

River Valley Charter School

Annual Report

2009-2010

2 Perry Way, MA 01950

P: 978-465-0065 Newburyport F: 978-465-0119

RVCSchool@comcast.net www.rivervalleycharter.org

Jeanne Schultz, Director

Table of Contents

Introductory Description of the School	2
From the Chair	2
School Mission Statement	2
School Performance and Plans.....	2
Faithfulness to the Charter	3
Implementation of Mission, Vision, and Educational Philosophy	8
Academic Program Success.....	8
Standardized Test Results	10
Curriculum	12
Instruction	13
Program Evaluation	13
School Culture	14
Diverse Learners	15
Supervision and Evaluation of Teachers	15
Professional Development	16
Organizational Viability.....	16
Policy Decisions	20
Amendments to the Charter	20
Complaints	20
Oversight	20
Board Planning	20
Family Satisfaction	21
Financial Oversight	21
Dissemination	21
Financials	24
Capital Plan	27
Data Section	28

INTRODUCTORY DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

River Valley Charter School, situated in Newburyport, is a regional school serving Newburyport, Amesbury, Salisbury, Newbury, and West Newbury. The school has been in operation for 11 years, with our current charter term ending on June 30, 2014. As of June 30, 2010, River Valley served 288 children in kindergarten through grade eight, encompassing ages 5 to 14. In the elementary grades, each head teacher works with a full-time assistant teacher. The Middle School (grades seven and eight) consisted of 59 students, as well as a team leader and five full-time teachers. Our full-day kindergarten program served 32 students.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to present the River Valley Charter School Annual Report for 2009-2010. This was a year of transition for River Valley, as we welcomed Jeanne Schultz as our new Director and began the first year of our third charter.

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

River Valley families remain highly engaged in the school community. This year, 84 percent of RVCS families reported a total of 10,660.5 volunteer hours, and 74 percent made a donation to the River Valley Foundation.

River Valley is financially sound. As a public charter school, River Valley's finances depend on enrollment, responsible budgeting, and state funding levels. With a current wait list of 685 students, River Valley will continue at full enrollment. The administration and Board of Trustees have continued to manage our budget conservatively this year. As of June 30, we estimate that the school's net assets are \$1,367,319, ensuring organizational viability in the face of a difficult financial outlook for 2010 and beyond.

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

Scott Jordan, Chair
River Valley Charter School Board of Trustees

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the River Valley Charter School is to provide a rigorous academic program based on the Montessori philosophy and rooted in the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. Students will reach their full potential as scholars and become self-reliant, productive members of society. They will be adept at critical thinking and creative problem solving and will be fully prepared to succeed in future schools, careers, and civic life.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND PLANS

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

Faithfulness to the Charter

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

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

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

Gail Supanich, a nationally recognized Montessori consultant, conducted our Montessori audit in February 2009. An excerpt from her report states: "RVCS is a model for authentic Montessori education in the public sector. They have successfully integrated the Montessori philosophy and methodology with the curriculum standards and outcomes for public education in Massachusetts." According to our Accountability Plan, we were not required to conduct a Montessori audit during the 2009-2010 school year.

Measurement 1.2: Maintain membership affiliations with the American Montessori Society

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

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

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

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

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

This year, our partnership with the Newburyport Tree Committee expanded to include the Amesbury Tree Board. Elementary 2 (E2: grades four through six) students planted more than 80 trees in Newburyport and found sites for 100 trees in Amesbury. Our students have planted more than 500 trees since this project began in 2005.

Pen pals connect our children to others in the world. Kinderhaus students have a partnership with students at Salem Elementary School in New Brunswick, Canada. The Journey North is a pen-pal project through which students at both schools learn about the annual migration pattern of the monarch butterfly. Elementary 1 (E1: grades one through three) students have a partnership with Donna Seim, a local author in Newburyport, who has connections with Providenciales Primary School in Turks and Caicos Islands. Through this partnership, students have learned about another culture by exchanging letters.

At the Middle School level, our students have taken on new challenges with their community partnerships. Our Middle School students participated in a model United Nations simulation at Northeastern and Bentley colleges, debating and providing leadership for their representative countries. Working with the Veterans of Newburyport, our students cleaned the veterans' cemetery, placed U.S. flags on each grave and marched in the Veterans Day parade. Local veterans came to our school to educate students about their service in the Vietnam War and helped them plan part of their trip to Washington, D.C. At Ironstone Farm, our students learned how horses are therapeutic, as they helped patients. Our partnership with the Salvation Army opened opportunities for enrichment within both organizations. In December, students rang bells and then, in the spring, the Salvation Army opened their facilities to our students for their Hunger Awareness Dinner. Boating safety is another area in which our partnerships reached out into the community. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary used our facility for a spring boat safety course, which attracted students and parents from around the area.

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

Classroom Curriculum Partners 2009-2010						
Curriculum Partner	Focus Areas	School-Wide Involvement	Kinderhaus	E1	E2	Middle School
American Montessori Society, NYC	Professional Development, Dissemination	X				
Amoskeag Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NH	Marine/Estuarine Ecology (salmon nursery and release program)			XX		
Bentley Model UN, Bentley University, Waltham	Global Studies, Leadership Initiative					X
Bura, Kenya: Sister City Program	Global Studies, Leadership				X	X
David Davies, Architect, Newbury	History, Culture, Ecology (pavilion project)	X				
Sue Doyle, Naturopathic Physician, Newburyport	Personal Health, Education (Nutrition Fair)	X				
Free the Children	International Children's Rights Organization					X
Gulf of Maine Institute (GOMI)	Ecology, Stewardship, Leadership					X
Heritage House, Newburyport	History, Culture (oral history and aging)			X		
Historic New England, Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm, Newbury	History, Ecology, Agriculture, Culture	X	X	X	X	X
Ironstone Farm, Andover	Horse Therapy, Volunteerism					X
Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary	Ecology (forests and fields study)			XX	XX	

Curriculum Partner	Focus Areas	School-Wide Involvement	Kinderhaus	E1	E2	Middle School
Joppa Flats Education Center, Mass. Audubon, Newburyport	Bird Banding, Research, Ecology			X	XXXX	X
Journey North, New Brunswick, Canada	Ecology (monarch butterfly migration), Cultural Exchange (pen pals)		X			
Kids as Peacemakers, Newburyport	Peace Education	X	X	X		
Leeward Light Charitable Thrift Shop, Salisbury	Community Building, Service Learning					X
Lowell's Boat Shop, Amesbury	Marine History, Culture (rowing site)	X				
Maudslay State Park, Newburyport	Ecology (forests and fields study)			X	XX	
Montessori Schools of Massachusetts	Professional Development, Dissemination	X				
National Park Service, Augustus St. Gaudens NHS, Cornish, NH	Arts and Science Integration into Historical Context of Memorials and Legacy Project					X
Newburyport District Court	History, Culture				X	
Newburyport Fire Department	Health, Safety, Community		X			
Newburyport Preservation Trust (Saving Our History)	History, Culture, Local Schools, Curriculum				XXX	
Newburyport Department of Public Works	Caution Labels on Storm Drains, Education of Local Residents				XX	
Newburyport Public Schools	Curriculum for Health, Social Studies, Math, Cultural exchange	X	X	XXXX	XXXX	X
Newburyport Tree Committee	Ecology (tree planting project)				XXXX	
Opportunity Works, Newburyport	Community Building, Cultural Awareness					X
Overlook Farm, Heifer International	Global Studies, Leadership, Culture, Hunger Awareness Meal				XXXX	X
Parker River Clean Water Association	Ecology			X		X
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, Newbury	History, Culture, Ecology (understanding our barrier island)			X	XX	X
Pennies for Poverty, 2 Cents 4 Change, Newburyport	Community Service Opportunities for Students	X		X		
Rings Island Rowing Club, Salisbury	Rowing, Water Safety, History, Culture, Dory Maintenance, Student Leadership	X				

Curriculum Partner	Focus Areas	School-Wide Involvement	Kinderhaus	E1	E2	Middle School
Salem State College	Collaborative Faculty Grant*, Dissemination, Interns**, Reading/Writing Course Site	X		**	* **	
Donna Seim, Newburyport Author and Providenciales Primary School, Turks and Caicos Islands	Literacy, Cultural Exchange (pen pals)			X		
Trustees of Reservations, Newbury	History, Culture, Ecology, "Quest" Development				XX	
United Nations Association of Greater Boston	Global Studies, Leadership					X
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary	Boating Safety					X
United States Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Parker River Wildlife Refuge	River Study, Ecology, Geology, Professional Development	X				
Veterans of Newburyport	History, Culture, Community					X
Totals		12	5	13	14	17

This school year, our curriculum partnerships developed a great deal through integration and stewardship opportunities with multiple organizations. It has been exciting to see that organizations are expanding their work with River Valley, including the Newburyport Tree Committee, the Amesbury Tree Board and Salem State College. The partnership among Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, the Gulf of Maine Institute and River Valley Charter School continues to grow, as our students attended ecological presentations by college and high-school-level students. We are able to coordinate efforts and make successful curriculum connections for all organizations involved.

As required by our charter and Accountability Plan, River Valley students remain highly committed to community service. They have greatly exceeded their goals for community service hours again during the 2009-2010 school year. This can be seen when looking at the hours reported for our exit-level students (Kinderhaus, grade three, grade six, and grade eight). Our 32 Kinderhaus students had a total of 184 hours this year, which averages to more than five hours per child. Our 33 E1 students performed 5,242 hours, for an average of 159 hours per child. Our 30 E2 students had a total of 5,613 hours, for an average of 187 hours each. Finally, our 31 Middle School students performed 5,187.5 hours of community service, for an average of 167 hours per student. Overall, our exit-level students performed a total of 16,226.5 hours of community service this year, an increase of almost 2,000 hours over last year's total. While this number is impressive, it does not even include non-exit-level students in grades one, two, four, five and seven.

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

Our school community is committed to the concept of giving both time and money. Closely related to many of our curriculum partnerships, these outreach activities are diverse and also meet a particular need of the partnership. The philosophy behind community service at River Valley is that the projects are student driven and grow from their work in the curriculum. This approach leads to experiences of substance for our students. The widely held view of community service as a service-learning component in education best describes these experiences. Following are examples of community service projects completed by our students during the 2009-2010 school year.

Environmental Projects

- Weekly recycling by our Green Team, an interactive program for students and teachers to learn how to reduce, reuse, and recycle classroom materials. Students were awarded certificates from the state and given recognition by their teachers.
- Students planted trees for the Newburyport Tree Committee again this year and found sites for 100 trees for the Amesbury Tree Board.
- Two classrooms raised salmon fingerlings and released them into the Merrimack River.
- Students collected data on air and water temperature and conducted fish counts for the Parker River Clean Water Association.

Humanitarian Projects

- Jump Rope for Heart/Hoops for Heart event raised \$1,083.25 for the American Heart Association and continued to create awareness for healthy heart behaviors for children.
- Students participated in bell-ringing for the Salvation Army.
- A class coordinated a school-wide weekly collection of food for the Pettengill House, a local food pantry for those in need.
- Elementary 1 students organized used book sales to raise nearly \$2,000 for hurricane victims in Haiti.
- Classes continued their work in intergenerational activity at Merrimack Place, a retirement facility in Newburyport. Students read with the elders and listened to stories about their life experiences. They brought treats and planted flowers.
- Our students donated \$1,245.25 to Heifer International through their fund-raising efforts.
- Each year, a class plans entertainment for the residents of Heritage House, another retirement home in the area. They sing, read poetry, and perform skits. They also bake and deliver refreshments for the residents.
- Elementary 2 students served meals weekly at Among Friends, a local soup kitchen.
- The River Valley after-school program participated in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Pennies for Patients Program by collecting and donating \$264.99 in pennies.
- Families donated approximately 160 winter coats to Coats for Kids, a community-wide project.
- Middle School students created "Fashion for Food," a fashion show that collected 80 coats and \$400 to contribute to local relief efforts with Pettengill House.

International Projects

- Middle School students once again participated in the Free the Children project. Students hosted a Hunger Awareness Dinner at the Salvation Army and took part in a 24-hour Vow of Silence to raise money for Free the Children.
- Our students' 2009 trick-or-treat efforts resulted in a gift of more than \$600 to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF. The money helps children in developing countries survive through the provision of vaccines, nutrition, and shelter.

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

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

Implementation of Mission, Vision, and Educational Philosophy

The mission and vision of the school is to provide a high-quality Montessori education. Our ongoing curriculum partnerships provide students with the opportunities to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, while learning about the history, culture, and ecology of the Merrimack River Valley. We read about and collect information from local papers citing the accomplishments of our alumni students and can see that they have indeed reached their full potential as scholars and have become self-reliant, productive members of society.

Recruitment, Enrollment, and Retention

River Valley is not required to submit a Recruitment, Enrollment and Retention Plan for 2009-2010, as this is not a charter renewal year.

Academic Program Success

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

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

We've seen our alumni students realize their individual potential as they move forward in their academic careers after graduating from River Valley. These students benefit from a high-quality Montessori education as they move on to other schools. This is evident in the many accomplishments of our graduate students. Outcomes expected from a Montessori education include academic preparation, intrinsic motivation, civility, social responsibility, autonomy, leadership skills, confidence, creativity, originality, and spiritual awareness. We define spiritual awareness as a basic appreciation for life and the human condition.

Students from the River Valley graduating class of 2010 have been accepted at some of the top regional private schools, as well as at vocational and agricultural high schools. These schools include Governor's Academy, Pingree School, Essex Agricultural High School, St. John's Prep, Whittier Tech, and Milton Academy.

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

In 2009-2010, River Valley students have exceeded exit-level goals in all areas. These assessments are determined by the classroom teachers based on information from student portfolios, daily observations and recordings, curriculum tracking sheets, and progress reports, all components of the River Valley Toolset.

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

Toolset documentation. Based on this evidence, this child may be retained or be considered a candidate for additional support services.

The results for 2009-2010 are as follows.

Percent of Students Who Met or Exceeded Documented Learning Objectives				
	Kinderhaus	Elementary 1	Elementary 2	Middle School
<i>Mathematics</i>	97	97	97	100
<i>Language Arts</i>	100	100	97	100
<i>Cultural (Science and Humanities)</i>	100	100	100	100
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	100	100	100	100
<i>Creative Problem Solving</i>	91	100	100	100
<i>Personal and Social Development</i>	100	97	97	100
• <i>Self-Motivation</i>	100	97	97	100
• <i>Self-Reliance</i>	94	97	93	100
• <i>Respect for the Prepared Environment</i>	100	100	97	100
• <i>Community Service</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	100

Notes to the table:

Cultural (Science and Humanities): At the Middle School level, these two subject areas are averaged together. All of our Middle School students have met or exceeded the documented learning objectives for both science and humanities.

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

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

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

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

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

Community Service: The River Valley Charter School Accountability Plan requires that students perform a total of 50 community service hours before graduation (pro-rated for students new to the school). All of the 31 graduating Middle School students acquired the desired number of hours, which means that 100 percent of the students had achieved the goal.

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

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

Analysis of TerraNova testing for the 2009-2010 school year indicates that the Median National Percentile Total Scores for River Valley students had a low range of 43 (which occurred in the first grade) to a high range of 92 (which occurred in the eighth grade). *At least eighty-five percent of students met or exceeded the national average on their Total Score* (comprised of reading and mathematics), with students in grades two through eight scoring at 50 percent or higher.

The TerraNova test has been given every year since the inception of River Valley Charter School. Following a thorough summary of this data, we can make the following generalization:

- *The longer students attend River Valley, the higher their performance on the TerraNova test.*

Median National Percentile – River Valley Total Scores	
	Percentile in '09-'10
Kinderhaus	N/A
1 st Grade	43
2 nd Grade	66
3 rd Grade	50
4 th Grade	72
5 th Grade	81
6 th Grade	85
7 th Grade	88
8 th Grade	92

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

MCAS

A total of 190 River Valley students in grades three through eight participated in the MCAS test in spring 2009. The results of these tests have been compared to state averages, as well as analyzed longitudinally to identify strengths and weaknesses of our academic programs.

Using the CPI calculations from the 2009-2010 No Child Left Behind Report Card for River Valley Charter School and for the state, one can see that River Valley students outperform their state peers on 13 of the 14 tests. Test scores remain “very high” in ELA and “high” in Math.

Following is a table of scores for the spring 2009 MCAS for both River Valley and the state. Note the small sample size (*n*) for River Valley, which is between 28 and 35 students.

Percentage of Students' Scores on MCAS in Each Category									
	River Valley					State			
	<i>n</i> =	A*	P	NI	W	A*	P	NI	W
3 rd -Grade Reading	34	9	50	38	3	12	45	33	10
3 rd -Grade Mathematics	34	3	41	44	12	20	40	25	15
4 th -Grade ELA	35	3	60	31	6	11	42	35	11
4 th -Grade Mathematics	35	11	29	60	0	16	32	41	11
5 th -Grade ELA	31	26	48	23	3	15	48	29	8
5 th -Grade Mathematics	31	32	39	26	3	22	32	29	18
5 th -Grade Science and Technology/Engineering	31	42	32	26	0	17	32	39	12
6 th -Grade ELA	28	29	50	21	0	16	50	24	9
6 th -Grade Mathematics	28	21	46	32	0	24	33	27	16
7 th -Grade ELA	32	22	63	16	0	14	56	23	7
7 th -Grade Mathematics	32	19	41	31	9	16	33	30	21
8 th -Grade ELA	28	18	71	7	4	15	63	15	6
8 th -Grade Mathematics	28	25	36	32	7	20	28	28	23
8 th -Grade Science and Technology/Engineering	28	4	43	46	7	4	35	40	21

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

*In grade three, the highest category of proficiency is termed P+, meaning Above Proficient.

River Valley vs. State (CPI Scores)														
Grade	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	8
Test	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	Sci.	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	Sci.
River Valley	87.5	77.2	85.0	81.4	90.3	86.3	91.9	92.9	90.2	95.3	80.5	95.5	79.5	77.7
State	82.6	81.4	79.9	78.5	85.7	77.0	77.7	85.7	78.2	88.1	73.8	91.1	72.8	70.2

- On ELA tests, River Valley students scored an average of 5.56 CPI points higher than their state peers in all grades.
- On math tests, River Valley students scored an average of 7.52 CPI points higher than their state peers in grades four through eight.
- On science and technology tests, River Valley students scored an average of 10.85 CPI points higher than their state peers in both grades five and eight.

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

River Valley draws the majority of its students from Newburyport and Amesbury; these sending districts account for 56 percent and 18 percent of River Valley's overall student enrollment, respectively. Following is a table of CPI scores for the spring 2009 MCAS for River Valley, its sending districts, and the state.

River Valley vs. District and State (CPI Scores)														
Grade	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	8
Test	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	Sci	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	ELA	Mth	Sci
Amesbury	83.4	83.5	86.8	81.3	89.2	74.0	79.3	87.1	75.7	89.8	75.3	92.1	75.8	77.8
Newburyport	85.4	80.3	83.2	82.0	88.9	78.0	81.6	92.4	83.1	96.9	85.8	95.2	79.9	79.4
Pentucket	90.0	86.6	87.1	82.9	93.3	86.5	89.0	92.5	89.2	95.2	84.8	95.7	86.4	82.6
Triton	86.2	88.4	86.2	85.6	90.5	86.7	87.2	94.3	89.4	92.7	82.7	94.8	79.8	75.2
River Valley	87.5	77.2	85.0	81.4	90.3	86.3	91.9	92.9	90.2	95.3	80.5	95.5	79.5	77.7
State	82.6	81.4	79.9	78.5	85.7	77.0	77.7	85.7	78.2	88.1	73.8	91.1	72.8	70.2

- River Valley students outperformed their Newburyport peers in eight out of 14 tests.
- River Valley students outperformed their Amesbury peers in 11 out of 14 tests.
- On the fifth-grade science and technology test, River Valley students scored higher than their peers from all sending districts.
- On the sixth-grade math test, River Valley students scored higher than their peers from all sending districts.
- River Valley outperformed three out of four sending districts on ELA tests in grades three, six, seven, and eight.

River Valley vs. District and State (CPI Scores) Students with Special Needs, Grades 3-8		
<i>Tests</i>	<i>ELA</i>	<i>Math</i>
Amesbury	68.1	53.0
Newburyport	73.0	57.8
Pentucket	77.4	65.9
Triton	75.9	66.9
<i>River Valley</i>	<i>78.5</i>	<i>64.6</i>
State	66.6	55.1

- River Valley students with special needs in grades three through eight outperformed their state counterparts on the MCAS tests. The state average CPI scores for special needs students in ELA and Math were 66.6 and 55.1, while River Valley students’ average CPI scores were 78.5 and 64.6, respectively. The differences were 11.9 points for ELA and 9.5 for Math.
- River Valley students also outperformed their peers from all sending districts on ELA tests.

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

River Valley did make AYP in English Language Arts, according to the 2009-2010 No Child Left Behind Report Card. In addition, student performance was rated as “very high” in this report.

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

While River Valley did not meet AYP in Math in 2009-2010, the aggregate student CPI score was 82.3, earning a “high” performance rating on the NCLB Report Card.

Curriculum

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

An interdisciplinary approach arises naturally from Montessori’s Five Great Lessons and from the project orientation of the Montessori curriculum. For example, two of the lessons are the Story of Language and the Story of Numbers. As young elementary children study the Story of Language, they develop an understanding of grammar, imagining the first words that were uttered and what parts of speech they might have been. As they study the Story of Numbers, they might practice writing and computing in Egyptian, Chinese, and Roman numerals. This work is also integrated into continent studies.

Instruction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Program Evaluation

As a general practice, River Valley does not utilize specific programs for learning, but rather focuses on individualized learning plans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As part of a review of our Middle School program, we found last year that students were in need of additional mathematics support. Therefore, as a means of improving individual student performance, River Valley continued use of the Study Island program and added tutoring services. These programs help Middle School students to improve their knowledge of pre-algebra and algebra and to operate at an individualized pace. From each student’s results, teachers and administrators used the evidence to guide and inform future instruction.

School Culture

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

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

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

In continuing with a multi-year plan of establishing a school-wide behavior management system, we continued to implement an Open Circle program in our Kinderhaus and elementary classrooms. This program promotes a common language of behavior and communication between students and adults. Teachers and administrative staff participated in training programs.

During the 2009-2010 school year, there were no instances of student disciplinary actions such as suspensions or expulsions.

Diverse Learners

Our Montessori philosophy strives to focus on the individual strengths of students, including those who may be at risk. We are in the process of rewriting our own District Accommodation Plan to specifically document our abilities to address all learners, including special education and English Language Learners.

In order to support all learners, River Valley has a pre-referral process which is initiated through the Student Support Team (SST). Within this group, specific accommodations such as provision of graphic organizers or study guides, use of instructional technology, and tutoring are discussed as options to improve student success and achievement prior to a special education referral.

While we do not currently have any ELL students, we continue to provide ongoing category 1-4 training as required by the DESE. If necessary, we will assess the English language proficiency of any student whose home language is not English.

Our special education program continues to be assessed annually through a self-study as well as through feedback from the Parent Survey. We were commended within our Coordinated Program Review in October 2008 and will participate in a mid-cycle review again in 2011. An inclusion model is successfully used to integrate services into the classroom setting.

Supervision and Evaluation of Teachers

As part of the faculty evaluation process, the Board formulates its goals at its annual retreat in June, and then they work with the Director to create her annual goals. This year, we had a change in administrative leadership. The Board hired our new director, Jeanne Schultz, on July 1. Her goals were to provide a transition between the two administrations, including hiring a new administrative team and facilitating a seamless start to the new school year for teacher, students, and parents.

In the fall, the Director meets with the teachers to review and clarify their professional goals, and the lead teachers replicate the process with their assistants. In the spring, the Director again meets with the lead teachers to review each teacher's progress and documentation of their goals. The lead teachers and assistant teachers repeat the same review process. In June, the Director meets with both lead and assistant teachers to summarize the year's goals, and all documents are placed on file in the Director's office. The standards used for evaluation purposes are stated in our faculty goal-setting documents.

As a means of improving instruction and as part of our formative teacher evaluation process, the Director, Curriculum Coordinator and Assistant Director carry out classroom observations. Montessori training center supervisors visit and assess their student teachers who are in the process of completing Montessori training. Our Middle School teachers participate in peer evaluation discussions on effective teaching methods. Additional evidence pertaining to the capabilities of our teachers can be found in our Montessori and public school audit reports.

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

Professional Development

River Valley's professional development focus for the 2009-2010 school year was on assessment for literacy and math. In partnership with Salem State College, our teachers learned how to use the Developmental Reading Assessment, or DRA. We added leveled readers for both fiction and nonfiction to enhance our Montessori curriculum. We focused on practical life skills for taking tests. We have learned that professional development opportunities have directly improved teaching and learning.

Elementary 1 teachers implemented the Montessori Records Express, or MRX, Program. This computerized model of assessment will facilitate the recording of teacher observations and assessments and help teachers develop better reports and more accurate tracking of each student. Elementary two teachers began curriculum mapping to create a plan for delivering the curriculum over the three-year cycle. Middle School teachers focused on refining the organization of our Celebrations of Learning, a culminating project of our students' experience at River Valley. Professional development activities throughout the year also included faculty study groups, Montessori training, professional conferences, EBSCO training, Open Circle training and observations.

Teachers attended the following professional development courses: Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom, Project Wild for Early Childhood, Montessori special needs training, wetlands science at Joppa Flats, Brain Gym, Crisis Prevention Intervention, anti-bullying workshop, and the Autism Project. Additionally, 2 teachers earned their Montessori certification, three teachers received initial or upgraded licensure status, and four teachers completed master's degrees.

Our Director and Business Manager, along with two Board members, attended leadership workshops through the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association in February. Additionally, the Director attended the NAMTA Montessori Leadership course and four days of workshops at the National Charter School Conference in Chicago. Our Assistant Director is working toward her Massachusetts principal's certification. Our Office Manager completed CORI, SIMS and EPIMS training through the state.

The American Montessori National Conference in Boston provided an exciting experience for River Valley Charter School. River Valley was featured on the AMS school tour, focusing on "Montessori made public." We hosted more than 60 national and international Montessori educators, and 19 members of our faculty and administration attended the three-day Boston conference.

Organizational Viability

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

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

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

The financial statements and information in this report have been prepared by the management of the River Valley Charter School and are unaudited. Our audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2009, performed by independent auditors, was issued with no material findings, reportable conditions or instances of non-compliance. The financial position of the School continues to be stable, with no need for borrowing to fund operations anticipated at this time. Total revenues of \$3,393,250 exceeded the revised budget of \$3,222,294 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010 by \$170,956, due to an increase in tuition revenues. Tuition revenues and facilities aid of \$3,073,976 in total exceeded the revised budget of \$2,875,404 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010 by \$198,572. The average rate per pupil was \$10,674, based on a planned enrollment of 288 students. The School budgeted \$3,211,294 in operating expenses for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. Due to a higher than expected tuition payment from the state, the School's actual expenditures were \$3,284,173 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. The unexpected increase in tuition allowed the School to expend a total of \$54,776 for some capital improvements to our facility as well as purchase a teacher resource library for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. The Board of Trustees approved quarterly budget adjustments reflecting the higher than projected tuition payment. The fiscal year ended June 30, 2010 revised budget planned for a net operating loss of \$12,000. Accordingly, the Board of Trustees approved the use of \$12,000 of the unrestricted net assets at the fiscal year ended June 30, 2009 to fund the expected operating loss. Due to favorable revenues, this was not necessary. The School reported a positive net change in assets of \$109,077 for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010.

The School's Statement of Net Assets is strong, with total net assets of \$1,492,108, including \$225,670 invested in capital assets, \$600,059 of restricted Capital Reserve Funds, \$664,959 of unrestricted net assets, and temporarily restricted net assets of \$1,420. The School's total cash position was \$822,512 as of fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. The Board of Trustees established a Capital Reserve Fund for the payment of high-cost maintenance items and capital expenditures relating to the purchase, renovation and improvement of school facilities, or to secure the financing thereof during the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. The Board of Trustees approved a transfer to the Capital Reserve Fund of \$600,000 during the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010. The School has no long-term debt. Liabilities are largely limited to short-term accruals, and there is no need for borrowing to fund operations. The cash position compares well to the School's projected quarterly expense structure, which amounts to roughly \$821,000 per quarter, giving the School some financial protection against unforeseen expenses or the anticipated negative changes in the macro-economic and political climate.

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

The budget presented for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 school year reflects a planned enrollment of 288 students. The School management and Board of Trustees are committed to continuing the present programs even with the projected slight increase in tuition revenues. Revenues have been budgeted for fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 in the amount of \$3,411,186, an increase over the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010 budget of \$188,892. The Board of Trustees have approved an operating budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011 with expenditures of \$3,411,186, an increase from the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010 budget of \$188,892. The School approved a budget with an additional \$500,000 for capital improvements for an expansion of our lease space with full funding being provided from the Capital Reserve Fund. River Valley Charter School remains financially stable, and we will continue our record of fiscal responsibility through conservative budgeting, accurate fiscal management and continued development efforts toward future independence and sustainability.

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

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

In June 2009, the Director, Assistant Director and Curriculum Coordinator left River Valley Charter School due to life changes, i.e. retirement and promotions.

In June 2010, the Curriculum Coordinator position was eliminated and replaced with two teacher-leader positions, a literacy coach and a math coach. Additionally, two assistant teachers and one art teacher completed the 2009-2010 school year but will not be returning in the fall due to life changes.

Thus, our 2009-2010 faculty retention rate is 95 percent, and our administrative retention rate is 87.5 percent, both well exceeding our goal of 75 percent.

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

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

This past year, 100 percent of our faculty and administration met individual professional development goals. Documentation of professional development activities and faculty goal setting is on file at the school.

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

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

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

Measurement 7.1: Minimum of two applications per opening each year

In June 2009, 29 students graduated from River Valley. Withdrawals over the summer of 2009 equaled five. An additional four students transferred after the school year began in September. This created a total of 38 openings for the 2009-2010 school year.

Applications that were lottered in February 2009 totaled 140. The existing wait list prior to this lottery numbered 535. The total number of applications available for this school year was 675. For 38 openings, that is a ratio of 17.7 applications per opening in the school; this well exceeds our requirement of having two applications per opening. Significant local advertising, opportunities for parent observations, and a strong reputation in the community have resulted in large numbers of applications. We expect the interest in River Valley to remain high in future lotteries.

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

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

Only five non-graduate students completed the 2008-2009 school year but did not return for the 2009-2010 school year, for a student retention rate of 98 percent. This well exceeds our goal of 85 percent. We feel that our strong academic program and school culture continue to promote the reputation of our school, which results in high rates of retention.

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

An external audit of the Board of Trustees took place in 2008-2009, and another will be scheduled for the 2010-2011 school year.

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

The Board of Trustees has achieved 85 percent of the following goals set at the July 2009 annual Board retreat:

- **Develop a five-year Strategic Plan** – The Board conducted online surveys of parents and staff to assess potential strategic plan goals and priorities. Several strategic planning work sessions were held to brainstorm and refine goals and strategies. The Board enrolled in a pilot program focused on excellence in charter school governance with consultant Marci Cornell-Feist/The High Bar, and worked with her on the strategic planning process. The Board has developed five-year goals, as well as annual goals and action plans for 2010-2011. It is anticipated that the Strategic Plan will be approved at the July 27 Board of Trustees meeting.
- **Submit a new Accountability Plan and receive approval from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education** – Revisions were made as requested by the Charter School Office, and approval of our revised Accountability Plan was received from the DESE in November 2009.
- **Assess and enhance development efforts in conjunction with the Foundation** – Several new development initiatives were undertaken, and a consultant was retained by the Foundation to assess current development practices at River Valley. As a result, a Development Plan for 2010-2011 was developed with the Development Committee and approved by the Board in June 2010.
- **Finalize the Memorandum of Understanding between the River Valley Board of Trustees and the River Valley Foundation** – An agreement on responsibilities and workflow for development activities has been documented as part of the Development Plan. Development work will be led by the Board Development Committee, and the Foundation will maintain fiduciary responsibilities for any privately raised funds. A part-time development assistant, funded by the Foundation, will be responsible for administrative work. The Board may choose to formalize the agreement between the Board and Foundation.

Measurement 9.2: 75 percent intra-term trustee retention

The Board of Trustees had an intra-term trustee retention rate of 64 percent, as five Board members stepped down prior to the end of their terms for personal and professional reasons. While this is lower than our goal, we have recruited a strong group of five new trustees who were trained at an orientation in July and are ready to step into active roles on the Board. In addition, two exiting trustees will continue to serve as committee members. We are confident that our Board possesses the expertise and experience to continue providing strong governance.

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

Please see “Dissemination” on page 21.

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

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

Families are a critical component of River Valley’s organizational viability. Family support helps us provide many school activities and programs that would not occur otherwise.

A goal of attaining high levels of active family participation, both in community service and by financial contributions, is an important component of our Accountability Plan. This year, 84 percent of our families recorded a combined 10,660.5 hours of service, which exceeds our goal of having a minimum of 80 percent of families contributing volunteer hours.

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

This year, 62 percent completed their required 40 hours of parent participation. This represents an increase of 7 percent over last year’s figure.

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

This year, 74 percent of River Valley families donated to the Annual Fund.

Policy Decisions

The Director communicates with the Board Chair and Executive Committee regarding suggested policy changes. Requests for revisions or new policies are submitted to the appropriate Board committee. The committee makes a recommendation to the full Board, which votes to approve or amend the policy. The Board made the following major policy decisions in 2009-2010.

- Approved a revised Accountability Plan, reflecting changes requested by the Massachusetts Charter School Office (September 2009)
- Established a Capital Reserve Fund for the payment of capital expenditures for the purchase, renovation and improvement of school facilities, or to secure the financing thereof (November 2009)
- Accepted the representations of management and expression of the opinions made by Ambrosi, Donahue, Cogdon and Co., P.C., as embodied in the financial statements, supplemental schedules, and independent auditor's report for the year ended June 30, 2009 (December 2009)
- Approved quarterly budget adjustments reflecting a higher than projected tuition payment from the state, as well as additional un-forecast expenses and initiatives (September 2009, January and June 2010)
- Adopted the 2010-2011 calendar (March 2010)
- Authorized the chair to enter into a contract not to exceed \$5,000 for the River Valley Board of Trustees to participate in the pilot program of The High Bar with Marci Cornell-Feist for the 2010-2011 school year (March 2010)
- Established an ad hoc Human Resources Committee to be charged with developing human resource policies (May 2010)
- Accepted the River Valley Charter School Development Plan for FY 2010-2011 (June 2010)
- Approved a transfer to the Capital Reserve Account in the amount of \$500,000 (June 2010)
- Approved the projected 2010-2011 budget as presented on the River Valley Charter School Comparative Budget Overview for FYE 2011 (June 2010)
- Approved nomination of six new trustees: John Martin, Joyce O'Connell, Francesca Pomerantz, Eric Powers, Amy Rasimas, and Kathy Shorter as the faculty representative. Renewed terms of the following trustees: Wendy Carmichael, Chris Horan, Scott Jordan (June 2010)

Amendments to the Charter

No amendments were made to the school's charter in 2009-2010.

Complaints

The Grievance Committee of the Board of Trustees did not receive any complaints this year.

Oversight

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

Board Planning

In 2009-2010, the Board of Trustees developed a new strategic plan for the school. Information was gathered from various constituencies, including parents, faculty and staff. The final document will be voted on at the July 2010 Board of Trustees meeting.

Family Satisfaction

River Valley conducts an annual parent survey to measure the rate at which families are satisfied with the school's programs. The results from our 2009-2010 Parent Survey stated that 94 percent of the parents strongly

agreed or agreed that the school's mission is clearly focused on desired student learning. Additionally, the survey showed that 92 percent of parents would likely recommend RVCS to another parent for their child.

Financial Oversight

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

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

Dissemination

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

This year, River Valley welcomed an average of 12 visitors per month into its classrooms.

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

On March 25, River Valley hosted Montessori educators from around the world as part of the American Montessori Society's school tour program prior to the Annual Conference in Boston. A group of approximately 60 educators visited River Valley and witnessed the inspirational concept called charter schools. They were most interested in how a Montessori school lives within the public realm. Visitors had the opportunity to visit our K-8 classrooms, as our teachers and students engaged them in how they learn, what personal and collective goals are embedded in their activity, and views on what learning looks like at River Valley.

A secondary goal was to disseminate a model for engaging community partners within the K-8 curriculum. Several of our curriculum partners were available (Spencer-Peirce-Little Farm, Salvation Army, U.S. Fish and Wildlife) to interact with our guests. Visitors were also given materials outlining our Middle School program, assessment tools, curriculum partnership program, the RVCS Dads committee and general program information.

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

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

In July 2009, our Director attended the AMS Leadership Conference in Simsbury, CT, led by national AMS director, David Kahn. The Director, through several venues, disseminated written and verbal information about our “Montessori made public” best practices. River Valley was the only public Montessori school represented at this conference, so this was valuable information to pass on to national Montessori leaders in attendance.

Our Director also attends local Chamber of Commerce meetings and Newburyport Community Non-Profit Agency meetings to foster cooperation among local non-profit organizations. She also sits on the board of the Massachusetts Charter School Association.

In 2009, we developed a new DVD, titled “Building the Future,” to highlight our “Montessori made public” program. We have disseminated this DVD to attendees of the AMS Leadership and Annual Conferences, to countless visitors to the school, to the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, and to educators from Texas, Montana, California, Idaho, Maryland, and even Australia.

In May, the assistant superintendent from the Pentucket school district and a team of elementary, middle and high school teachers visited our Middle School to learn about our Celebration of Learning event in order to implement this practice within their own district. Our Middle School staff provided a Power Point presentation and programmatic materials to support Pentucket’s efforts.

Students from Newburyport High School’s environmental science class visited one of our E1 classrooms (grades one to three) in the fall to learn how to set up a salmon incubation project. The high school students returned in May to share the results of their efforts and to gain knowledge from our students on how to improve their success rate.

A newly chartered school in Gloucester received our application materials, Annual Report, and CORI and enrollment policies.

Through our Celebration of Learning process, each eighth-grader invites a community member to participate on his or her panel, giving this visitor the opportunity to witness the high-quality level of expectations for our graduating students. This year, panel attendees included the mayor of Newburyport, a local musician, a member of the Boston Bruins organization, an assistant superintendent from a neighboring district and the head of a local performing arts group.

Our curriculum coordinator shared our progress report templates with a charter school in Kingston, New Hampshire.

Our guidance counselor and middle school coordinator visited eight public and private high schools in the area for the purpose of disseminating materials about our curriculum and programs in anticipation of those schools receiving applications from our graduating students.

We offered ongoing support to a group in Danvers exploring the possibility of replicating River Valley Charter School’s public Montessori model. We provided the leaders of this group with information on charter development, curriculum design, financial systems, enrollment practices and state and local regulations.

We disseminated our parent informational packet, faculty and family handbooks, and faculty goal-setting documents to the River Montessori School, a public charter school in Peta Luma, California.

Our Middle School Arts of Expression group performed an original musical piece for Newburyport Mayor Donna Holaday’s inauguration. This showcased River Valley’s Middle School project group program.

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

spent the day with our curriculum coordinator in January to discuss implementation of the MRX assessment tool in a public school setting. A teacher from the Marblehead Charter School also visited to learn about our multi-age classrooms. These activities continue to promote River Valley's reputation and status.

One of our teachers disseminated best practices through her participation in Harvard University's educational rounds. Another teacher shared information with a Waldorf school in New Hampshire on two separate occasions.

River Valley hosted under-graduate and graduate students from local colleges, as well as area high school students, who completed internships and student teaching assignments in both the fall and spring. These students worked with children at all grade levels.

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

FINANCIALS

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

Statement of Net Assets

June 30, 2010

(Unaudited)

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$	822,512
Grants receivable		26,399
Accounts receivable		4,296
Prepaid expenses		18,544

Total current assets 871,751

Restricted Cash

600,059

Capital Assets, Net

225,670

Deposits

39,462

Total assets \$ 1,736,942

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$	8,946
Accrued payroll		233,180
Deferred grant revenue		700
Other current liabilities		2,008

Total current liabilities 244,834

Net Assets

Unrestricted:

Invested in capital assets	225,670
Capital Reserve	600,059
Unrestricted	664,959

Total unrestricted net assets 1,490,688

Temporarily Restricted 1,420

Total net assets 1,492,108

Total liabilities and net assets \$ 1,736,942

**** Please note that this statement is preliminary (unaudited). The River Valley Charter School's financial year ends June 30, 2010 and additional adjustments may be required.**

River Valley Charter School
Statement of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets
For the Year Ended June 30, 2010 (Unaudited)

	<u>July 2009-June 2010</u>
Operating Revenues:	
State allocation for tuition	\$ 3,073,976
Federal government grants	144,657
Program service fees	87,968
State government grants	26,200
Private grants	<u>4,002</u>
Total operating revenues	<u>3,336,803</u>
Operating Expenses:	
Salaries	1,987,105
Occupancy	444,088
Fringe benefits	195,927
Other instructional services	107,609
Payroll taxes	93,767
Direct program contract professional services	63,204
Maintenance of buildings and grounds	61,130
Staff professional development	45,872
Utilities	43,320
Instructional supplies and materials	42,269
Information management and technology	38,274
Contract professional services	26,832
Insurance	25,466
Depreciation	23,473
Supplies and consumable expenses	16,462
Office supplies and materials	11,557
Dues and association fees	10,271
Legal fees	8,745
Maintenance of equipment	8,398
Equipment lease and rental	7,136
Postage and printing	5,584
Advertising and recruitment costs	5,527
Travel	5,343
Meals and lodging	3,731
Contributions to outside organizations	2,995
Other	<u>88</u>
Total operating expenses	<u>3,284,173</u>
Operating Income	<u>52,630</u>
Nonoperating Revenues:	
Miscellaneous income	28,293
Interest income	13,857
Contributions	9,019
Fundraising	<u>5,278</u>
Total nonoperating expenses	<u>56,447</u>
Change in net assets	109,077
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	<u>1,383,031</u>
Net Assets - End of Year	<u>\$ 1,492,108</u>

**** Please note that this statement is preliminary (unaudited). The River Valley Charter School's financial year ends June 30, 2010 and additional adjustments may be required.**

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL
Approved School Budget - Passed June 24, 2010
Fiscal Year July 2010 - June 2011

	Approved Budget Overview 2010-2011 July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011	% of Total Budget 2010-2011 July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011	
STUDENT ENROLLMENT	288		
Operating Revenue:			
State allocation for tuition	\$ 3,076,806	90.20	%
Federal government grants	118,930	3.49	
State government grants	26,200	0.77	
Program service fees	15,000	0.44	
Total operating revenue	3,236,936	94.89	
Nonoperating Revenue			
Private grants and fundraising	161,250	4.73	
Rental income	1,000	0.03	
Interest income	12,000	0.35	
Total Nonoperating Revenue	174,250	5.11	
Total Revenue	3,411,186	100.00	
Expenditures			
Administrative expenses	430,280	12.61	
Instructional services	1,933,157	56.67	
Other student services	69,066	2.03	
Operation and maintenance of plant	594,250	17.42	
Benefits and other fixed charges	352,500	10.33	
Community service	500	0.02	
Non operating expenses	31,433	0.92	
Total Expenditures	3,411,186	100.00	
Capital Expenditures	500,000	14.66	
Total Expenditures including Capital Expenditures	3,911,186	114.66	
Change in Net Assets	(500,000)	(14.66)	%
Unrestricted net assets, June 30, 2010	1,492,108		
Unrestricted net assets, June 30, 2011	\$ 992,108		

Capital Plan

Introduction

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

Description of the Project

In school year 2009-2010, the site committee considered two alternatives. One was to purchase property in Newburyport and either build or refurbish an existing building. The second was to lease additional curricular space at our current site while continuing the search for a more desirable property. Two attempts at property acquisition during the past year were unsuccessful.

The Current Status of the Project

In May 2010, the Board of Trustees voted to extend our lease with an additional 6,200 square feet.

The Current Estimated Schedule for the Completion of the Project

The additional space is anticipated to be available for lease in December 2010.

The Current Estimated Cost for the Project

The estimated cost for the additional space will include an initial payment of \$295,000, with increased lease payments over nine years. An additional \$150,000 will be used for a major acquisition of furnishings, fixtures, and equipment that are appurtenant to the expansion of our current school building. The school will have an option to purchase at the end of the current five-year lease, or to continue to lease. The school's long-term objective is to own a campus.

Information on How the School Plans to Finance the Project

The school will finance the increase in leased space through the Capital Reserve Fund and state funding, i.e. facilities allotment.

Capital Project Reserve Account

The Board of Trustees established a Capital Reserve Fund in 2009 with a current balance of \$600,000. We will continue to populate the Capital Reserve Fund each year to provide for high-cost maintenance items and/or property acquisition.

DATA SECTION

<i>Instructional Time:</i>	
Total number of instructional days for the 2009-2010 school year:	180
First and last day of the 2009-2010 school year:	Sept. 8, 2009- June 21, 2010
Length of school day (please note if schedule varies throughout the week or the year):	8:30 a.m.- 3:10 p.m.

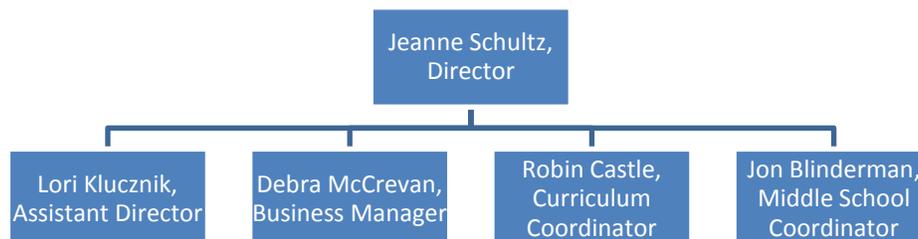
<i>Student Enrollment Information:</i>	
Number of students who completed the 2008-2009 school year but did not reenroll for the 2009-2010 school year (excluding graduates):	5
Total number of students enrolled as of October 1, 2009:	287
Total number of students who enrolled during the 2009-2010 school year, after October 1, 2009:	3
Total number of students who left during the 2009-2010 school year, after October 1, 2009:	2
Total number of students enrolled as of the June 30, 2010 SIMS submission:	288
Number of students who graduated at the end of the 2009-2010 school year:	31
Number of students on the waitlist as of June 30, 2010	685

Reason for Departure	Number of Students
Moved	2
Child looking for more of an athletic program	1
Enrolling in private school	3
Unhappy with program	2
Child needs specialized program	1

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND SUBGROUP INFORMATION		
(for students enrolled as of the June 2010 SIMS submission)		
Race/Ethnicity	# of students	% of entire student body
African-American	2	1
Asian	9	3
Hispanic	8	3
Native American	0	0
White	259	90
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0	0
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	10	3
Special Education	48	17
Limited English Proficient	0	0
Low Income	0	0

ADMINISTRATIVE ROSTER FOR THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR			
Title	Brief Job Description	Start date	End date (if no longer employed at the school)
Director	Acts as superintendent of school	07/01/2009	N/A
Assistant Director	Acts as principal of school	09/01/2001	N/A
Middle School Coordinator	Manages Middle School students, plans trips, and coordinates classes	9/01/2007	N/A
Curriculum Coordinator	Coordinates K-8 Montessori curriculum	08/18/2009	6/30/2010
Business Manager	Maintains financial oversight	01/01/2000	N/A

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



TEACHER AND STAFF ATTRITION FOR THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR			
	Number as of the last day of the 2009-2010 school year	Departures during the 2009-2010 school year	Departures at the end of the school year
Teachers	38	0	3
Other Staff	13	0	1

Two teachers left after the end of the 2009-2010 school year for the following reasons: one teacher retired and one teacher's contract was not renewed. The other staff member's contract was also not renewed.

BOARD MEMBERS FOR THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR

Name	Position on the Board	Committee affiliation(s)	Area of expertise, and/or additional role at school (parent, staff member, etc.)	- Number of terms served; - Length of each term, including date of election and expiration
Wendy Carmichael	Secretary	Executive, Committee on Trustees	M Ed, MBA, Educational Publishing, Parent	1 term; 3 years served: 10/5/07-6/30/10
Christine Cohen	Co-Chair, Development	Development Committee	Education, SPED, Parent	1 term; 2 yrs. served: 7/1/08-6/30/10
Brian Cummings	Trustee	Finance	MBA, JD, Parent	1 term; 1 yr. served: 7/09-6/30/12
Kate Donlin	Trustee	Accountability, Committee on Trustees	M Ed, Charter School Leadership, Parent	1 term; 1 yr. served : 7/09-6/30/12
Lauren Eramo	Chair, Accountability	Accountability	M Ed, Government, Parent	1 term; 2 yrs. served: 7/1/08-6/30/10
Pamela Hallock	Chair, Grievance	Accountability, Grievance	MS Chemistry, Education	1 term; 2 yrs. served: 7/1/08-6/30/11
Christopher Horan	Chair, Site; Co-Chair, Development	Site, Development	Commercial Real Estate, Parent	1 term; 3 years served: 10/5/07-6/30/10
Margaret Henry	Trustee	Committee on Trustees, Grievance	Montessori School Head	2 terms; 4 years served: 9/9/06-4/27 /10
Scott Jordan	Chair	Executive, Committee on Trustees, Finance, Grievance	MBA, Finance, Government, Parent	1 term; 3 years served: 10/5/07-6/30/10
Alfred Link	Treasurer	Executive, Finance	Marketing, Communications, Parent	1 term; 2 yrs. served: 7/1/08-5/21/10
Julie Ryan	Vice Chair	Executive, Committee on Trustees, Accountability	Communications, Marketing, Parent	2 terms; 5 years served: 7/1/05-6/30/11
Jeanne Schultz	Ex-Officio Trustee	Finance, Executive, Accountability	Director, RVCS	1 year served: 7/1/09-6/30/10
Lesli Suggs	Trustee	Committee on Trustees	MSW, Non-Profit Administration, Parent	2 terms; 4 years served: 9/9/06-6/30/12
Bill Taylor	Trustee	Grievance	Education	2 terms; 5 years served 7/1/05-4/27/10
Zoe Wettach	Ex-Officio Trustee		Teacher, RVCS	1 year served: 9/09-6/30/10