, and psychologist for a specific period of time to remedy the problem. If this process is unsuccessful, there will be a formal evaluation and team meeting in order to determine if the student will qualify for special needs services. If a disability is determined, but the student is making sufficient academic progress, a 504 plan will be developed to create specific modifications to assist the student in the classroom. This will be used in conjunction with the child's ILC. If the child qualifies for Special Education Services, an IEP will be created that will be used in conjunction with the ILC.

Students entering River Valley Charter School who are not proficient in English will be provided with an English as a Second Language tutor. A portion of the day will be devoted to intensive, small-group or one-on-one English instruction. Initially, the tutor will shadow the child in the classroom to provide language assistance as the child pursues learning (and nonacademic) activities with other students and the head teacher. As the child's language ability improves, the tutor will phase out of the classroom, but will continue to provide assistance with reading and writing. This will be especially important in the middle school, where there will be a greater emphasis on reading comprehension and written language.

4. Accountability

To illustrate how the school will define, measure and demonstrate success, list 3 to 5 clear and measurable student performance objectives as well as 3 to 5 clear and measurable school performance objectives.

Clearly state how progress will be measured relative to each of these objectives.

Evaluation of the following three student and four school performance objectives will be conducted both internally and by annual external audits. These audits will be reported by the accountability committee of the board of trustees.

Student Performance

High Academic Achievement

- All students will advance a minimum of one grade level each year, with many advancing more than one grade. This will be measured and demonstrated by benchmarks identified in the curriculum and by Terra Nova, IOWA, and MCAS scores.
- School-wide averages on Terra Nova, IOWA, and MCAS test scores will be above national and state averages.
- Twice a year, teachers will compile data from individual assessments and submit a progress report for each student.

Social Growth

- Teachers will monitor the social behavior of their students as part of their daily observations.
- Non-academic outcomes of the Montessori method will be measured and demonstrated by an audit conducted by a representative of a recognized Montessori training institute.

Success at Future Schools

- Graduates will excel at future schools. This goal will be measured and demonstrated with statistics such as class rank, leadership roles, and numbers taking advanced-placement courses and SATs.

School Performance

High Academic Achievement

- All students will advance a minimum of one grade level each year, with many advancing more than one grade.
- School-wide averages on Terra Nova, IOWA, and MCAS test scores will be significantly above national and state averages.
- An impartial educational consultant will perform an annual audit to assess academic performance in the context of the nation's public schools. The observer will evaluate class time, assessment tools, and outcomes.

Strong Links with the Community

- The school will form long-term alliances and arrange internships with local institutions and organizations that enrich the curriculum, starting with at least three in year one and expanding by at least two per year in years two through five.
- The school will foster understanding of the school by communicating its values and goals to the larger community.

Successful Montessori Program

- An annual audit by a representative from a recognized Montessori training institute will assess the implementation of the Montessori program and the teachers, administrators, assessment tools, and outcomes. Non-academic goals (social and emotional development, respect for individual, independence, responsibility, leadership) will be examined closely.

Parent Participation and Satisfaction

- Parents will volunteer 40 hours per year.
- The school will attract more than enough applicants per year and experience a low turnover rate.

5. School Environment

Culture

Please describe the culture or ethos you expect to create in your school.

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.

There will be three overriding expectations for students' behavior while at school:

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

The classroom culture promotes an atmosphere of order, calm, and civility that is quite remarkable to an onlooker used to traditional public schools. It helps free the teachers from constant disciplining and it allows the students to concentrate on their work.

Discipline and Conduct

Please summarize the school's discipline policy or code of conduct (the unabridged policy can be part of your attachments).

Discipline

The structure of the Montessori classroom eliminates many of the discipline issues found in other classroom environments. In the first days of every school year, the students and teacher together develop basic class rules. If additional issues arise, the class as a community establishes ground rules so that they will be able to learn from the situation. The consequences for not following the ground rules and not accepting responsibility will depend upon the severity of the issue and will follow a hierarchy of consequences laid out in the code of conduct, including parent intervention and removal from the classroom or the school.

In the Middle School, integrity and responsibility will be heavily emphasized. Students will be expected to keep their word and to pull their weight in collaborative projects. In cases where they step out of bounds through physical or verbal abuse, cooperative discipline results. Students take an active role in analyzing their own behavior and are encouraged to learn from their mistakes. See the Cooperative Discipline Student Action Plan in Appendix I.

Code of Conduct

A series of workshops involving students, their families, school volunteers, trustees, and staff will be held following completion of the admissions process. The focus of the workshops will be to create three separate handbooks outlining rules, policies, and procedures governing behavior: 1) the Student Handbook, which will cover the behavior of the students and logical consequences for stepping out of bounds; 2) the Staff Handbook, which will cover the behavior of all staff; and 3) the Volunteer Handbook, which will cover the behavior of all volunteers.

6. Enrollment Policy

Number of Students

How many students will be enrolled each year over the five years of the charter?

In its first year of operation, the River Valley Charter School will enroll approximately 160 students from the five regional communities: Amesbury, Newbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, and West Newbury. In each of the following three years, student population will increase by approximately 32. The expected maximum enrollment in year five will be 256 students.

In the first year, there will be four Elementary I classes (each with 24 students aged 6-9) and three Elementary II classes (each with 22 students aged 9-11). In year two, with new and continuing students, there will be four Elementary II classes (each with 24 students aged 9-12). In year three, there will be two Middle School classes (each with 16 students aged 13). In year four, there will be three Middle School classes (each with 22 students aged 13-14). Our school will then have a total of eleven classes consisting of four Elementary I classes, four Elementary II classes, and three Middle School classes.

Recruitment

How will student applicants be recruited?

Upon receipt of its charter, the River Valley Charter School will hold public information sessions in each of the five towns to further publicize the school, its mission, and its admissions policies. We will then broadly advertise in local newspapers (the *Newburyport Daily News*, *Merrimac Valley Sunday*, *Amesbury News*, and *West Newbury News*) as well as public notices in all regional town halls, public libraries, community bulletin boards, and community access television.

In the unlikely event that there are not enough applicants in the initial enrollment period, the River Valley Charter School will re-advertise and lengthen its enrollment period. If there continue to be too few applicants, the River Valley Charter School will open its enrollment to "choice" students from other Massachusetts towns.

Lottery

Describe your enrollment process, including a plan for a lottery.

All interested parents will receive an application packet upon request. Prior to enrolling, families will attend an information session and agree in writing that they understand the mission, culture, and pedagogy of the school. (See Appendix J.) Because classes will be multi-age, the school will admit students by age rather than grade level. The application period will be open for a minimum of two weeks.

In expectation of excess applicants, the school will establish an enrollment lottery. The lottery will be overseen by the board of trustees and will be completely free of preference. Siblings of students, either previously or newly admitted, will be granted automatic acceptance. The lottery process will continue until all applicants have been chosen and assigned a placement number. Those students who are not accepted in the quota will be placed on a waiting list. Students will be drawn from this list, in order, if, or when, accepted applicants or current students refuse admission or leave the school during that given year. The waiting list does not supersede sibling priority. The board of trustees of the school will notify families in writing of their acceptance or denial.

7. Leadership and Governance

How will this school be governed?

The River Valley Charter School will be governed by a board of trustees and a director of the school with structured input from three constituency groups: the school's staff, board of advisors, and the parent's alliance.

Leadership

Who will be the school's leader?

The school will be led by a director, as yet unnamed. We will begin advertisement in December 1998 in publications across the nation.

What criteria will the founders use to choose the school's leader?

The director will have earned a Bachelor's degree from an accredited university and completed training from a program accredited by the American Montessori Society or Association Montessori International/USA. He or she will have a minimum of ten years combined experience as a teacher and/or director, preferably in a Montessori setting. The director will share commitment to the RVCS mission and be dedicated to starting and shaping a new school.

Job Descriptions

Summarize the job descriptions of the Board, School Director, and other key personnel.

Board of Trustees

The responsibilities of the board of trustees will be as follows:

- Set policy to carry out the mission of the school.
- Develop by-laws by which the board will be governed.
- Select a director of the school who will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school.
- Provide the director with support and periodic performance evaluations.
- Working through the director, ensure that all laws and regulations are being followed and that day-to-day operation is consistent with the mission of the school.
- In consultation with the director and the staff, develop and approve the budget for the school.
- Working with the director and representatives of the school's constituency groups, take a leadership role in the process of on-going strategic planning and self-study.
- Assume a key role in fundraising.
- Serve as ambassadors for the school.

The board will have between 12 and 14 members who will be drawn from the founding alliance and the community, based on individual expertise and commitment to the mission of the school. The original board will be appointed for terms of one, two, or three years. Subsequent members will be elected to fill vacancies as they arise. Terms will, therefore, be staggered to balance continuity with change.

The board will elect officers, including Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer and will organize its work into committees. Each committee will be chaired by a trustee with other members being drawn from the board and the three constituency groups.

The board will operate on the principles of policy governance as described in *Boards That Make a Difference* by John Carver, which we will ask all trustees to read. The concepts of policy governance are in keeping with the values and methods of the Montessori philosophy and in many ways parallel the structure of the classroom and the relationship between the teacher and the student.

Director of the School

The director, hired by the board of trustees, will have the following responsibilities:

- Working with the trustees, shape and uphold the school's mission, goals, and standards and articulate them to the wider community.
- Attract, retain, and manage well-qualified faculty and staff members.
- Carry out day to day administrative decisions and actions.
- Act as steward of the school's resources through sound financial management, maintenance of the physical plant, and long-range planning and fundraising.

Hiring, supervising, and evaluating teachers and staff will be the responsibility of the director. However, given the short time-frame for starting the school, the large task of developing an entirely new staff, and the possibility that it may take longer to find the director than to find teachers, the staffing committee of the transition team will begin the search for faculty. Once the director is chosen, he or she will head this committee and have the final say in hiring decisions.

Constituency Groups

The **staff** of the school will have regular meetings as a group and have representation on the board of trustees through the director.

The **board of advisors** will be comprised of specialists from the communities in our region and will be available to the board of trustees for advice and consultation. Members currently identified are as follows:

Robin Bullard Carter received an M.B.A. from Simmons College. She is a local financial consultant and the principal of MONEY\$ENSE. Robin has made a commitment to serve as financial advisor to the Finance Committee.

Bob Currier has a B.A. in Economics from the University of Hayward, CA. He is a real estate consultant for corporations doing land acquisitions, sales, permitting, financing, construction, and project management. He has extensive experience handling large municipal projects, having been on the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority for 10 years. His two children attended Montessori schools. He recognizes the value of a Montessori education.

Maureen Daley holds a B.A. in Literature from Ithaca College and an M. Ed. in Integrating the Arts in Education from Lesley College. She has trained at both the Northeast Montessori Institute and St. Nicholas Training Centre. She is the founder and current director of the Newburyport Montessori School and has been educating children in Newburyport Montessori schools for 26 years.

Kevin Finnegan is a Newburyport resident and State Representative from our district.

Laura Goldberg, a Newburyport resident, received her Ph.D. from Pacific Graduate School of Psychology in Palo Alto, CA. A licensed psychologist in two states, she has experience in evaluating children to identify special needs in local schools and hospitals. She is involved as an advisor to provide consultation services with regard to the social and emotional needs of children and special education services. She is an advocate of alternative educational experiences for children, having been educated in alternative elementary school. She is also a strong believer in school choice for parents.

Anne L. Fetter, a Newburyport resident, has a B.A. in economics from Williams College. She received her M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education from the University of New Hampshire. A certified teacher in two states, she also has a Ph.D. in Developmental and Educational Psychology from Boston College with a concentration in Research Methodology and Statistical Analysis. She is currently a research scholar affiliated with the Lesley College Center for Children, Families, and Public Policy. She is also the research director for the Say Yes to Education program, also at Lesley College. She has two young children who would hope to attend the River Valley Charter School.

Joan Steinberg, a resident of Amesbury, earned an M.Sp.Ed. from the University of North Carolina. She has 20 years experience as teacher, evaluator and administrator for children with special needs and is currently teaching at Institutes for Development in Chelmsford.

David Tibbetts, a long-time Newburyport resident, is an attorney and Director of Economic Affairs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He is also the community representative on the School Council at the Kelley School in Newburyport.

Rachel Webb, A.I.C.P., is a Newburyport resident with six years' experience in city planning, specializing in capital improvements program planning and long-range master planning. She attended the Masters in Regional Planning program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and has a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College. She has served as chair of the Newburyport Historical Commission. Currently she is a real estate sales associate and a parent of a preschool-age child. The **parent's alliance** will be an open and active alliance of parents. In addition to their own activities, they will have structured input to the board of trustees.

8. Capacity

Briefly explain how the founding group came together to form this school.

The founders came together as a group who recognized the need for an alternative in our public school system. Many of us met through our preschool children at the Newburyport Montessori School. We have greatly missed the values and effectiveness of the Montessori method as our children have moved into the local public schools.

Qualifications

Summarize each founder's and/or board member's experience and qualifications. Please describe what role each person will play and why he or she has chosen to support the application.

Founders

Jonnie Lyn Evans, a resident of Newbury for 13 years, earned a B.B.A. from the University of Massachusetts and an M.B.A. from Northeastern. Her previous careers include strategy consulting in the information industry and investment banking analysis. She is currently home schooling the eldest of her three children in a third grade curriculum. She has chosen to be involved in this application process in order to ensure that educational choice is available to all public school students. She will be on the transition team and a member of the board of trustees.

Miguel Gandert holds a B.U.S. and M.A. in Art from the University of New Mexico. Currently he is an associate professor in communication and journalism. His two daughters have attended Montessori schools. He will be involved with the parent's alliance.

Tom Getz has a B.A. in Education and an M.A. in English from the University of Toledo. Currently a middle school math teacher in the Marblehead school system, he has over 20 years of experience in education as teacher, elementary curriculum coordinator, and elementary school principal. He believes the Montessori approach is the most effective total education package that he has experienced during his varied education experience. His role will be to provide a link between the charter school and the local public school systems and will serve on the board of trustees.

Chris Getz has a B.S. in Education from the University of Maryland. She has been a real estate broker in the Newburyport area for 18 years. Chris and Tom have two children. She believes in the effectiveness of the Montessori method of education and feels that it should be an option for public school students. She will continue to serve on the transition team as well as the parent's alliance.

Linda Guthrie, a resident of Newbury since 1985, has a B.S. in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin and completed her postgraduate work in the Publishing Procedures Program at Harvard/Radcliffe. She suspended her career as

Vice President of Database Marketing at Fidelity Investments to raise two children who are home schooled. She believes that in today's culture, people are better than institutions. Her role will be to help launch the school and ensure its success.

Marie Hoffman received a B.A., with teaching certification in French, from Middlebury College. She earned an M.B.A. from Babson College, specializing in marketing and entrepreneurship. Marie believes Newburyport is a prime location for both a public alternative and a program that capitalizes on its unrivaled resources. What her family missed most about Montessori in three years in public school was the focus on social development and respect for individuality. She will be a member of the board of trustees or the transition team.

Nina Keery holds a B.A. in English and Communication Studies and an M.A. in English from Virginia Tech. Currently an associate professor of writing and literature at Massachusetts Bay Community College, she has worked in higher education for over ten years. She is a past member of the Newbury Elementary School Council, and volunteers in local classrooms. Two of her 5 children have attended Montessori. She supports the charter school initiative because of her commitment to choice and its potential for educational reform for existing public schools. She will serve on the board of trustees.

Jill Kelleher earned B.M. in Vocal Performance from Heidelberg College. She is currently a graduate student majoring in Applied Educational Psychology with a specialization in School Psychology at Northeastern University. She is also employed as an adult basic education teacher. Jill supports this application based on her experience with the Montessori philosophy. She will be involved in the parent's alliance.

Kathleen Klose has a Massachusetts Teaching Certificate for grades 1-6 and B.A.'s in both French Linguistics and Computer Science. She has worked in software design for educational software and scientific research, and has taught bilingual Spanish/English grades 1-3, English as a Second Language, and Computer Literacy. She currently teaches English at the Immigrant Learning Center in Malden. Her interest in RVCS stems both from her role as a mother and her strong commitment to public education. She will serve on the transition team's curriculum committee with special interest in the computer literacy and world language curricula.

Esther Lorences has a degree in Humanities from the Universidad Central de Barcelona and a Certificado de Aptitud Pedagógica from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. She has taught Spanish grammar and literature. Currently she works as a software localization specialist. She believes that the River Valley Charter School will improve public education by offering an alternative to traditional education. She will be part of the transition team and the parent's alliance.

Katherine Moore earned a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Massachusetts. Her most recent employment was in the software industry as a senior technical writer and editor. She is now at home full-time raising three young children. She is involved in the River Valley Charter School because she believes strongly in public access to excellent schools and has seen through her own children the effectiveness of the Montessori method. She will work on the transition team.

Leigh Olson Snow earned a B.A. in American and Environmental Studies from Williams College and a Master of Architecture from MIT. She has over ten years of experience in the practice of architecture and facilities management. She will serve on the transition team and the board of trustees out of a commitment to child-centered public education.

Joan Travis earned a B.A. in journalism from Syracuse University and an M.S. in Technical Writing from RPI. She has worked for the high technology industry as a technical writer and teacher. She supports RVCS because it would provide a small, non-competitive, and challenging learning environment. She recognizes the benefits of a Montessori education and welcomes it as a public school choice. She will serve on the transition team.

Amy Wallis earned a B.A. in French from Middlebury College and a Certificate in Elementary Education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. A mother of three, she has taught in both public and private elementary schools in Massachusetts. She is committed to choice in public education and feels the Montessori method would offer balance and diversity to existing public education in our region. She will be on the curriculum and instruction committee of the transition team.

Board of Trustees

From the founding alliance, Jonnie Lyn Evans, Tom Getz, Linda Guthrie, Marie Hoffman, Nina Keery, Leigh Snow, Katherine Moore, and Amy Wallis will either be on the board or be alternates. Final board composition will be voted upon, once the charter is granted, to round out the skills, experience, and resources of the group. The following is a partial list of members from our community who have expressed interest in and commitment to serving as Trustees of our school:

Bridgette Beinecke, a mother of two, has a B. Arch. from the University of Texas, Austin. She has been actively involved with schools in Alaska, Texas and Massachusetts and has served on the boards of several non-profit organizations.

Susan Heersink graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a B.A. in Art and Architectural History and from Althouse Teachers' College in London, Ontario. She taught 5th and 6th graders, then went to Uganda for a year and a half where she taught art. Sue has four daughters, actively volunteers in the community, and is an amateur violinist with the Northern Essex Orchestra.

Michael Mroz is a marketing and public relations consultant living in Newburyport. He has a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame. He owns his own firm, Endeavor Associates, in Boston, which specializes in target marketing.

Spencer Purinton earned a B.A. in History from Brown University. He has two daughters, one attending Montessori pre-school, and is an active fundraiser for Brookwood School in Manchester and Governor Dummer Academy in Byfield. He is president of the Richard Purinton Company, a manufacturer's representative firm in Andover.

John Ryan received a Masters in Public Finance/Administration from Pennsylvania State University and has become nationally recognized as a leading educator of advanced property valuation methodologies. He is owner and president of a professional consulting group that provides property appraisal and information systems.

Clarence (Lance) Travis is a research director for a consulting services company and has been in technical and marketing management for high-technology companies for several years. He earned a B.S. in Mathematics/Physics and M.S. in Electrical Engineering from Union College in Schenectady and an M.B.A. from Boston University. He has two children, one who attended Montessori pre-school and kindergarten.

Partner Organizations

Please provide a list of organizations that may partner with your school (include accompanying letters of support in your attachments).

As stated in our mission, River Valley Charter School intends to form close ties with a variety of organizations in the region as curriculum partners and as hosts for interns from the middle school.

The following have written letters of intent (see Appendix B) to work with our school:

Massachusetts Audubon Society
Historical Society of Olde Newbury
Merrimac River Watershed Council
Parker River Clean Water Association
Custom House Maritime Museum
Jane Carolan (a nationally recognized architectural historian)

We anticipate forming relationships with several other organizations as well. A list of possible partners is in Appendix A.

We also have connections within the local, regional, and national Montessori community. In addition to research on the Web and reading literature, we have visited four Montessori schools with elementary and middle school programs, in Ipswich, Newburyport, and Lexington, MA, and in Stratham, NH. We will establish reciprocal relationships with the American Montessori Society in New York, the North American Montessori Teacher's Association in Ohio, and the Montessori Resource Center in California. We anticipate this larger community, with shared values and goals and a wealth of experience, to be a great resource and a support in the establishment of our school. Our network will provide us with a pool of qualified candidates for teachers, and a resource for training, conferences, seminars, and publications.

9. Facilities and Student Transportation

Facilities

Describe the viable options for a facility for this school.

We currently have two possible approaches to establishing our school facility:

Option 1: Build a new school. We are working with several companies (including GE Modular and Pope Building Systems) to design a new facility from modular or pre-fabricated units. We have begun negotiations on three separate sites in Newburyport that are on the border between residential areas and the industrial park. These sites provide open land with city utilities and good street access from all towns in our region.

Option 2: Lease the Salisbury Memorial School. The current occupants of this building, currently functioning as the elementary school for the town, will vacate it this summer for a new school that will open in the fall. The school houses 24 classrooms, a large gym, a cafeteria, and more than ample support space; it has adequate parking and playing fields. We have toured the facility and begun discussions with the committee charged with determining the new use for the building. We will make a formal presentation to them on December 16, 1998 to become one of several groups being considered for tenancy.

Why were these sites chosen?

These sites were chosen because they meet the school's needs for space and location within our budget and schedule constraints.

Option 1: The three sites in Newburyport are geographically central to all towns in our region and provide ample outdoor space. The modular and pre-fabricated building systems are affordable, flexible, and can be installed quickly.

Option 2: The Salisbury Memorial School, while somewhat less centrally located, is an existing school with ample space and many amenities.

What renovations might be required? How might the renovations be financed?

Option 1: This will be new construction, performed by the supplier. Site work required will include utilities, paving, lighting, and fields. We will either lease the building from the supplier or finance through a tax-exempt bond from the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency.

Option 2: The school is currently fully functional and would meet our space needs with minimal architectural changes. Utility and alarm work needed to satisfy code requirements have not yet been determined. We will finance this work either through grants or a tax-exempt bond from the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency.

Transportation

Describe the transportation services that the school will provide to eligible students.

We plan to provide bus transportation to the students residing in the town in which the school is located. Transportation for the remaining students will consist of bus transportation to and from one or two central locations per town. As soon as the enrollment process is complete, we will get bids from the following local transit companies: Salter School Transportation in Newburyport; Laidlaw Transit Company in Merrimac; and Bruce Transportation Group in Amesbury.

To assist families transporting students to the centrally located bus stops, the school will provide a network through which families can develop ride shares and car pools. Providing this transportation will be one of the options by which parents may fulfill their volunteer obligations.

10. A Day in the Life of a Student

Describe an entire day in the life of a student in this proposed school.

Erin, an Elementary II Student

8:30 Arrival

Upon arrival, Erin refers to the job chart to see what Classroom-Community Responsibilities she has this week. Unfortunately, it's her week to tend to trash removal. That done, Erin checks her current science project. She waters, feeds, and then records data about the effects of alternating light exposure on plants. After that she refers to the whiteboard to see what is expected of her today. She thinks about how she will organize her work time to ensure that she is ready to start the new Block Project that is identified on the whiteboard.

9:00 - 9:45 Class Meeting

Erin's teacher, Tom, returns yesterday's work to students while they take their seats at class meeting. He instructs Erin to archive her Ancient China work. Her other papers have a note reminding her to look up last week's spelling words and encourages her to utilize the Montessori Multiplication Checkerboard to review the multiplication work she missed. The note also suggests she work with her classmate John because he especially enjoys working with the checkerboard.

Suggestion Box: Classroom Microwave Usage

During the class meeting, Erin's teacher, Tom, reminds the class that today is Conflict Resolution Day. Tom reads suggestions, complaints and compliments about the classroom from the Suggestion Box without mentioning the identity of the complainer or victim. Today, the major complaint is about the classroom microwave. (Erin put the note in the box because every time she uses the microwave, she finds someone's spillovers in it.) Tom's role is to ask questions. The students brainstorm about potential solutions. After some discussion, Erin reminds her class members that they all stand to lose use of the microwave if it can't be used responsibly, i.e., left clean for its next user. The group decides to try one more week of unmonitored use before resorting to a sign-up sheet for microwave usage, or worse, loss of the privilege.

Conflict Resolution: Prejudicial Namecalling

Tom randomly breaks the students into four groups and hands out a conflict resolution vignette. He requests the individual groups spend 15 minutes figuring out how to handle a situation like the one they were assigned. Erin's group needs to come up with ways to deal with prejudicial name calling in a situation where one of her friend's parents verbally attacks someone in front of her. Tom tells the group they will have more time to prepare and will share their ideas at the end of the week.

Introduction to New Block Project: Ancient Egypt

Tom uses the rest of class meeting to introduce the next Block Project: Ancient Egypt. Tom asks the class what sort of things they think are important to learn about ancient civilizations. He asks them to suggest ways in which they could demonstrate their knowledge of a Block Project. Erin records her understanding of Tom's expectations in her journal. Finally, Tom plays a short audio tape about Ramses and reminds the class about their lesson on story elements: genre, character, setting, plot, climax, resolution, etc. He urges them to listen closely as they will be expected to recall key parts of the story later in written form.

9:45 - 12:15 Choice Work Time

Erin checks her weekly work plan, which lays out activities to meet her individual learning contract. She begins her choice work with a study of the fundamental needs of people of ancient Egypt. She collects resources and begins to take notes for a report that details forms of shelter, food, clothing, safety, transportation, religion, and art. After about an hour, Erin decides to grab a quick snack in the kitchen area. She returns to her work renewed and ready to attack another area of her contract.

Erin decides to fulfill the daily math section of her contract. She asks John to work with her. His demonstration seems to solidify the "regrouping" aspect she continually missed. With great excitement, Erin approaches Tom and asks him to come witness how she has finally mastered the checkerboard! As soon as Tom finishes the short homonym lesson he is giving to a small group, he meets with Erin. He knows that she has had difficulty with large digit multiplication and he is pleased to know that she will now be better equipped to attempt abstract mathematical calculations. He asks her questions which lead her to determine that abstract math is just like the concrete checkerboard version but without physical representation. Tom asks, "Could this shed light on why or how numbers were invented in ancient times?"

Next, Erin refers to the whiteboard and sees that Tom has made the questions for the Ramses audio available. She works on answering these questions and puts her answers in a folder for Tom. He will review and return them for group discussion. Then Tom asks Erin to join him and two other students for a direct lesson on sentence analysis. Using select sentences from each student's Ramses questions, he has them cut sentences. Tom then asks, "What is the action word in this sentence?" Erin places a red circle, indicating Verb, on the action phrase. Tom asks, "who or what is doing the action?" In this way, Erin identifies both the subject and predicate of her sentences. Erin has now fulfilled her language arts requirement for the day.

Erin looks at the clock and sees she has half an hour before lunch and recess. She decides to utilize this time to begin plans for an Egyptian art project. After reviewing a number of resources, she prepares a proposal for Tom that lists potential projects: Mummies--their role in ancient Egyptian burials with an accompanying homemade model; or Pyramids--a comparison of step and sloping pyramids with history and plans for comparative models.

12:15 - 1:15 Lunch & Recess

Erin eats quickly so that she and a few of her classmates can spend time outside playing the ancient game of *T'Yow Fang Zi* (a form of Chinese hopscotch) they learned during last block on ancient China.

1:15-1:45 Silent Reading

Erin uses half of her silent reading time to finish a novel set in modern day China. The other half of silent reading is spent looking at Egyptian art books.

1:45 - 2:45 Afternoon Activities

At this time, half of the class departs to meet the drama teacher. Erin stays in class with the other half for individual math instruction. Tom hands out Beat-the-Clock worksheets to the six other students seated at various tables. Students are to complete 100 single-digit multiplication facts as quickly as possible. Last week, Erin finished in 9 minutes; this week she hopes for 6 so she can progress to the next level of mathematical instruction. Then she and the others will switch with the other half of the class to do drama.

Erin has drama today. After hearing about the Egypt block from Tom, the drama teacher gears her activities toward ancient Egypt. The drama teacher proposes staging an Egyptian burial scene. Some of the class spends time on rudimentary costumes and props (which they may later incorporate into their Egyptian projects). Erin and the rest of her classmates rehearse rowing the Nile to deliver the body; mummification; the funeral procession; offerings; etc. They plan to ask Tom if they could schedule time for a presentation for him. One of their greatest hopes is to "stump Tom" by teaching him something about ancient Egypt that he didn't know first.

2:45 -3:00

Erin uses this time to archive the work that was returned this morning. Afterward, Erin records her daily activities in her binder so she knows where she has spent her time today and where she might need to focus tomorrow. Finally Erin checks the whiteboard for homework. Tonight's assignment should be fun. Tom has asked the students to identify anything at home that has an Egyptian influence. Erin has already thought of one: the pyramid on the back of a one-dollar bill.

III BUDGET, FISCAL MANAGEMENT, AND HUMAN RESOURCES

1. *Budget*

2. Budget Narrative

Revenue and Expenses

Briefly justify expense projections and show the calculations of each line item in the budget.

Revenue

Because students will come from five different towns in unknown proportions, a weighted average per pupil **Tuition** is calculated by appropriating an estimated percentage to each district in the region.

In addition to a \$150,000 federal **Public Grant** dispersed to each Commonwealth Charter School in year one, and smaller amounts in the next two years (estimated at \$75,000 each of those years), **Private Grants** of approximately \$60,000 for the start up period and \$210,000 spread over the next four years are being pursued. When the charter is granted, a list of corporations and foundations identified by a nationwide search as amenable to elementary education, charter schools, education reform, history, science, cultural education and/or nature conservation will be targeted. **Other Fundraising** (see Appendix H), in the amount of \$50,000 in the first year and \$66,000 over the next four years, will consist of business partnerships, individual gifts and grassroots fundraising. In addition, the **Day Care Program** will generate approximately \$43,200 in year one and will expand proportionately as our student population grows.

Expenses

Professional Salaries

The **Professional Salaries** listed are the mid-range of a salary schedule based on education and experience. There is a three percent (3%) cost of living adjustment added each year. **Health Insurance** will be approximately \$5,000 per staff member, while **FICA, Worker's Compensation and Medicare** are estimated as a percentage of total salaries (7.5%, 2% and 1.45% respectively). An amount equal to approximately \$1,000 per staff member will be apportioned to **Staff Development** to cover three continuing education events per year. An estimated expense of \$2,000 in year one for **Substitute Teachers** assumes 10 sick days per year per teacher at \$50 per day.

Services and Activities

Specialists in Art, Music and Foreign Languages will be contracted on an hourly basis to supplement parent volunteers and classroom teachers. The figure of \$48,960 in the first year for **Special Education Services** represents one hour per week of services for 17% percent of the student population with an occupational therapist, physical therapist, or speech and language therapist. The estimate for a **School Psychologist** assumes that 6% of students per year require a psychological evaluation, at \$750, and one meeting, at \$100. The amount allowed for **Educational Consultants** includes the annual audits. The allotment for **Curriculum Development** assumes the hiring of a firm like *Montessori Made Manageable, Inc* to merge the Montessori curriculum with the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*. This task will be completed in the start-up phase for grades 1-3 and 4-6, at a cost of \$3,500, and in year two for grades 7 and 8, at a cost of \$2,000. The cost of \$2,500 in start-up and year one for **Legal Council** includes \$1,500 to establish a tax-exempt entity for fundraising. The services of an **Accountant** will be required for the annual audit, at \$2,000 per year. A **Standardized Test** will be administered to all students, at a cost of \$23 per student the first year, reducing to \$10 per student in subsequent years. **Custodial** services are based on an estimated cost of \$300 per classroom. Care of the environment is an integral part of the curriculum; students are encouraged to participate in maintaining the classroom. A nutritious, but not necessarily hot, **lunch** will be offered to each child at \$150 per student. Starting in the school's fourth year, this service operation will be entirely managed by the middle school students. **General Liability Insurance** is estimated at \$100 per student; this cost increases as enrollment increases. The **Telephone** bill is estimated at \$200 per month, **Postage and Shipping** at \$50 per student. **Printing and Advertising** expenses are estimated at \$3,500 per year, \$2000 for start-up. The **Fundraising** budget will be \$2,000 per year and \$2,000 for the start-up phase.

Supplies and Equipment

The cost of **Instructional Materials** is based on an estimate of \$20,000 per classroom. Montessori learning materials are an integral part of each classroom and are purchased from companies that make them according to specifications. Our source for materials will be Nienhuis Montessori based in Mountain View, California. These materials have a long term value, often lasting ten years or more before needing to be replaced. **Furniture and Equipment** include tables, chairs, shelves for materials and computers and is based on a figure of \$5,000 per classroom. **Books and Other Supplies**, at a one-time cost of \$1,000 per classroom and an additional \$500 per year to maintain them, includes books and any other non-consumable materials needed to furnish the classroom. We estimate **Musical and Athletic Equipment**, including a piano, other musical instruments and athletic equipment such as balls, etc., at \$1,000 per classroom and \$500 per year thereafter. The figure for **Computer Equipment** represents one for each classroom, at \$2,500 each. **Administrative Equipment** is a first year only cost of approximately \$10,000 to outfit the school office and \$1,400 during start-up. This includes the purchase of a computer (\$3000), copy machine (\$5000), fax machine (\$500) and phone system (\$1500). **Consumable Supplies**, at \$50 per student, accounts for all materials used by students on a daily basis and **Administrative Supplies**, at \$25 per student, includes all office-related consumables.

Facility

Rent of land and/or a facility is estimated at a cost of \$13 per square foot and **Utilities** at \$2 per square foot for a total facility expense of \$20,000 in the start-up phase and \$240,000 in the first year. This expense will increase with each of the four classrooms that are added over three years to reach a total of \$375,000 in year four and each year henceforth. Utilities include HVAC, electricity, telephone and other common space services.

Financial Management

Please explain who will manage the schools' finances and what controls will be put in place.

Primary responsibility for fiscal management of the River Valley Charter School lies with the director of the school and the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will be chaired by a board of trustees member and two volunteer financial experts: Robin Bullard Carter and John Ryan. (See biographies in Leadership and Governance).

The director will be responsible for the hands on, day-to-day financial management of the school, with the Finance Committee acting in an advisory and monitoring capacity. An administrative assistant will provide support to the director in carrying out her fiscal obligations to the school. He or she will process payroll and place orders for school supplies and material. The assistant will also assist in any record keeping as requested by the director.

Faculty will have input to the budget regarding equipment and materials needed. Faculty will also affect the budget via salary negotiations and benefits.

The board of trustees will give final approval to the annual budget. After obtaining any pertinent information from the director and the Finance Committee, the board of trustees will be responsible for developing the long-term financial plan, and for making any major financial decisions for the school.

3. Human Resources

Please indicate the number of faculty to be hired and provide a summary of the hiring criteria for the school's teachers and staff.

The River Valley Charter School anticipates hiring 7 head teachers and 7 assistant teachers in the first academic year. One head and one assistant teacher will be added for each new class (see budget). A special needs coordinator/instructor will be hired as needed.

Head teachers will have earned a Bachelor's degree from an accredited university and completed primary/elementary training from an accredited AMS or AMI program. They will have experience teaching in a Montessori setting. Head teachers will also be dedicated to starting and shaping a new school and to working as a mentor for assistant teachers.

Assistants will have completed certification as an assistant teacher in an accredited AMS or AMI program. The position requires a B.A. or B.S., and dedication to starting and shaping a new school. Each assistant will have one formal evaluation meeting each semester where the director and teacher will share concerns about the classroom and attempt to solve any issues.

The special needs coordinator/instructor will have credentials and experience relevant to this position in a public school and, ideally, some experience and background in the Montessori method.

To some extent art, music, movement, physical education, and gym will be incorporated into the classroom by the teachers. Specialist Instructors in these areas will be contracted on an hourly basis and parent volunteers will also play a large role in meeting these needs.

What will be the salary range and benefits for teachers and administrators?

Head teacher salaries will be \$36,000; assistant teachers \$25,000; the special needs coordinator \$29,000. The director's salary will be \$60,000 and the administrative assistant's \$24,000. The school will provide health Insurance coverage for all employees.

How will faculty and administrators be evaluated?

Each staff member will be formally observed and evaluated by the director three times a year. This process will allow for an appeal to the board of trustees. The director will make written comments on strengths and areas for improvement. An end-of-year evaluation will include comments, self-evaluation, and peer observation.

The director will be evaluated by the accountability committee, which will accept input from trustees, staff, and parents and submit a draft evaluation for board approval. The evaluation will be based on the five key goals of the school--high academic standards, measurable academic progress, community links, successful implementation of the Montessori method, and parent participation—as well as fiscal and human resource management. The format will include ranking in each area and overall, with comments addressing accomplishments and goals for improvement, and the director's self-evaluation.

IV. ACTION PLAN

Outline the strategy for getting the school open.

Upon receipt of the charter, the founding alliance will combine with other supporters and advisors to form the transition team. The transition team will be responsible for getting the school up and running. It will divide into six committees: governance, staffing, enrollment, site, finance, and curriculum.

The primary objective of the transition team will be to establish the board of trustees in order to get the governance structure in place and functioning and to provide the board with a list of qualified candidates for director. At the same time, it will be performing crucial early tasks identified in the timeline below. Once the board and director are in place, the transition team will work for them, support them, and be accountable to them. Members of the transition team will have the clear understanding that their term is finite (ending in August) and their role temporary. All founders wishing continued input into the running of the school will find places within the Governance structure.

Specify how responsibilities will be delegated and to whom. Provide a clear timeline from receipt of the charter to the opening of the school.

Objectives	Start Date	Lead Person
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE		
Final board of trustees composition	February	L.Snow
Orient board of trustees	February	L.Snow
Write bylaws and initiate formal legal structure	March	Legal Counsel
Refine governance strategy, process, and roles	March	L.Snow
Establish committees	March	L.Snow
Develop and file articles of incorporation	March	Legal Counsel
Apply for tax exemption	March	Legal Counsel
Develop board calendar	March	L.Snow
Research and secure insurance	March	L.Snow
Establish and launch parent's alliance	March	E. Lorences
All-school meetings to establish codes of conduct	May-Aug	Director
STAFFING COMMITTEE		
Develop job descriptions/advertise positions	Jan./Feb.	N. Keery
Develop hiring policies and personnel procedures	February	N. Keery
Review applications/interview candidates	Feb./March	T. Getz
Hire teachers, specialists and administrator	March-May	Director
Develop professional development plans	May	Director
Hold staff orientation and plan staff retreat	June	Director
ENROLLMENT COMMITTEE		
Hold informational meetings for interested families	February	M.Hoffman
Advertise admissions policy and recruit applicants	February	J. Travis
Distribute information to potential applicants & families	February	M.Hoffman
Hold lottery with impartial selection group	March	J.Evans
Mail admission letters and establish waiting list	April	J.Travis
Confirm acceptances	April	J.Evans
Send EOE an enrollment report	May	Director
Request student records	May	Director
Hold parent and student orientation series	June	Director

Objectives	Start Date	Lead Person
SITE COMMITTEE		
Select site and begin preliminary negotiations	Jan-March	C. Getz
Code, fire & safety review	Feb-March	L. Snow
Design renovations/construction	Feb-March	L. Snow
Negotiate final lease	Feb-March	C. Getz
Secure financing	March	C. Getz
Property insurance/security	March	C. Getz
Contract for renovations/construction	April	B. Currier
Acquisition of furniture and materials	May	Director
Final inspections and testing	June	B. Currier
Custodial arrangements	June	Director
Completion of renovations/construction	July	B. Currier
Technology installation	July	Director
Prepare and arrange classrooms	August	Director
FINANCE COMMITTEE		
Develop and initiate fundraising plans	January	M. Hoffman
Define interim fiscal management process	February	M. Hoffman
Establish banking arrangements	March	M. Hoffman
Establish budget development & oversight system	March	R.Bullard-Carter
Develop cash flow plan & monitoring	March	R.Bullard-Carter
Establish accounting & payroll systems	May	Administrator
Refine staff benefits budget	May	Director
Identify check writers, signers, and signature amount limits	Feb	M. Hoffman
Identify auditor/preparer	Mar	R.Bullard-Carter
Entitlement data collection & reporting	Mar	R.Bullard-Carter
Schedule of board financial reviews	Mar	M. Hoffman
Design reports and forms	Mar	J. Travis
Insurance	Mar	K. Moore
Arrange transportation and food services	Apr	K. Moore
Develop before and after school care program	May	E. Lorences
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE		
Consult with students previously identified for SPED	March	L. Goldberg
Contact SPED administrators from previous schools	May	Director
Develop ILCs to align with previous IEPs	June	Director
Define requirements for SPED services	June	Director
Coordinate alignment of curriculum (Mont. w/ MCF)	March	K. Moore
Further develop Curriculum Partners Program	March	T. Getz
Refine assessment plan and schedule	March	T. Getz
Review curriculum and assessment procedures w/district	May	Director
Create school calendar and schedule	May	Director
Determine age/grade/cluster configuration	May	Dir. /Teachers
Conduct workshops to develop codes of conduct	July	Director

V. Appendices

- A. Regional Resources
- B. Letters from Potential Partners
- C. Pictures of Montessori Materials from Nienhuis Catalog
- D. Evidence of Success in Public Montessori Schools
- E. The Five Great Lessons
- F. Sample Curriculum Correlation
- G. Fundraising Plan for Startup Phase
- H. Sample Middle School Cycle Plan
- I. Cooperative Discipline: Student Action Plan
- J. Family/School Commitment Form

Regional Resources

Newburyport

Historical Society of Olde Newbury
(Cushing House Museum)
Customs House Maritime Museum
Maudslay State Park Arts Center
The Children's Theater at Maudslay
Firehouse Center for the Performing Arts
Newburyport Public Library
Newburyport YWCA

Amesbury

Barlett Museum
Macy-Colby House
John Greenleaf Whittier Home
Lowell's Boat Shop
Amesbury Carriage Museum
Woodsom Farm-City Park
Cider Hill Orchard
Amesbury Public Library

Newbury

Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities
(SPNEA)
 School House (lower green)
 Coffin House
 Spencer-Pierce-Little Farm
Old Town Hill (Trustees of Reservations)
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge
Parker River Clean Water Association
Plum Island
Sunshine Dairy
Tendercrop Farm
Newbury Public Library

Salisbury

Salisbury Public Library
Pettingill Farm
Cold Springs Farm dairy

West Newbury

West Newbury Public Library
Long Hill Farm Orchard
West Newbury Historical Society (Hills House)

Other resources

Massachusetts Audubon
Haverhill Historical Society
Essex County Greenbelt Association
Chambers of Commerce

Letters from Potential Partners

The following are letters from our committed partners to date. We expect additional commitments from several more soon. In addition, we intend to pursue commitments from the resources listed in Appendix A.

Montessori Materials

This appendix illustrates some of the materials specifically designed for Montessori classrooms.

Evidence of Success in Montessori Public Schools

The rapid growth of public Montessori programs is so recent that there is still not much hard data on their success. The studies that have been published are overwhelmingly positive.

One of the earliest studies of public Montessori, by Dr. Time Duax on the McDowell school in Milwaukee in 1989, showed the particular benefit of the Montessori program for children of low socio-economic status. Of the children in the Montessori program he studied, 36% were eligible for the federal hot-lunch program and 50% were minorities. Yet 44.5% fell in the "high achievement" range of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, compared to 23% nationwide. In addition, teachers in a blind study gave McDowell graduates the highest ranking on five characteristics: using basic skills, being responsible, showing enthusiasm for class topics, being individualistic, and exhibiting multicultural awareness.

In a more recent report, in 1993 the Montessori Public School Consortium published the following data:

Reports from the Field

This information for the 1992-93 school year was obtained by telephone contact. These schools were selected because they represent the largest and broadest of the Montessori schools in the public school system.

School:	Buffalo (Bennett Park)	Cincinnati (North Avondale)	Dallas (L.L. Hotchkiss)	Denver (Mitchell)	Kansas City (Faxon)	Milwaukee (Greenfield)
Year program began	1976	1976	1984	1985	1988	1982
Number of children in program	600	550	560	525+	300	460
Number of children on waiting lists	100's	1,000+	100's	350	N/a	500+
Ethnic/racial makeup (%) (B-blk, W-white, H-hisp., O-other)	B-50 W-40 O-10	B-40 W-40 H-20	B-50 W-50	B/H-60 O-40	B-60 W-40	B-50 W-50
Percentage achieving at or above grade level in reading	---	79%	74%	---	96%	59%
Achievement ranking within school system	Middle	Top 1/3	1 st /2 nd	2 nd out of 81	Above average	11 th out of 107

In 1998, the Cincinnati Public Schools issued an evaluation report on their magnet programs, including the following findings:

- In a comparison of over-demand for the various magnet programs in the system, Montessori ranked second, with 5.4 times as many applications as spaces available.
- In a ranking of schools serving grades 7 and 8, the Clark Montessori school was 2nd in math and 4th in reading on the Stanford 9 Achievement test, out of ten other magnet programs, and 6th overall on the Ohio Proficiency test.
- The report recommended adding another Montessori school to the magnet program because "the Montessori program continues to receive applications each year far beyond their capacity to accept, and two Montessori schools earned the highest ratings on effectiveness and achievement gains."

Montessori's Five Great Lessons

Montessori uses its *Five Great Lessons* as an introduction to all topics; they provide a "Big Picture" to demonstrate how the sciences, art, history, language, geography, are interrelated. From here, students are introduced to increasing levels of detail and complexity within these broad areas.

The Story of the Creation of the Universe describes how minerals and chemicals formed the elements; how matter transforms to three states of solid, liquid, and gas; how particles joined together and formed the earth; how heavier particles sank to the earth's core and volcanoes erupted; how mountains were formed and the atmosphere condensed into rain, creating oceans, lakes, and rivers. From this story, students are introduced to lessons in physics, astronomy, geology, and chemistry. For example, they learn about light, heat, convection currents, gravity, galaxies, planetary systems, the earth's crust, volcanoes, erosion, climate and physical geography.

The Coming of Life explains how single-cell and multi-celled forms of life became embedded in the bottom of the sea and formed fossils. It traces the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic periods, beginning with the kingdom of trilobites and ending with human beings. The teacher indicates on a time line where vertebrates began, followed by fish and plants, then amphibians, reptiles, and birds and mammals. This lesson is the basis for lessons in chemistry, nutrition, categories of animals and plants, care and requirements of different animals, and their interrelationship with an ecological system. Students are introduced to formal scientific language of zoology, botany, and anthropology.

The Story of Humans introduces human beings and their unique endowments: intellect and will. The aim is for the children to imagine what life was like for early humans. This lesson is the basis for lessons in prehistory and the emergence of ancient civilizations. Students are introduced to an analytical tool to compare cultures. They learn how climate and topography influence culture and political geography.

The Story of Language describes the origin, structure, and types of writing and speaking. It begins with a discussion of the Egyptians, who had two kinds of symbols: one for ideas and one for sounds. The story goes on to describe the Phoenicians, who used the Egyptians' sound pictures but not their idea pictures. Next, it describes contributions of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans. From this lesson, students use grammar materials (described in Appendix C), which help them examine how language is put together, and refine capitalization and punctuation. Students are introduced to the study of the origin of English words from other languages, the meanings of prefixes and suffixes, and different forms of writing such as poetry, narrative, plays. Older children may study Egyptian hieroglyphics or American Indian picture writing.

The Story of Numbers emphasizes how human beings needed a language for their inventions to convey measurement and how things were made. The story describes how the Sumerians and Babylonians had a number system based on sixty, which is the reason for our sixty-second minute and sixty-minute hour. Greek, Roman, and Chinese numbers are introduced. The story describes how our Arabic numerals are similar to numbers found in a cave in India from two thousand years ago. These Indian numerals had something that no other number system had: the zero. This story is the basis for the children's learning of mathematics, which is integrated in all studies. For example, large numbers are needed in measuring time and space in astronomy; negative numbers are needed when measuring temperature changes; triangulation is needed to reestablish property boundaries after the Nile flooded ancient Egypt.

Sample Curriculum Correlation

We will contract with consultants Montessori Made Manageable, Inc. to correlate the Montessori *Scope and Sequence* with the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks*. This firm specializes in adapting state and local requirements for public schools. Recently they completed a curriculum correlation for the South Shore Charter School in Hull, MA, and they have also done correlations for the following schools:

Florida: Dade County Public Schools
Lee County Public Schools
Virginia Shuman Young

Ohio: Dayton Public Schools
Cincinnati Public Schools

Tennessee: Hull Jackson Montessori

Arizona: Phoenix Public School

Texas: Sacred Heart Montessori School

California: San Diego Unified School District

The principals of Montessori Made Manageable, Inc.:

Barbara Scott, M.Ed., is an American Montessori Society (AMS) certified Montessori teacher, experienced in private and public schools since 1968. She has implemented and maintained a Montessori magnet within a traditional school of 1,800 students. She has a Master's degree in learning disabilities from the University of Miami, Bachelor degree in elementary education K-6 and in exceptional education K-12 from the University of South Florida, and AMS 6-9 certification from North Carolina Center for Montessori Teacher Education in Raleigh, NC.

Lisa Ricke Adarve, M.Ed., is an AMS certified Montessori teacher experienced in private and public schools since 1984. She is an experienced Montessori program coordinator, responsible for phasing in a total school Montessori magnet program as well as administrative duties. She has teaching experience in preprimary, primary, upper-elementary, in small parent-cooperative private school, large inner-city setting, and suburban magnet environment. She has a Master's degree in educational administration from the University of Cincinnati, a Bachelor's degree in Montessori education 6-9 and elementary education K-8 from Xavier University, and AMS 9-12 certification from Montessori Teacher Education Center in San Leandro, CA.

The following sample correlation shows science lessons from the Montessori *Scope and Sequence* for ages 6-9 as the title of each box, with the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* learning standards covered within each lesson. Note that several Montessori lessons (e.g., zoology and botany) go well beyond the Massachusetts *Frameworks* for this age group.

Fundraising Plan for Startup Phase

The fundraising goal of the River Valley Charter School for the start-up phase (February 1999 - August 1999) is \$260,000. Of this, \$150,000 will be in the form of public grants, \$60,000 will be pursued from large corporations and foundations, and \$50,000 will be solicited from local businesses and individuals. An additional \$50,000 funding will be pursued from large corporations and foundations.

Our research included conversations with the Pioneer Institute, with existing charter schools, database searches at the Associated Grantmakers of Massachusetts Library (the Foundation Center Search and the Associated Grantmakers Database) as well as directories (the Massachusetts Grantmakers Directory and the National Directory of Corporate Giving). This research has identified the following corporations and foundations as possible donors to elementary education, education reform, charter schools and/or science and history programs.

The Amelia Peabody Foundation

The Mary Alice Arakelian Foundation

The L. David and E. Virginia Baldwin Foundation

The Achelis Foundation

The Bodman Foundation

The Dresser Industry Corporation Giving Program

The Foundation for Microbiology

The J.C. Penney Corporation Giving Program

The Walton Family Foundation, Inc.

The High Meadow Foundation

The Trustees of the Lowell Institute

The Apple Partners in Education

The AT&T Foundation

The Ford Foundation

The Hewlett Packard Foundation

The IBM Corporate Support Program

The Toshiba America Foundation

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

The Pew Charitable Trusts

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

The Hewlett Packard Foundation

The Lucent Technologies Foundation

The Bell Atlantic Foundation

The Bell South Foundation

The Exxon Education Foundation

The Carnegie Foundation

Sample Middle School Cycle Plan

Theme: Independence/Interdependence

Overview

Independence is like the yarn of a tapestry. It maintains its identity of color, strength, and potential. Yet when intertwined with other strands, the yarn takes on new colors, new strength, and new possibilities.

In **Language Arts** we will be concentrating on the themes of independence and interdependence that are woven into the novels we will be studying. Using writing skills and artistic expression, we will discover our own place in the tapestry.

In **Social Studies** we will look at the three branches of government and how their independent identity helps to contribute to the function of the whole. We will look at the ideas that helped to weave our levels of government. Finally we will examine the strands of public officials and processes of law.

In **Science and Mathematics** we will examine independence and interdependence in nature. All elements of the earth--living and non-living--seem to simultaneously act autonomously and rely on other elements in order to survive.

Throughout this theme we will focus on how we as individuals can contribute to our school community. Our strengths and weaknesses alike become part of a tapestry. How might we support others?

Guiding Questions:

Language Arts and Social Studies

- Are we interdependent on one another?
- What influences our choices?
- What are the effects of our personal choices?

Science and Math

- How are cells independent and interdependent?
- How does a classification system show independence and interdependence?
- How are our physical traits dependent on our heredity?

What You Will Learn:

Language Arts and Social Studies

- Understanding of federalism through identification of local, state, and national levels of government.
- Understanding of the separation of powers.
- Identification of the main functions of each branch of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) at the national, state, and local levels.
- Describe the process for making, amending, or removing laws.
- Understanding of the role of public officials in government.

Science and Math

- How to construct and use a dichotomous classification system.
- To compare and contrast plant and animal cells.
- To explain biological diversity in terms of genetic trait transmission.
- How cells reproduce.
- To organize living things using the Five Kingdoms.

What You Will Do:

Language Arts and Social Studies

- Tour city halls in the area; interview mayors, selectmen, and city councilors.
- Attend a city council and a town meeting.
- Research a topic from history to be debated in a city council or town meeting; compare and contrast the forms.

Science and Math

- In teams, conduct on-going visual shoreline surveys of local streams and rivers.
- Using real survey techniques, record observations scientifically and make drawings in a sketch book of the habitats and wildlife.

Presentation of Work:

Language Arts and Social Studies

- Hold a mock city council meeting to discuss a topic from the city's history
- Create organization chart using graphic organizers to compare two forms of local government.

Science and Math

- Show the data in summary at community presentations organized by the local watershed association.
- Submit lab reports and conclusions tracing three generations of fruit flies.

Rubric for Assessment:*Language Arts and Social Studies*

- Prior to project research, teacher and students will jointly develop the requirements for a 4-point rubric to include:
 - knowledge of topic discussed
 - effectiveness of debating skills
 - knowledge of both forms of government

Science and Math

- Students will jointly develop the requirements for 4-point rubric to include:
 - Extent of data support for lab conclusions
 - Quality of sketches
 - Clarity of data in presentation

The content learned in these projects would correlate to the Massachusetts *Curriculum Frameworks* as follows.

Science And Technology FrameworkStrand Two: Domains of Science – Life Sciences*Characteristics of Organisms*

- Identify cell as the basic unit of life and the smallest unit than can reproduce itself. Give examples of single and multi-cellular organisms.
- Explore and describe an understanding that plants, animals, fungi, and various types of microorganisms are major categories of living organisms. Each category includes many different species. Note that these categories are subject to change. Life does not always fit into neat categories (e.g., are viruses alive?)
- Observe and explain that in single cells there are common features that all cells have as well as differences that determine their function. *Compare the features of plant and animal cells noting similarities and differences.*
- Investigate and illustrate evidence that cell replication results not only in the multiplication of individual cells, but also in the growth and repair of multi-cellular organisms.

Heredity, Reproduction, and Development

- Explain the importance of reproduction to the survival of the species. Students compare and contrast sexual and asexual (e.g., yeast) reproduction.
- Investigate and describe processes by which organisms that have two parents receive a full set of genetic instructions by way of the parents' reproduction cells specifying individual traits from each parent. Offspring exhibit traits from each parent.
- Illustrate an understanding that sorting and recombining of the genetic material of parents during reproduction produce the potential for variation among offspring.

History and Social Science FrameworkStrand Four: Civics and Government*Learning Standard 16: Authority, Responsibility, and Power*

- Students identify elected and appointed officials and their authority and responsibilities.

Learning Standard 18: Principles and Practices of American Government

- Students describe how the ideals expressed in key documents relate to the structures, functions, and powers of national, state, and local governments.
- Students describe the establishment of the judicial system in U. S. and Massachusetts Constitutions.
- Students describe and compare: the basic legislative process at all levels, the interaction between chief executives and legislative bodies, and the role of political parties.

Cooperative Discipline: Student Action Plan

(Adapted from Cooperative Discipline model from the School of the Woods, Houston, Texas)

Name: _____ Date: _____

The questions on this sheet will help you think about what just happened and what can be done so it doesn't happen again. Please answer honestly and with as much detail as possible. Glib or sarcastic responses will not be accepted.

1. What happened?

2. What did I want to happen? (Check all answers that fit)

- I wanted to be in charge of what was happening.
- I wanted to challenge the teacher.
- I wanted to avoid doing my work.
- I wanted to be sent home.
- I wanted to be noticed by the teacher.
- I wanted to be noticed by the other kids.
- I wanted to get even with someone.
- I wanted

3. Did I get what I wanted? Yes or No.

Why?

4. Could I have gotten what I wanted in another way? Yes or No.

How?

5. What could I do so this won't happen again?

6. This is what I am willing to do differently next time:

7. The name of the person who could help me do what I'm willing to do is:

They could help me by:

8. This is what I could do to feel more capable, connected and contributing:

9. This is what the school could do to help me feel more capable, connected and contributing:

Student

Parent

**River Valley Charter School
Middle School
Family/School Commitment Form**

(Adapted from model from the School of the Woods, Houston, Texas)

We the undersigned agree to do our best to fulfill our responsibilities as contributing members of the school community and to support all others in fulfilling their commitments.

Student Responsibilities

1. To be a contributing member of the class community and work to build a peaceful community.
2. To act with integrity, respect and responsibility.
3. To work hard, use time wisely and complete each learning cycle.
4. To participate in field studies with a positive attitude and vigor.
5. To demonstrate mastery of at least 90% in designated areas of study. If mastery is not attained, it is the student's responsibility to get assistance and to arrange to take an equivalent re-test during tutorials or study hall.
6. To complete daily homework by 8:15 and have necessary class materials.
7. To plan your educational goals and prepare and lead your scheduled family conferences.
8. To complete a weekly progress report to be signed by a parent and returned on Monday.
9. To complete progress reports and self-assessments at the end of each cycle and mail to parents.

Teacher's Responsibilities

1. To create an atmosphere for learning.
2. To facilitate the students in their explorations and learning.
3. To offer adolescents opportunities for challenging and meaningful work.
4. To meet with each student regularly to review progress and discuss any concerns.
5. To be available to students who need to finish work during study hall.
6. To schedule three family conferences each year and any additional ones as needed.
7. To serve as the liaison with community resources.

Parents' Responsibilities

1. To participate in establishing the student's educational plan and attend scheduled family conferences.
2. To provide a time and place at home conducive to the completion of homework on a daily basis.
3. To allow their adolescent to attend tutorial for re-tests and make-up work.
4. To support participation in the outdoor education program and the Curriculum Partners Program.
5. To review weekly progress reports and sign and return on Monday.
6. To review the summary report at the end of each cycle and contact the teacher if there are concerns.
7. To meet with the teacher if the student's behavior requires a conference.
8. To facilitate the selection of and provide transportation to the community internship.

Student

Parent

Teacher

Parent