



Marine Area Community School dba River Grove
Annual Report 2018

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Introduction

Marine Area Community School dba River Grove is a public charter school serving 184 students in grades K through 6. River Grove offers an innovative place-based curriculum that emphasizes project-based and community-centered learning. The 2017-18 school year was our first in operation and we are proud to have created a unique learning opportunity for the Marine on St. Croix and greater valley area community.

Mission

River Grove's mission is to utilize the natural resources, history, arts, and civic stewardship of the community as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, art and other curriculum subjects. The place-based learning environment will be student-centered, designed by teachers, and reinforced and supported by the local community.

School Description

Marine Area Community School dba River Grove

District #4254

First Year of Operation: 2017-2018

Grades Served: Kindergarten through 6th

Enrollment Cap: 200 Students

Authorizer: The Minnesota Guild
Cindy Murphy, Executive Director
execdirectormnguild@gmail.com

School Calendar and Hours of Operation

First Day of School: August 28, 2017

Last Day of School: May 31, 2018

River Grove is open for student instruction Monday-Friday from 9:00-4:00pm

This report outlines and details River Grove's governance, structures, academic program, accountability data and innovative practices.

School Enrollment and Demographics

River Grove had an Average Daily Membership of 160.02 for the 2017-18 school year. Enrollment has increased to 184 students for the 2018-19 school year.

School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	Enrollment Total	Average Daily Membership
2017-18	22	25	22	41	20	20	12	162	160.02
2018-19 (Oct 1)	31	23	25	25	46	17	17	184	182.95

School Year	Free and/or Reduced	Special Education %	District 834 Residents %
2017-18	9.2%	26%	84.5%
2018-19	5.4%	29%	87.5%

Student Attendance, Attrition & Mobility

2017-18 Student Attendance Data

Grade	Attendance Rate
K	93.3%
1	97.5%
2	94.8%
3	96.7%
4	95.1%
5	96.5%
6	96.7%
Total	95.9%

Student Attrition:

Grade	Students 17-18	Re-enrolled for 18-19	Rate
K	22	21	5%
1	25	21	15%
2	22	20	9%
3	41	40	2%
4	20	15	25%
5	20	16	20%
OVERALL	150	133	11%

Innovative Practices

Place-Based Learning: At River Grove, we believe that our community is our curriculum. In our first year of operation, deliberate efforts were made to enrich our students' experience and learning through the use of community experts and assets.

Some highlights:

- Each class was given the opportunity to visit neighboring Warner Nature Center to learn about our area's natural setting and environment.
- Every classroom was given the opportunity to learn about and explore our neighboring Minnesota Food Association/Big River Farm.
- A partnership was created with Zephyr Theatre in Stillwater to provide students with a comprehensive music and theatre arts education.
- All classes were given an "Artist in Residence" experience by local artist, Karron Nottingham, who enriched our programming through collaborative large group art pieces.
- Yoga and Mindfulness instruction was provided by two community experts.
- Students engaged in a "Winter Warm Up Challenge" through participation in winter recreation, including snowshoeing and cross country skiing, taught by a community expert.

In addition, a core component of the school's place based learning initiative was to carry on the legacy and important traditions of the closed Marine Elementary school. Two key traditions were the "6th Grade Buddy" program as well as the "6th Grade Play". The play acts as a capstone to a student's time in elementary school, strengthening self-confidence and readiness for the next academic stage.

Project-Based Learning: River Grove academic program places an emphasis on "learning by doing". Students were able to complete whole class and campus wide projects throughout the school by leveraging community assets and experts, including many of the items listed above. Plans for the 2018-19 school year include requirements for all classrooms that community center projects occur on a frequent basis (6-8 weeks). Further opportunities with our community assets will be explored as well as new educational partnerships with organizations such as the St. Croix River Association and Footprint Earth.

1:1 Technology Initiative: Leveraging CSP Funds, the school was able to successfully implement a 1:1 (1 device per student) technology initiative, purchasing 175 chromebooks during the 17-18 school year. This initiative will allow teachers to implement innovative 21st century learning strategies in the classroom.

Teacher-Powered Governance Model: River Grove employed a Teacher-Powered governance model during the 17-18 school year. This model places the teachers in charge of the learning program and grants them autonomy in key areas of the school's operations to influence school success. While there were noted challenges during the school's implementation year, continued development of this model will be a focus in future years.

Staff Development & Evaluation Program

Staff Development Processes and Activities

The 2017-18 school year was the inaugural year of River Grove. With eight teachers and one School Administrator hired at the same time, significant time was spent on team development and governance. The team received 15 planning days during the summer to select curriculum and discuss/set site policy.

The teaching team was given time during summer meetings for curriculum research and selection, as well as setting school and site policy. Time was also given to learn about the Teacher Powered governance structure and select operational autonomies through a facilitator provided by Education Evolving.

During the school year, it became clear that continued work was necessary to develop an understanding of the governance model. The school entered into an agreement with Eklund Consulting to assist the team in refining how the group functioned best and to capitalize on the strength of each member.

The staff also spent time in the spring reflecting on their performance and creating SMART goals. The goals will be used in the 2018-19 school year to craft both individual and school wide professional development.

Evaluation processes: During the 2017-18 school year, the River Grove board focused on **Domain 4- Professionalism** of the Minnesota Department of Education's Recommended Performance Standards Rubric. As a Teacher Powered school, the staff was given equal say and autonomy to assess each other. Each teaching staff member, along with the School Administrator, completed an anonymous survey on each of his or her colleagues. The results were then compiled, averaged and presented to each staff member for reflection and goal setting. Each staff member created two "SMART" goals on the data in general and were also required to create goals in any areas that were deemed significantly below his or her peers. They each reviewed their goals with the School Administrator to discuss individual development needs and school level support necessary to achieve these goals.

In 2018-19, the school plans to have a more comprehensive evaluation process led by the School Administrator in collaboration with the teaching team and the board personnel committee. The evaluation will provide assessments on all four of MDE's recommended performance domains: Planning and Preparation, Environment, Instruction and Professional. Teachers will be assessed using a variety of tools including classroom walkthroughs, formal observations, self evaluations/reflections, student/parent/peer surveys and State (MCA) and Internal (NWEA) testing data. Adherence to the Mission and Vision of the school will also be a key component of the teacher evaluation.

The School Administrator was also given a formal review at the end of the 17-18 school year by the school's board chairs, who formed the evaluations based on staff survey data and soliciting opinions of other board members and staff to identify areas of needed growth. As a result of the meeting the School Administrator created SMART goals and a professional development plan. The board is working to approve the plan, and will implement a more developed evaluation plan for the School Administrator in the 2018-19 school.

Academic Performance

2017-18 Mathematics Goals:

Goal 1:

“River Grove will show positive student growth measured by state accountability measures; the School will show a Growth Z Score of ‘0’ at the end of the first year and post a positive Z Score in all subsequent years during the contract period.”

Progress to Date: Only one year of MCA data, not enough to calculate Z score.

Goal 2:

“In cross-cohort performance, River Grove students who are continuously enrolled (1 October) will exceed MCA proficiency rates in reference to comparable schools. Year 1: same%; Year 2: 5%; Year 3: 7%; Year 4: 10%; Year 5: 12%”

Progress to Date: River Grove scored lower on MCA tests in Mathematics proficiency rates than comparable schools.

River Grove MCA Scores: Math:46% **Scandia Elem MCA Scores:** Math: 77.4%

Stonebridge Elem MCA Scores: Math: 65%

Summary: In 17-18 River Grove used CSP Funds to purchase math curriculum (Everyday Math and Go Math). However, the curriculum purchases were not finalized until into the school year, so teachers created their own curriculum for part of the year, resulting in inconsistent curriculum and alignment across grade levels. For the 18-19 school year the goal is to create curriculum maps in mathematics for each grade level to help address this issue.

2017-18 Reading Goals:

Goal 1: Reading Growth

“River Grove will show positive student growth measured by state accountability measures; the School will show a Growth Z Score of ‘0’ at the end of the first year and post a positive Z Score in all subsequent years during the contract period.”

Progress to Date: Only one year of MCA data, not enough to calculate Z score.

Goal 2: Academic and Achievement-Proficiency, Reading

“In cross-cohort performance, River Grove students who are continuously enrolled (1 October) will exceed MCA proficiency rates in reference to comparable schools. Year 1: same%; Year 2: 5%; Year 3: 7%; Year 4: 10%; Year 5: 12%. “

Progress to Date: River Grove scored lower on MCA tests in Reading proficiency rates than comparable schools.

River Grove MCA Scores: Reading: 46% **Scandia Elem MCA Scores:** Reading: 66.7%

Stonebridge Elem MCA Scores:Reading: 69.9%

Summary: River Grove did not exceed proficiency of other comparable schools during the first year. The teachers identified the need to more effectively standardize and align the reading curriculum and a system to monitor it. To improve this result the school plans to standardized our curriculum across the grade levels - (Wonders K-2, Readers Workshop 3-6).

The teaching team also plans to spend significant amount of time during summer 2018 inservice creating curriculum maps to ensure our instruction and planning aligns closely with Minnesota State Standards. The team will also receive further training on assessments and reading levels to provide targeted interventions. A teacher mentor program and PLC structure will be implemented to support teachers in curriculum design.

2017-18 Science Goal

Goal 1: Academic Achievement-Proficiency, Science

“In cross-cohort performance, River Grove students who are continuously enrolled (1 October) will exceed MCA proficiency rates in reference to comparable schools. Year 1: same%; Year 2: 5%; Year 3: 7%; Year 4: 10%; Year 5: 12%.”

Progress to Date: River Grove scored lower on MCA tests in Science proficiency rates than comparable schools.

River Grove MCA Scores: Science 52.6%

Scandia Elem MCA Scores: Science: 64.4%

Stonebridge Elem MCA Scores: Science 58.9%

Summary: The teachers identified the need to more effectively standardize and align the curriculum and a system to monitor it. To improve this result we have standardized our curriculum across the grade levels- (K-2 McGraw Hill 3-6 Teacher Created Materials). During the 2018-19 school year a significant amount of time will be given during summer inservice to create curriculum maps to ensure the school’s instruction and planning aligns closely with Minnesota State Standards.

2017-18 Teacher Satisfaction and Confidence Goal

“Annually, 90 percent of teachers will post that they agree or strongly agree that the School fosters a professional environment that encourages innovation and creativity through professional autonomy and collaboration for the benefit of improved student achievement.”

Progress to Date: In a survey distributed to teaching staff members in the summer of 2018, 100 percent of teachers strongly agree that the School fosters a professional environment that encourages innovation and creativity through professional autonomy and collaboration for the benefit of improved student achievement.

Summary: The school made efforts to give the teaching time collaborative planning before and during the 17-18 school year. During the 2018-19 school year, the school will continue to push teacher leadership and professional autonomy as well as a formalized structure for PLC’s (Professional Learning Communities). The school also plans to develop a teacher mentorship program. At a board level, the formation of the Academic Excellence Committee is underway and will help provide encouragement and support towards innovative practices.

Student and Parent Satisfaction

Background:

In February 2018 River Grove distributed an electronic survey to parents in order to solicit feedback on their satisfaction with the school as well as ask for opinions on key questions. These surveys were anonymous and not required. However, the school received 107 independent submissions, which was an approximate 94% response rate. This survey data was shared with teachers and staff as part of our school-wide growth planning for 2018-19 School Year.

Results:

Overall Satisfaction (1 lowest-10 highest):

My family and I are satisfied with River Grove overall
8.51

Performance Data (1 lowest-10 highest):

River Grove's mission to utilize the resources of the community as the foundation for *place-based* learning is being fulfilled	River Grove's mission to utilize the resources of the community as the foundation for *project-based* learning is being fulfilled	My academic expectations for my child/ren are being met	My child receives the social and behavioral support he/she needs at school in order to be successful
7.72	7.55	8.22	8.77

My child is safe, respected, appreciated, and in a place that nurtures his/her growth and learning	The communication about the class as a whole with and from my child/ren's teacher is good	The communication about specifically my child/ren with and from my child/ren's teacher is good	The communication with and from the school office is good
8.98	8.45	8.21	9.15

Key Questions:

1.The length of the school day is:

OK: 86%

Too Long: 14%

2.Preferred Start Time:

7:30-8:00: 10%

8:00-8:30: 33%

8:30-9:00: 46%

9:00-9:30: 9%

9:30-10:00:1%

3.Length of School Day:

Shorter day (6 hours 15 minutes) with shorter recess and shorter lunchtime: 4%

Medium-length (6.5 hours) day with shorter recess but longer lunchtime: 30%

Longer day (7 hours) with extra recess and longer lunchtime: 66%

4.Does your child eat school lunch?

No: 28%

Yes, frequently or often:37%

Yes, occasionally: 35%

5.Satisfaction with the food provided

5.97/10

Staffing 2017-18 School Year

Student to Teacher Ratio

In the 2017-18 school year, River Grove employed 10.5 FTE licensed teachers to serve 162 students in grades K-6. This included 2 special education teachers. Excluding special education teachers, the 2017-18 student to teacher ratio was 19.05:1 (19.05 students to 1 teacher). Including special education teachers, the student to teacher ratio was 15.43:1 (15.43 students to 1 teacher).

Teacher Retention:

Despite being in a start-up year, River Grove was able to retain 81% of teachers (9/11) for the 18-19 school year.

Name	Assignment	File Folder Number	Returning for 2018-19 School Year	Not Returning 2018-19 School Year	New Hire for 2018-19 School Year
Jessica Hansen	Kindergarten	412108	X		
Elizabeth Bingham	Kindergarten	508964			X
Jackie Henschen	1st Grade	389007	X		
Renee Anderson	2nd Grade	326907	X		
Michelle Cauley	3rd Grade	447689		X	
Mandy Lindemann	3rd Grade	489292			X
Jody Dick	3rd Grade	473141	X		
Luke Hallbeck	4th Grade	493871	X		
David Cauley	5th Grade	439126		X	
Janel Koenig	5th Grade	495946			X
Adam Johnson	6th Grade	475055	X		
Molly Kaliher	Special Ed	352637	X		
Heidi Dettmann	Special Ed	500511	X		
Robin Walcheski	Special Ed	455167			X
Karla Krick	Physical Ed	206601	X		

Governance and Management

River Grove’s board elections are held in May of each school year. The election is completed prior to each school year end with new members seated the following July.

Election Results

Four candidates ran for two open seats on the River Grove Board of Directors. Elections took place in May 2018. River Grove was pleased to add the following two board members:

Jessica Hansen, Teacher

Dan Miller, Parent

Current Board Roster

Member’s Name	Effective Start Date	Current Term Expiration Date	Officer Role	Email Address
Jon Dettmann (Community Member)	6/12/2016	6/30/2020	Treasurer	jdettmann@marineareaschool.org
Lisa Dochniak Licensed Teacher: #331091	6/12/2016	6/30/2020	Member	ldochniak@marineareaschool.org
Glen Mills (Community Member)	6/12/2016	6/30/2020	Member	gmills@marineareaschool.org
Lisa White (Community Member)	6/12/2016	6/30/2020	Board Chair	lwhite@marineareaschool.org
Jackie Henschen Licensed Teacher: #389007	10/14/2017	6/30/2020	Member	jhenschen@marineareaschool.org
Jessica Hansen Licensed Teacher: #412108	07/1/2018	6/30/2021	Secretary	jhansen@marineareaschool.org
Dan Miller (Parent)	07/1/2018	6/30/2021	Board Chair-Elect	dmiller@marineareaschool.org
Kristina Smitten (Parent)			Ex-Offico	ksmitten@marineareaschool.org
Kate Seitz (Parent)			Ex-Offico	kate.seitz@gmail.com

2017-18 River Grove School Board

Board Member Training

Prior to the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, founding board members received training in the areas of school finance, governance and management, and human resources. Ongoing training in school finance was provided to all board members during the 2017-18 school year. Board member Jackie Henschen joined the board in October 2017. It is expected that Board Member Henschen will receive training in school finance, governance and human resources with any new board members in 2018.

Board members Lisa Dochniak and Kristina Smitten attended Charter Director/Leader Evaluation training provided by the NEST on November 8, 2017.

New board members are trained by the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) at their own convenience and according to the MACS schedule of training.

Current River Grove Strategic Plan

Facilities: River Grove began the school year with uncertainty regarding a facility in future years. At the beginning of the year, we had only secured a 1 year lease for the Wilder Facility. However, the school was able to secure a five year facility lease with the Wilder Foundation, offering the school security for future years.

The River Grove board also engaged with the Town of Marine on St. Croix on a potential interest in the closed Marine Elementary building throughout the school year. As of October 2018, the town has entered into a purchase agreement with Stillwater District 834 to acquire the Marine Elementary property. The board has expressed an interest in using the building in some fashion in future years and is in the process of developing a long term facility plan.

Education: The board supported the implementation of the learning program by being heavily involved in the hiring of the initial teaching team and School Administrator. In addition, the board leveraged the significant educational experience of Board Member Dochniak in helping present curriculum options and make recommendations. Board members visited and/or researched the best practices of successful charter schools and reached out to many mentors working in charter schools and supporting services. Finally, the Board is in the process of developing an “Academic Excellence” committee to provide oversight into the implementation of the school’s instructional program.

Marketing: River Grove primary marketing tools were parent word of mouth, social media, community presentations, local newspaper ads, and flyer distribution to local preschools and businesses. The school also held multiple prospective student open houses where board members and parent advocates led tours of the school and answered questions.

Student enrollment for the 18-19 school year increased by 14% and the school added a section of Kindergarten.

As the school grows and with a potential of operating two sites, a key focus for the 18-19 school year will be the formation of a marketing committee and the development of a multi-faceted marketing plan which may include:

- Frequently updates to the school website.
- Hold open houses throughout the year for new and prospective families.
- Use the School Facebook page, boosted posts, targeted advertising, and shared posts on appropriate pages and in groups to communicate about events and news.
- Continue to send school news and event press releases to and create display ads for appropriate area print newspapers and online media, such as the Country Messenger, Stillwater Gazette, Forest Lake Times, St. Paul Pioneer Press, Stillwater Patch, The Stillwater Current, and other news sources and community bulletin boards.
- Use a database of almost 400 email addresses for announcements and newsletters.
- Mail postcards to families in targeted areas using rented or purchased lists.
- Employ additional community presentations and updates to Marine's city council, area churches, preschools, senior living centers, local civic clubs, 4-H clubs, and other local community clubs to increase word-of-mouth outreach.
- Print posters, flyers, and brochures to be placed on bulletin boards and circulated in key places such as preschools, churches, community centers, coffee shops, grocery stores, playgrounds, libraries, community centers, food shelves, and via Realtors.

Fundraising: The board was tremendously successful in fundraising efforts during the 17-18 school year, securing critical funds for the schools start-up. The school raised a total of \$142,285 during the fiscal year the majority of which came through donations from general community ask of members of the Marine on St. Croix community, most of whom did not have students at the school.

Fundraising efforts were also supported by an active PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) who held successful fundraisers throughout the year to help support the Band/Orchestra program as well as providing River Grove with a playground.

With the last CSP funding round approaching in the 18-19 school years as well as heavy budget commitments in items such as transportation, fundraising will be a key emphasis of the River Grove Board moving forward. It is the board's desire to form a development committee to assist in long term financial planning, especially in coordination of a potential second site.

Finances

In its first year of operation, River Grove faced many financial challenges. While the school was aided by \$375,000 in CSP (Federal Startup Grant) funds, which assisted in offsetting many start up costs, these funds were not able to be used for certain capital expenses and facility upgrades in getting the leased Wilder Forest facility up to code and as a usable school campus. The school spent a total of \$98,817 on capital expenses and facility upgrades during the 17-18 school year.

The school also absorbed \$211,547 in transportation costs by entering into a contract with a third party vendor to provide bus service to the school. The alternative option was to use School District 834 provided transportation. While this would have negated any transportation expense charged to the school, the manner of service was at the discretion of the school district, which offered an unreasonable start (after 10am) and end time (after 4:30pm) as well as lengthy ride times for our students.

Finally, the school had an initial adopted budgeted enrollment of 165 students. The school finished with an AMD (Average Daily Membership) of 160.05. This is an approximately \$45,000-\$50,000 difference in anticipated funding.

However, despite these challenges, the school was able to end the year with a total fund balance of **\$71,601 (3.5% of expenditures)**. A primary factor in achieving this fund balance was the generous contributions from the Marine on St. Croix Community as well as fundraising efforts of our parent organization. In total the school received **\$142,285 in donations during the 2017-18 school year.**

Appendix A

Non Licensed Administrator Professional Development Plan

Employee: Drew Goodson

School Year-18-19

Goal 1: Increase knowledge of the Minnesota education and charter school landscape by joining in a network of peers.

Action Steps:

- Attend a minimum of 4 charter school boot camp trainings providing by MDE throughout the 18-19 School Year
- Join the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools (MACS) New Director Cohort and attend Director meetings.
- Continue to utilize the MDE Charter Director support group
- Seek out and establish ongoing mentor
- Make a minimum of two school visits to other charter schools to view operational practices.

Goal 2: Improve email responsiveness by acknowledging and/or responding to every non solicitation email within 2 school days.

Action steps:

- Create email batch blocks of time (dedicated calendar time to answer emails)
- Seek out and read resources on email and workplace efficiency
- Discuss policy with staff and key stakeholders for accountability
- Attend training on workplace efficiency

Goal 3: Increase visibility on campus and community by creating deliberate times to personally engage with students, staff and community members

Action steps:

- Implement instructional practice and compliance walkthroughs

- Implement weekly teacher check-ins (especially with new staff)
- Spend a minimum of 1 day a week participating in lunchroom or recess duty
- Attend relevant community events
- Introductions during showcase events such band concerts and 6th grade play
- “Administrators Corner” in newsletters

Goal 4: Improve personal project management and operational leadership skills by attending Six Sigma training.

Action steps:

Register and attend training

Planned Trainings:

Summer SDE (Staff Development for Educators) Conference

MDE Charter Center Training- Teacher Development and Evaluation

New Directors Cohort Coffees

MACS “How To” Sessions

MACS Directors Meetings

MDE Charter School Boot Camps