

RIVER SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the River School is achieved by the cooperation and commitment to the mission by the teachers, parents and volunteers from the community at large.

Our students will be conscious, responsible, active citizens of a democracy and global community. We will achieve this by having the following behaviors as goals.

Our students will:

1. take responsibility for their actions (see self as cause, rather than victim)
2. examine and address issues from multiple perspectives.
3. assess and solve problems independently, collaboratively, and creatively.
4. communicate effectively both in their ability to articulate written and spoken ideas clearly and to listen actively.
5. demonstrate mastery of the standards of the core academic areas
6. become self-motivated (intrinsically motivated)
7. respect diversity.
8. understand that the world is interconnected and interdependent (systems thinking)

The mission statement reflects the program of high academic achievement, development of creative literacy through the arts, and character education fostering responsibility, respect, resourcefulness, and responsiveness.

River School, Napa's First Charter School

What is a charter school?

The Charter School movement began in the early 1990's and its purpose was to spur innovation and change in education by freeing dedicated parents and teachers from education codes in order to create their own schools that operate independently from the existing school district structure. The goal of the legislation was to improve pupil learning, increase learning opportunities for all pupils, encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods, allow parents more choice in the types of schooling offered within the public school system, move toward performance-based accountability, and to serve as competition to stimulate improvements within all public schools. In part it was also an effort to offer choice to families within the public school system in answer to the school voucher movement, which seeks to take public dollars out of the system to pay for private education.

River School became one of the first 100 schools in California to become a charter school. As such, it enjoys freedom to develop its own educational program and has control of its State and Federal dollars, unlike non-charter schools whose dollars are controlled by the District administration and School Board. Like any other school, it must follow state standards, credentialing of teachers, and non-discrimination laws. Every five years, it must renew its charter with the District, following State guidelines. River School became the first charter school to renew its charter successfully in 2000 and will seek its second renewal in 2005.

The Charter Council is the governing and policy making body of the school, much like the District's School Board. [see Charter Council]

HISTORY OF RIVER SCHOOL

The River School is Napa Valley Unified School District's first charter school. T. Beller and Gail Chase-Bien, who were committed to offering an alternative education experience for middle school students, founded the school in 1994.

The first year of operation the school had 6, 7 and 8th grades. The school population was about 50 students. The school was housed in a large open building on Coombs Street. The major emphasis was on art, creative expression and community interaction. There was intensive art and drama training and numerous field trips. The floods came to Napa that year and the students learned about sandbagging and water volume! The second year there were 70 students but there was only 7th and 8th grades. The decision to eliminate 6th grade was based on the school's capacity to serve academic needs of all the students. The sixth grade curriculum is substantially different from 7th and 8th grade curriculum.

The third year, Linda Inlay came to River School as Director. Linda has a strong academic background as well as practical experience aligning the values of a school program with the policies and procedures of the school. She helped found the Ho'ala School in Hawaii with her mentor, Sister Joan. Ho'ala School embodies the infusion of implicit values into all the structures of the school culture. Values are communicated through the application of policies and procedures. For example, we can't say we value our student's opinions and then not listen to them. We set up 'Listening Groups' to provide a structure to listen to students.

At the end of the fourth year, the school moved to our present site on the old Ridgeview Campus on Old Sonoma Road. We had many issues to handle through the 4th, 5th and 6th years; coordinating with other programs on site (Garden Haven Alzheimer's Day Program, Adult Ed and Temescal High School) and site improvement.

Our Charter was renewed in 2000 with the Napa Valley Unified School District. With much careful thought and hard work by our charter Council, teachers and parents, our charter was improved and the approved for another five years. The organizational and curricular groundwork was set and the decision made to add 6th grade as a way to extend our work to younger children.

In the summer of 2002 construction began on the new Harvest Middle School and the move of all the district's programs to new sites. Construction and renovation continued into the 6th year and is continuing into the current year. The construction has brought three new classrooms, a life science lab and a larger faculty lounge with running water for our campus. It has also brought us an opportunity for partnership and collaboration with another school and to set the precedent for two middle school campuses to co-exist on the same campus. We share newly renovated gym and locker facilities, new soccer and baseball fields, multi-use room and library. Both principals with the Superintendent have envisioned a collaborative relationship between the two schools to model for students from both schools that two different school cultures can exist peacefully and collaboratively, an important concept in the midst of a world that is fractured by conflict.

After a slow process of development to nurture the unique culture of mutual respect and responsibility, the River School enjoyed receiving the State Board of Education Award for Distinguished School in May 2003.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

River School
2447 Old Sonoma Road
Napa, Ca 94558
(707)253-6813
Website: www.riverschool.org

SCHOOL HOURS

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, the school hours are 7:57 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. **Wednesday is minimum day for the students.** This year the release time (dismissal) on the first (1st) and third (3rd) Wednesdays will be at **2:00 p.m.** On the second (2nd), fourth (4th), and fifth Wednesdays the release time is at **12:30 p.m.** The 2:00 release Wednesdays are used to develop a sense of community through advisory, team, family, or school wide meetings and activities.

The school office is open each day from 7:30a.m. to 3:30p.m. After hours or when the phones are in use by office staff, voice mail may be used to leave messages. Unfortunately, when messages are left if the secretaries are on the phone, there is no way for them to know a message is being left. So, please be patient. They do, however, check for messages throughout the day.

CLOSED CAMPUS/ SCHOOL LUNCH/ RECESS

Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds during recess or lunchtime. Parent volunteers supervise students at recess and lunch. Many of our faculty can be seen chatting with students at lunch. Most students bring their lunch to school, but school lunches can be purchased on site either at the River School Student Store or on the campus cafeteria shared with Harvest Middle School. River School participates in the free or reduced lunch program for those families who qualify. Please call the office if you have questions regarding the program or if you would like to volunteer during this time.

OFFICE BUSINESS

Before and after school are very busy times in the school office. We would like to serve you with our full attention. The remodel that was done in the summer of 2004, has given our office counters and storage space. The counters are in place to help the office staff be more efficient in assisting our families, teachers, district staff and visitors.

- The Student Counter is the area where we assist students with their needs (attendance, student forms, illnesses and questions and more).
- The Parent counter is the area where we assist parents and visitor with their needs (attendance, messages, forms, questions and more). We ask that parents respect the office area and staff by standing at the counter and only proceed through the doors when asked.
- The PAC table is the area where Parent Participation logs are kept, calendar and notices are posted. There are boxes for each PAC board member, all PAC representatives, Advisory Parent coordinator, recess and traffic coordinators and newsletter editor. You may leave messages for any of these persons in their boxes.

Due to the limited space in the school office we ask that when you pick up your child, please designate a place for them to meet you outside, UNLESS, you have business to take care of in the office.

1. TELEPHONE AND COPIER USE

Students can use the office phone if there is an emergency; otherwise a student is required to pay .25 cents for the privilege. Students can get copies of papers they have misplaced. They will be charged .10 cents per page for copies. This is a real life consequence for losing papers. The money collected from telephone and copier use is put into the Student Council fund to use for school projects.

- The office telephone is for school purposes only and emergencies. There is a pay phone on the Harvest Campus that can be used before or after school hours. We ask that parents and visitors use their own cell phones or use the pay phone, if a need arises.

TRAFFIC FLOW / SUPERVISION FOR DROP OFF AND PICK UP

Our families will follow a traffic flow pattern for morning drop off and afternoon pick up. **Please follow the map that is in the Appendix of this handbook. The speed limit in the parking lot is five (5) mph and there are NO left turns out of the parking lot.** We ask your cooperation during the morning and afternoon traffic times. Please allow enough time in the morning for you to drop off your child on time for school. Please pick up your child on time. We have parent supervision at the student drop-off point from 7:45 a.m. - 8:10 a.m. Please do not drop off your student prior to 7:45 a.m. as there is no supervision. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday supervision is provided from 2:55 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 12:30 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. **We do not have supervision after that time.**

We have parent volunteers to assist us with traffic patrol. Please keep in mind that these people are dedicating themselves to keeping your children safe each morning and afternoon. They are putting themselves in a precarious situation in order to carry out this responsibility by crossing students in front of vehicles and making sure that parents are following the traffic flow and drop off and pick up points. They are often the subject of out of control parent behaviors, which is totally unacceptable here at River School.

We ask that all parents dedicate themselves to the safety of all children while they are driving their children to school and while dropping them off and picking them up each day.

The school office closes at 3:30 p.m. each day. When the after school activities begin (clubs, student council, etc), it is important that parents are on time to pick up students. The safety of your children is important to us. There is no supervision provided when most activities end. Parents will be called if students remain on campus after 4:30 p.m.

If you have an emergency, please try to call the school office before school is out so that we can notify your child of a change in plans.

Our school follows the calendar of the Napa Valley Unified School District. This information is in the appendix of this handbook.

TRANSPORTATION

If your student lives in the Brown's Valley area, there is a school bus they may use to get to school. However, this bus is also used for Harvest Middle School students, whose schedule is different from ours. The bus does not arrive on campus until after our bell rings. If your student is a bus rider, please inform the school office. Call the district Transportation department 253- 3556 for specific routes and times.

Due to the parking and traffic situation on campus, it is suggested that students carpool to school. A PAC volunteer will be at orientation and /or Back to School Night to help families with information about carpooling.

APPOINTMENTS WITH THE DIRECTOR

Linda Inlay is the River School Director.

Our Director is committed to being available for parents and students. She knows that it can be a struggle dealing with issues involving our children. There are time slots dedicated to parent conferences each week. She is a very involved staff member with many things to do to ensure the running of an energetic middle school. In order to do this effectively; all appointments will be scheduled with her secretary, Maggie Ford by calling **253-6813** or by email: mford@nvusd.k12.ca.us

When you have an issue regarding your student, we ask that you first contact your student's advisory teacher or the specific teacher to express your concerns. Please do this by leaving a message with the office staff. If you still have concerns or your needs have not been met, please call the Director's Secretary to schedule an appointment to meet with Mrs. Inlay.

CUBICLE STORAGE

The school does not have lockers but each classroom has open cubicle storage available for student use. The cube space is cleaned and maintained by each student. Students are asked not to bring valuables to school with them. The school is not responsible for student property.

GYM LOCKERS & PE UNIFORM

Students are required to 'dress' for PE. PE uniforms are purchased at the beginning of the school year, at Orientation and continue into the first few months of school. Students are issued both a small locker and a big locker for the entire school year. The small locker is used for the student's PE clothes, athletic shoes and deodorant. The big locker is used only for their backpacks and only for the period they have PE. Nothing is to be left in the big locker as it is shared by other students. Valuables should not be left in a locker.

HALL PASSES

Students must get a pass from their teachers to go into the hallways, restrooms, or the main office. A student without a pass will be sent back to class and may receive a 'check' (see the Agreement System for information on discipline).

RESTROOMS

The portable restrooms near Rm. 8 are for River School students only. Due to previous problems with students' use of the restrooms, students are required to sign out to use the restroom to monitor problems that arise. If a student sees a problem with the restroom they are to report it to the school office so it can be fixed. If another student has caused the problem, then we are able to meet and discuss the problem with the student.

Parents with young siblings that have a need to use a restroom will use the student restrooms.

LOST AND FOUND

Found items are stored in the courtyard, outside the main office door. Encourage your child to check the lost and found often. At the end of each month the items are taken to Community Projects or other charity drop off.

COMMUNICATIONS

NEWSLETTER

The *River Current* is the River School's Newsletter. This is the major means of communicating information about upcoming dates and events as well as helpful articles on parenting. The Newsletter is published weekly through September and then twice a month through the remainder of the school year and comes home on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays. Get into the habit of asking your child for it; otherwise, it gets buried at the bottom of the backpack. You can also receive the newsletter by email by contacting Jaime Severi at JaimeEcopy@aol.com or call 258-5560.

WEBSITE - www.riverschool.org

The website is a useful place to check on the most current calendar. There is a link on the homepage to facilitate viewing the calendar. The school secretary, Maggie Ford, updates the calendar to keep it current. The website includes selected student work, photos, art, and essays and articles. It also includes information about the school for prospective parents.

WHITE BOARD

The White board is our marquee to inform you of the daily events at school. The information on the white board is updated daily. If you have an event that you are planning, please give your information to the school secretary.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE STATEMENT

There are policies and procedures River School needs to follow because we are a part of the Napa Valley Unified School District (NVUSD). Some policies and procedures, however, are unique to the River School because they are part of our charter or because they support the philosophy of our school.

Work is continuing on completing the policies and procedures for our school. Each will be developed in consideration of our philosophy. Each piece of the school must have integrity with our philosophy if we want to live what we teach. If we do not live what we teach, we cannot expect our children to learn our implicit curriculum. Until a particular policy is completed and approved by the Charter council, we are following the NVUSD policy regarding the matter. In the case of a disagreement over policy or procedure, the Charter Council will be consulted.

RIVER SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

CHARTER COUNCIL

The River School is a program of Napa Alternatives for children, Incorporated, a California Benefit Corporation as per California Law. The school is governed pursuant to the bylaws adopted and amended by the incorporators. The Charter Council is the governing board of our school and the non profit organization and has authority to revise the governance structure in accordance with the bylaws.

A nomination and election process as outlined in the bylaws selects charter council members. The Charter Council includes equal portions of community members and stakeholders (teachers and parents in the school). Everyone is encouraged to attend Charter council meetings. If you would like to have an item added to the agenda please contact the President of the Charter Council one week in advance of the meeting.

As the governing body, the role of the Charter Council is to support and assist the director, staff, and parents in achieving the vision, mission goals, and shared values of the River School by providing

- objectivity and oversight in long-term planning,
- organizational structure, and
- development of policies
- ensuring accountability and financial stability

A list of the current Charter Council Members can be found in the Appendix.

There are seven standing committees of the Charter Council: 1/ Parent Advisory Committee, 2/ Legal, 3/ Recruitment, 4/ Fiscal, 5/ Fundraising, 6/ Public Relations, and 7/Curriculum.

PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)

The Parent Advisory Committee is made up of nine parents. There are at least three PAC representatives for each grade level. Two of these parents are elected to serve as members of the Charter Council. The role of the Parent Advisory Committee is to coordinate the parent participation efforts in the school, facilitate community building and coordinate grade level events. Each PAC member represents a portion of the families within one grade level. They are **your** direct contact person for your Parent Participation Hours and concerns about the school. PAC members attend parenting groups, are responsible for communicating the school's philosophy and behaving within the code of behavior adopted by the PAC. They can better understand the school from a fellow parent's perspective. PAC members are not elected until after school starts in the fall. A list of current PAC members will be published in the River School Directory.

ADVISORY ROOM PARENTS (ARP)

Each homeroom has one or two parents who act as coordinators for that homeroom to help organize the homeroom to support the teachers and to participate in school wide projects like landscape maintenance, potlucks, and to help communicate important school information via a phone tree.

PARENT PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

The Parent Participation program is intended to promote and instill community spirit. Parent Participation supports the theory that students do best academically when their parents are involved with their education at school; they become socially responsible by actively engaging in a contributing to their community (homerooms, teams, school as a whole). River School is structured so that students learn and become involved in their community by “playing, learning and working together”. Parent participation is vital to the life of the school. Parents need to model the qualities that we hope to instill in our students. Parents are needed to take on tasks that would not normally get done or would have to be an additional responsibility for the teacher, whereas the teachers’ focus should be the task of teaching which in the end supports the vision and mission of our school.

What Qualifies as Parent Participation Hours

Parents must log their participation hours in the binders kept in the River School Office. Activities eligible as participation hours are as follows:

Event/Activity	Eligible Participation Hours
Meetings that directly relate to the River School Program, such as Orientation (Aloha Night), the General Meeting (Parent Participation Night), PAC meetings and Charter Council Meeting	Hours per individual attendee (i.e., if both parents attend such a program, both parents can log the time spent at the program)
River School community building events, such as Team Potlucks, Talent Show, and Fall/Winter Social	Hours per family (i.e., if everyone in the family attended the potluck from 5:30-7:00 p.m. that counts for 1.5 hours)
Recess duty, Traffic Patrol and Student Store	Double-time

Events centering on your child, such as Back to School Night, parent/student conferences or any meeting specific to your child that you set up with the teacher or director are not eligible for participation hours

If you have any further questions or comments about eligible hours, please contact your PAC rep.

ATTENDANCE & TARDY POLICY

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is important. Our State funding is dependent on ADA or Average **Daily** Attendance. This means that each day counts for a certain amount of money that the school receives to pay for teachers, maintenance, textbooks, etc. **So, we ask you to have your children in school and postpone vacations to holidays and summer.**

Arriving on time is important for a number of reasons: 1/ teaching students the value/habit of being on time, 2/ advisory is when valuable information is given to support your child in school (like information on extra-curricular activities, new discipline agreements, etc.

When your student is absent this is the procedure to follow:

- ◆ Students are to clear their absences through the school office. Upon their return to school, they will need to come into the school office, to the Student Counter, **BEFORE** going to class. The student will then receive an absence clearance as a pass to class.
- ◆ Your student will be required to bring a note to excuse the absence, upon returning to school. The note will need the student's name, date(s) of the absence, and the reason for the absence and the signature of the parent or guardian. Notes will need to be received within three days of return to school after an absence to clear the absence. The absence will be considered unexcused after the third day. You may also email your note to: wbeltrami@nvusd.k12.ca.us .
- ◆ You may, instead of a note, call the school office on the day of the absence. We will need the student's name, date(s) of the absence and the reason for the absence.
- ◆ You may also call and leave a message to report an absence **on the day of the absence only**. We suggest if your student is absent for more than one day, send a written note with your student upon his/her return to school.
- ◆ When you go out of town for any reason during the school year, the absence is unexcused. This is a policy of the Napa Valley Unified School District.
- ◆ For students that have appointments during the school day, it is suggested, a parent or guardian send a note to the school office before school starts or come into the school office to sign the student out upon pick up. If you call ahead, you will still need to sign your student out in the office. If you send a note or call ahead, the student will be called out of class and will be waiting for you in the school office.
- ◆ If a student is taken out of class for an appointment and upon a student's return from an appointment during the school day, the student will need to come into the school office and have one of the following: previously signed out that day by a parent/guardian, parent/guardian to sign them in, a note signed by parent/guardian, note from the doctor or dentist or a phone call/message on record that day. They will then get a pass to class. If it is an appointment before they attend school for the day, the time away will be processed as an absence (see above).
- ◆ **Independent Study:** We discourage students being absent from school for long periods of time. This places a hardship on your child in having to make up work. In addition, the school loses valuable ADA funds which it needs to fund programs. However, if your child will be missing school for an extended period of time, you or your child should arrange with your child's teachers to keep up with all assigned work and homework. Please contact your child's Advisory teacher and s/he will assist you in this process. You will need to inform the school office of the absence prior to the absence.
- ◆ **Homework Requests:** Parents can request homework for excused absences while the student is home ill. However, it is the student's responsibility to ask for his homework once he/she returns to school. The teachers will not issue homework unless the student asks for it. This policy supports our philosophy that class work is the student's responsibility and not the parents or the teachers.

When your child is absent for **more than one day**, you or your student may request homework from your child's teachers. You may call the school office and we will complete a Homework Request for you. Include your child's teachers' names. Please give the teachers 24 hours to complete the request. You can pick up the work in the school office.

TARDY POLICY

There are two types of tardies. One is arriving late to school. The second type is "tardy to class". This comes under the discipline system as "Out of Area", meaning that a student is not where he or she should be when the bell rings. If a student is late to class, he/she receives a check and logs in.

- ◆ If your student is **late to school** he/she will need to come to the school office, to the Student Counter, to clear their tardy. A Green slip will need to be filled out in the office if the student is late to school. The student logs in their Green slip in the office and in their advisory classroom. The Green slip is the student's clearance/pass to class.
- ◆ It is true, but, flat tires, parents or siblings late or slow, carpool late, traffic, repairmen, waking up late, the alarm did not go off, parent's fault...are not excused tardies. The only excused tardies to school are doctor and dentist, counseling appointments or illness. We do however, understand that there are situations that are out of your control and take each situation on a case by case basis (power outages are a good example). We would like to avoid abuse of the Attendance Policy, but ask you support your student to get to school on time.
- ◆ Your child is the one who attends school and is responsible to be here on time. If they are late for any reason not their own, that affects the time at school when they need to hear important information being given in their advisory class. They receive information about team activities, after school activities, important turn-in dates, field trip information, general school information and much more.
- ◆ If your student is late to class, they will receive a check (green slip) and will need to log in.

River School follows the Napa Valley Unified School District Attendance Policy. When a student is habitually tardy, they are considered truant and the following process begins:

- When the student is tardy five or more times in one trimester, the first letter goes home notifying the parent that their student is truant.
- At ten tardies in one trimester, the second letter goes home and a conference is requested by the principal and the student's attendance record is referred to the Child Welfare and Attendance office (CWA).
- At 15 tardies in one trimester, a letter goes home, notification is sent to CWA, and a Student Attendance Review Team will meet with the parents and the student.

For further information about this policy and procedure, you may contact the school secretary.

ADVISORY

Advisory is the student's 'homeroom'. Each day starts with an advisory period. The Faculty Advisor is the student's advocate for school matters and that relationship of mutual trust and respect is one of the valuable parts of how we teach the character education values. The Advisory is the center for the life of the school. The school bulletin is read and activities are discussed. Permission slips and other important information (papers) are handed out in Advisory. The River Current Newsletter is given out during this period. Teachers at River School assign students to their advisory. Consideration is given to the make up of the classroom as a whole to ensure successful grouping of students for all homerooms.

ACADEMICS & ASSESSMENT

HOMEWORK

Here is a critical area where students learn to become responsible for their own learning. Teachers are not responsible for students' learning. Students are.¹ This is very different from most elementary schools where teachers and parents believe it is their responsibility to make sure that students succeed. River School teachers take responsibility to present effective lessons, provide emotional support, answer questions, etc. but it is not up to them to "make" students succeed because to do so, is very disrespectful to the decision making nature of human beings. To do so would likely create compliant, passive, dependent human beings who cannot think for themselves. Likewise with parents, it is not up to parents to make sure that their child succeeds. A parent's role is to be supportive, encouraging, setting up parameters for study time, answer questions, provide materials, etc. but it is not up to parents to "make sure" that their child succeeds. That's the student's job. To do so would rob the student of the satisfaction of his/her own labors and the self-confidence that comes from a job well-done.

We want our students to learn how to make choices for themselves. They make the choice and then learn from the consequences. Grades tend to suffer at first while students come to learn that they are responsible for their work. The teachers will not force them to do the work. They do not give them detention or hold them in from recess to complete work. In general, late work is not accepted. Students are held responsible for the original due date. Make up work for extra credit is not given. Exceptions are rare and are given under special circumstances.

This is a difficult transition for many parents, especially when their child begins to falter, gets his/her first "F." In the supportive environment of River School, students learn how to be resilient, to bounce back from adversity in the process of learning that ultimately, learning is their responsibility. This "standing on one's own feet" lesson is critical for their success in high school and beyond.

Parents are given support through this transition by attending required parenting classes, reading articles in the newsletter by Linda or by parents, or talking with other parents.

There are times when quite a bit of homework is required such as when major projects are in progress. Teachers try to work together to mediate the impact on students. Especially for entering 6th graders, the teachers teach study and organizational habits to help students. They encourage all students to use an assignment notebook. Homework is written on the board and students are asked to get out their assignment books to write down their work. Time management for completion of big projects is taught throughout the project. This does not guarantee the student will be successful. Oftentimes, it is the mistake, the poor choice that comes the most valuable lesson of all so we encourage parents to allow their child this learning opportunity here in middle school, instead of having to learn those lessons in high school when the consequences are much higher.

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS:

We ask you to allow your child the choices about his learning. This can be hard on parents to "let go" emotionally and trust that your child will learn about good choices through the process of making mistakes, learning from the mistakes, and making other choices. In addition to the other parent support (parenting classes, newsletter articles, etc.), we provide progress reports **three times a trimester**, more than any other school. These occur at the 3-week, 6-week, and 9-week periods in a 12-week trimester.

Sending home reports three times a trimester or nine times during the year to 240 students is a lot of work and a lot of paper. However, the most important reason for this use of paper and energy is give your child information about their progress. How can students be responsible for their work without knowing how their doing? Then the second reason is to keep you informed so that you know what's going on.

¹ Research from Phi Delta Kappan, "Teaching Responsibility," 1996.

When these reports come home and they are less than stellar, we encourage you NOT to get angry or fearful and act out of those feelings with your child. Neither are you to ignore the lack of progress. It is opportunity for communication - for listening to your child, not grilling your child; for offering support, not scolding; for setting up consequences, not punishments. Whenever possible or appropriate, both parents should talk together and deciding how to handle the situation BEFORE talking to their child. This way you present a unified front.

STANDARDIZED TESTING IN THE SPRING

Like any other school, charter schools are required to administer assessment tests each spring. These tests include: 1/Stanford Achievement Tests in Language Arts and Math which are nationally normed tests to compare Napa students with students nationally, and 2/ the California Standards Tests which are based on the state standards that all California schools are required to teach. These are criterion-referenced tests which mean that they test whether students know the state standards and not how they compare with other students nationally.

The API or Academic Performance Index is the gauge by which schools are evaluated for progress. Charter schools can lose the right to exist if their API scores are not minimum requirements. The River School has always met the 800 index mark since valid scores were used beginning in 2002.

We are required by the Federal No Child Left Behind legislation to test 95% of our students in all tests. **So, it is important that your child be present during testing days. Please schedule appointments and holidays outside of those dates.** We also ask your help in supporting your child in getting to bed early and having an adequate breakfast. Test results are mailed by the District during the summer.

We recognize that while these tests are important to gauge student progress, we also know that test scores are NOT the most or only accurate measure of a child's progress. We also recognize that much of what is really important to learn cannot be tested on a multiple choice exam. We encourage you to view the test results in a balanced way, recognizing that what your child knows is more than what can be or is tested.

PROMOTION & RETENTION POLICY

I. Rationale

The California State Board of Education has mandated the end of social promotion in California schools. As a result, students must earn promotion to the next grade through their progress grades and other means of assessment.

The River School's retention policy is aligned with our vision, values, and educational philosophy and is based on certain assumptions about the nature of a human being:

- 1/ human beings strive for self-determination, the freedom to choose
- 2/ human beings are natural learners and learn effectively through trial and error, especially in an atmosphere where mistakes are seen as valuable learning experiences.

From these assumptions, our educational philosophy follows the principles:

- 1/ because human beings strive for self-determination, we respect our students' choice to learn or not learn. To "make" students learn is disrespectful and subverts our vision of developing independent learners.
- 2/ we trust that through the consequences of their choices, that students will learn to make good choices for themselves over time through this process of trial and error. Moving from dependence on parents or teachers, students learn self-reliance through viewing their mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth.

These assumptions are aligned to our vision of students with a strong sense of self - self-motivated, self-disciplined and self-reliant - who choose to learn, who choose to behave appropriately, not from extrinsic manipulations of punishment or reward, but from their innate choice to act, and through this process become more and more independent.

The process of taking responsibility for one's own learning takes time. Experiencing this trial and error process many times has enabled a student to learn responsibility for his or her learning despite a shaky beginning. Our Retention Policy recognizes and allows for this process of learning. Each of the steps of our policy assume that the student is capable of being responsible for his/her learning and, as such, asks for the student to initiate the steps required for promotion.

II. Requirements for Promotion:

1. Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts are the River School's Core Subjects.
2. A student must receive a passing grade of 60% (D-) or better for two out of three trimesters to receive credit for a Core Subject.
3. A student must pass **three** Core Subjects, during the school year or during summer school to be promoted automatically.
4. In the event a student receives credit in only two Core Subjects, he/she may, after passing summer school, petition for discretionary approval for promotion with such approval to be granted by the sole discretion of the staff.

Note: Because of the River School's vision of independent learners, homework deadlines are geared toward teaching habits of responsibility. In general, no credit is given for class or homework turned in late. 60% passing reflects the desired habit of homework turned in on time. Only on rare occasions is credit given for make up work or bonus points.

III. Failed Core Subjects.

The chart below describes the various situations of failed subjects and determinations of whether or not a student should be retained. The chart takes into account two considerations:

A/ Summer school subjects are only offered in math and language arts in order to make up failed subjects.

B/ Because the River School is geared toward changing students' attitudes and habits of responsibility, teacher discretion is a part of the decision to retain. This **discretionary promotion** is based on teachers ascertaining whether the students' attitudes and habits have changed in the last trimester toward self-motivation and self-discipline. Such changes in attitudes may not be reflected in improved grades until later. Students have the option of petitioning for this consideration by teachers by predetermined dates. Teachers would make this determination based on a student's choices that include, but are not limited to:

- writing down assignments without being reminded
- diligent use of the after school tutoring and homework club remediations
- asking for help when needed
- initiating a conference with teachers when needed
- asking for missed assignments when returning from an absence
- checking their academic progress on a regular basis
- choosing to stay in at recess to finish assignments

These behaviors indicate the self-initiation that marks an independent learner.

6th grade as a transition period: Recognizing that 6th grade is a transition from elementary school where adults (teachers and parents) took more of the responsibility for success in school, the following practices help support students in making the change to more independence.

We recognize the importance of honoring a student's choice to take responsibility for his/her own learning. The first trimester becomes an opportunity for the student to see if he is capable of handling the decisions related to class work and homework. The consequences of his choosing poorly may result in failing one or more core subjects. Through this consequence, a student learns from the poor choices he has made. This is the *wake up call*. Parent and student will be notified of the retention policy at the end of the first trimester.

The second trimester becomes an opportunity to respond to the *wake up call* for changes in behavior for both parents and student. Parents will be encouraged to attend a parenting class to support them through this process of change. Many students begin changing specific behaviors into productive habits. Some continue the process of learning from mistakes.

The third trimester is an opportunity for students to redeem themselves by showing that they have learned from their mistakes. If a student who has had failing subjects in the first two trimesters receives C's or better (70% or more) in all subjects (core, PE, and electives), the student may petition for promotion to the next grade.

At the end of summer school, if the student has:

Number of failed subjects	Result
0 failed subjects	Automatic promotion to next grade
1 failed subject	Automatic promotion to next grade
2 failed subjects	Student may apply to be considered for discretionary promotion based on the student choices listed above
3 failed subjects	Retention
4 failed subjects	Retention
6th grade only: failed subjects	Petition for promotion to 7 th grade if student has a 70% or more average in each of all subjects (core and electives and PE) for the 3 rd trimester.

IV. The Petition Process for Discretionary Promotion

A. Timeline for petitioning:

- **6th graders:** may petition no later than 2 weeks before school begins for their 7th grade year.
- **7th graders:** who have been retained may petition for promotion to the 8th grade by the middle of the 2nd trimester.
- **8th graders:** there is no petition opportunity for an 8th grader trying to be promoted to 9th grade who does not pass at least three core subjects.

B. Explanation

There is a distinction we make between the timelines for 6th and 7th graders. 7th graders may petition during the middle of what would have been their 8th grade year because there is less stress due to discretionary promotion. 7th and 8th graders are mixed in their classes and the change would occur in their transcripts, not in moving classrooms.

V. Notification of Retention

- A. Advisors shall notify parents of the student's grades after the end of the 4th and 8th weeks of each trimester through the Student Progress Reports.
- B. The River School shall send written notice of possible retention for the school year after the first trimester.
- C. It is the student's responsibility to apply for summer school by submitting the application by the required District deadline.

Approved by the Charter Council, February 5, 2002

Policy Amended by The River School Charter Council February 24, 2004

RIVER SCHOOL'S DISCIPLINE OR AGREEMENT SYSTEM

Dear Parents:

When you first came to our school, you heard that the River School's overarching goal is to raise students with a strong sense of self: self-motivated, self-reliant, self-disciplined. We encourage this by focusing on three objectives:

- academic competence and confidence
- creative expression and problem solving
- personal and social responsibility.

through the explicit curriculum of reading, writing, and arithmetic and the implicit curriculum of values communicated through how parents, teachers, and students relate with one another and through the structures within the school. This alignment of explicit and implicit curricula to our vision is a powerfully effective way to encourage our students to learn self-enhancing habits instead of self-defeating ones.

The Agreement System, as we call the discipline in our school, is one of those structures within the school that implicitly communicates values and assumptions. Here are the values and assumptions underlying this system:

- Human beings learn primarily by making mistakes
- Learning in an environment where mistakes are seen by parents and teachers as valuable learning opportunities removes the fear of making mistakes and the fear of taking risks.
- When one is unafraid to acknowledge mistakes, one is more willing to take responsibility for one's actions, instead of blaming others, making excuses, lying, or justifying actions.
- Human beings have the power to make good decisions for themselves with practice and reflection over time

The Agreement System is a awareness program to develop SELF- discipline

From these values and assumptions, we created a discipline system that is a program for raising awareness of how one's actions affect self and others. The Agreement System has the following components:

- Agreements covering the underlying principles of "take care of self, each other, and the school" focus on minor behaviors so that students learn to avoid those with more serious consequences. Example of minor behaviors include: "*Possible harm*" for running or "*Out of area*" when a student puts one toe past the red boundaries,
- We call our discipline The Agreement System because we don't have detentions or other practice to "make" students behave. We have agreements of how they will behave and our word (agreement) about how we adults will behave.
- A system of logical consequences that is not punitive (to remove fear as a motivator), but act as a wake up call to awareness.
- Structured opportunities to reflect on behavior (to think about what is working and what is not)
- A chance to start again with a clean slate every month
- Regular communications with parents so that parents are informed and educated about the system
- Responsibility for communicating with home is placed in the students' lap; consequences are also the students' responsibility
- Opportunities to create and "own" their behavior modification plan, rather than imposed from the outside by parents or teachers, in order to nurture intrinsic motivation

You can see from this that we have tried to take out as much as possible the punitive feel of usual discipline systems and replaced it with nonjudgmental consequences which only work when the adults following through on the consequences religiously are not upset or angry by the students' choices. Like learning to ride the bike, we want the consequences to be like falling off the bike. It's a consequence that gives us information so that we want to and are able to change our behavior. We make a mistake, fall off the bike, change behavior, and get on the bike to try again.

Your role is critical in the process because your influence is much, much greater than we can ever hope to have on your child. You are not a bad parent if your child makes poor choices in this program. Allow your child to learn from his/her mistakes. When parents understand this system and apply it at home, we have found the students learn very quickly to take responsibility for their actions and demonstrate self-discipline.

This system seems to work with about 95% of our students. For others, a shorter time period or different consequences seem to work better. With these students, we will call a conference to discuss an alternate plan with parents.

The River School Agreements

I agree to support the learning environment	I agree to do nothing that blatantly disrespects or harms myself, others, or the school.	I agree to be in class ready to learn and in the proper recess areas.	I agree to respond quickly and quietly when given a reminder or a directive to log in a check.
<p>Broken agreements look like but are not limited to the following:</p> <p>A teacher may give a reminder to a student for any behavior which, in the teacher's judgment, does not fully support the student or others in learning at our school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talking at an inappropriate time. - making noises that distract students from their learning activity or the teacher from teaching 	<p>Broken agreements look like but are not limited to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Behaviors typically considered "possibly harmful to oneself" include things like:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ holding a sharp object near one's eyes, ▪ running in a classroom, 2. <u>Behaviors typically considered "possibly harmful to others" include things like:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ shoving in line or in a crowd, ▪ throwing objects in a classroom, 3. <u>Behaviors typically considered "possibly harmful to self and others" include things like:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ being involved in a fight, ▪ speaking or posturing in a way which seems physically threatening or fight-provoking in nature, 	<p>Broken agreements look like but are not limited to the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Behaviors typically considered "out of class" include things like:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ leaving an assigned class without the teacher's permission, ▪ entering an unoccupied or unassigned classroom without the teacher's permission, ▪ not having all books and supplies needed for class 2. <u>Behaviors typically considered "out of recess" include things like:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ stepping on or over recess boundaries (red lines), ▪ entering the bathroom without permission from a recess supervisor, ▪ being in the hall without a hall pass. <p>Behaviors typically considered "possibly harmful to the school" include things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ marking school property, such as a textbook or desk, ▪ sitting on a desk ▪ chewing gum, ▪ using unacceptable language, ▪ doing something that could damage the school's reputation 	<p>When a student is given a reminder, s/he may not respond in any way by talking or making a noise. So broken agreements can look like: talking to friend, answering back to the teacher, asking why at that moment. The student may ask the teacher later in a manner that doesn't distract the class when the teacher is available to answer that question one on one. Or the student may ask for a listener in the office.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If a teacher gives a reminder to a student and the student does not hear his/her name called, the teacher may call the student for "not going quickly" if, in the teacher's judgment, the reminder was clearly audible. 3. If a student is uncertain whether his/her name was called, the student may raise his/her hand and ask in a manner that does not disrupt the class as to whether s/he received a reminder. 4. A student who receives a "check" (a written or verbal notice that s/he has broken a school agreement), the student must log himself in his homeroom. If a student fails to do so, s/he will receive another "check."

OVERVIEW OF THE RIVER SCHOOL AGREEMENT SYSTEM

Guiding Principles: Take care of yourself, take care of others, take care of our school

LEVEL	AGREEMENT	CONSEQUENCE	LEARNING EXPERIENCES
School-based Training	<p>1/ I agree to support the learning situation so teachers can teach and students can learn.</p> <p>2/ I agree to accept the reminder of the teacher or an order to go to the office <u>quickly and quietly</u></p> <p>3/ I agree to do nothing that could possibly harm or disrespect self, others, and/or school.</p> <p>4/ I agree to be in class during class time and in recess boundaries during recesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 “free” Reminders • On 3rd reminder= check and reflection • Out of the classroom unless teacher allows student's return • Logs self on individual log in homeroom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate discipline check; logs check on own sheet. • Stay out of class for reminder of period unless teacher allows return. • Logs self on individual log in homeroom. • If student is uncooperative, he/she will have a choice to go to a room on the other team or go home for the balance of the day. Parents are notified. 	<p>Starts over each month</p> <p>With:</p> <p>4th check=Letter home to parent with child</p> <p>8th check=Letter home Community Service consequence Loss of extra-curricular activities until community service is completed.</p> <p>10th check= Student does analysis with principal. Principal calls home</p> <p>12th check=Parent decides either to have student go home for “at home reflection” [this is NOT a suspension and does not appear in records] OR parent shadows child for a ½ day. Loss of community service until consequences completed</p> <p>Student creates own plan to change behavior while reflecting at home and may not return to school until plan is complete and signed by parents.</p> <p>With each four checks = at home reflection or shadow; returns when parent conference is held.</p> <p>Second month with 12 or more checks = required parent conference and possible revision of plan.</p> <p>Special Individualized Plan may be necessary for certain students.</p>
District	- District suspension policies	- Suspension - Expulsion	None

Tardies to School: If a student is late for school, s/he will be marked Tardy on the Attendance sheet, as per state regulations. Excused tardies are limited to: medical appointments, purposes of State required attendance regulations. Beyond medical appointments, tardies resulting from extreme circumstances, like an accident on the streets, will be excused from the River School Agreements System.

Revised and approved by Charter Council, Oct. 2002

RULES AND REMINDERS

- ◆ No bike riding, roller-skating, skateboarding or riding scooter on campus. Bikes are to be kept in the area provided. If scooters are brought to school they must not be ridden on campus. The student should arrange with his/her teacher to store the scooter or skateboard in a safe place. Items will not be stored in the school office. The school is not responsible for student belongings. Should an item be stolen, the school will not be held responsible for items that students choose to bring to school.
- ◆ All student belongings should be clearly marked with owner's name.
- ◆ Students are not allowed to chew gum on campus.
- ◆ Students are to use common sense and good judgment regarding their own safety and the safety of others.
- ◆ No laser pointers are allowed at school
- ◆ CD players, Walkman, hand-held video games, toys, cell phones, and other distractions and electronic devices are not allowed at school. These items are confiscated and held in the office for parents to pick up.
- ◆ Any inappropriate items brought to school will be taken away from the student. The Director will hold the item until **a parent or guardian** picks the item up from the office.

PROHIBITED ITEMS

DRUGS, WEAPONS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO ARE PROHIBITED ON SCHOOL GROUNDS.

CONFLICT MEDIATION

Conflict mediation is a process to assist teachers, parents, and students in healing a conflict. This is useful skill for our students to learn as conflicts are not always avoidable. Whenever a student has a problem in school, we ask parents to encourage the child to speak for himself by going to his advisor or to see Mrs. Inlay. We want to teach our students so that they feel empowered when they face such a challenge. If your child is reluctant to do so, then alert his advisor so that the advisor can “walk” the student through this process.

The process is a simple one in which the purpose is NOT who is right and who is wrong. The purpose is for both sides feel heard and understood in their concerns. Teachers or trained student facilitators direct the active listening process so that both feel heard and understood and when that happens, it is more likely that the solution will be successful. Oftentimes, students apologize without being asked to or made to apologize. Besides, when adults “make” students apologize, they usually don't mean it and the other student knows the apology is not authentic. The end result is that the adult has asked the student to lie.

CONFERENCES

Student-led conferences: In the fall and spring students lead and run their own parent conference. This is an opportunity for a student to show his/her parents some of the important concepts he /she has learned in each of his/her classes and to share goals of areas that need improvement. By having the students run their own conference, we send them message that: 1/ they are responsible for their own learning, 2/ they can be trusted to share what they have learned and what they still have to learn; and 3/ that speaking up for themselves is important to giving them power to be responsible for their education. Furthermore, we believe that it is disrespectful to talk about a person and not have that person participate actively in the discussion. It would be like parents being talked about by their employers.

Parent requested conferences: A parent can call the school office to request a conference with a teacher. As a rule, conferences should include the student to avoid misunderstandings and to empower the child's voice. The request will be given to the teacher and the teacher will get back to you within 48 hours to set up a time. Please do not show up at the teacher's room and expect a teacher to stop right then and conference with you. We know this is a temptation but it is very disruptive as well as disrespectful. Our school is a very dynamic environment with many things requiring the teacher's involvement. Any unexpected interruption impacts the teacher's work. Please call and leave a message for the teacher or write a note and give it to one of the office staff to be put in the teacher's mailbox or communicate by email. (Note: Just as you do not always get papers from your children, do not assume that a note or comments sent through your child has actually been received.)

It is important for you to know that when the school makes a call home regarding the child, we are not expecting the parent to 'fix' the problem or the student; we only want to communicate concerns.

WHEN PARENTS HAVE A CONCERN

Formal Conflict Resolution Process

Rationale for the Dispute Resolution Procedure

The vision of our school is a student who has a strong sense of self - self-motivated, self-disciplined, self-reliant. We attempt to align everything in our school from how we relate with one another to the structures, policies, and procedures in our school, in order to achieve this vision.

We come from the assumption that our students are capable. We trust that with practice and reflection over time, they can make good choices for themselves. One of the most important ways to nurture this confidence in themselves is to help them find their own voices and take charge of their lives. When a problem or concern arises, we want to help them learn how to speak up in appropriate ways to those who can help them with their problem instead of parents doing their speaking for them.

Most of the disputes or concerns in schools involve the student in some way. So, our dispute resolution policy where it involves students requires that students be present and encouraged to communicate their concerns, to listen to another's point of view, and to learn how to resolve differences. This is a tremendously useful life tool that they can use in all facets and stages of their lives.

River School Dispute Resolution Procedure

This Dispute Resolution process is designed to allow a student and parent or guardian a direct avenue for resolution of disputes with any River School staff member, including Council members, Administrator, Teachers, office staff, or any other staff or volunteers.

Most disputes arising in any middle school involve the student at some level. In any dispute involving the student, he/she will be included in each meeting seeking resolution. The following steps must be followed in the order presented.

Step 1:

- a) Contact staff member directly involved with the issue, in person or by phone to make an appointment to attempt to resolve the matter directly.
- b) Once contacted, the staff member must respond to and meet with the student and parent or guardian within five (5) working days.
- c) For the conference, the teacher, student, or parent may ask for another staff person to act as a facilitator of the communication process. As a community, we expect all parties to adhere to the active listening process. This process can be found in the Parent and Teacher Handbooks.
- d) The Dispute Resolution Form will be completed, copies will be given to all parties concerned, and the original copy will be kept in a confidential file in the school office.
- e) If not resolved go to Step 2

Step 2:

- a) If the issue is unable to be resolved at Step 1, either party may bring the issue to the Principal/Administrator.
- b) The Principal/Administrator will arrange a meeting with all parties concerned within five (5) working days of being notified that there is a need for Step 2.
- c) The Principal will facilitate the discussion and attempt to bring resolution to the issue.
- d) The Dispute Resolution Form will be completed, copies will be given to all parties concerned, and the original will be kept, with the report in a confidential file in the school office.

- e) Upon resolution of the dispute, the Principal/Administrator will write a summary report concerning the dispute and the resolution reached, within five (5) working days of the final meeting. A copy of the report will be given to all parties concerned and the original will be kept in a confidential file in the school office.
- f) If not resolved, go to Step 3.

Step 3:

- a) If the dispute remains unresolved at Step 2, within five working days of the completion of the Step 2 conference, each party (student, parents, staff member) will submit a written report to the Principal/Administrator outlining the following:
 - A summary of the dispute
 - A summary of attempts at resolution
- b) Within these same five working days, The Principal/Administrator will write a summary of his/her attempts at resolving the dispute and submit all documentation to the Charter Council Designee.
- c) The Charter Council Designee will then arrange and attend a meeting with the Principal/Administrator and all parties concerned within five (5) working days of submission of all written reports. The Charter Council Designee and the Principal/Administrator will review the written accounts, facilitate conversation, and attempt to resolve the dispute.
- d) Upon conclusion of item c) above and within five (5) working days of the meeting, the Council Designee will write a summary report of the dispute and its resolution and complete the Dispute Resolution Form. Copies will be given to all parties concerned and the originals filed in the confidential file in the school office.
- e) If not resolved go to Step 4.

Step 4:

- a) If the dispute remains unresolved, the Charter Council Designee will arrange a Dispute Hearing with the President of the Charter Council. This Dispute Hearing will be scheduled in an open session meeting of the Charter Council. This hearing will take place within thirty (30) days of the meeting, in Step 3.
- b) If the dispute is with a Charter Council member, it must be held in open session. If the dispute is with a staff member, it will be held in closed session if requested by the staff person or as otherwise required under law or collective bargaining agreements.
- c) At least five (5) days prior to the closed session hearing, the Charter Council Designee and Principal/Administrator will submit to the Charter Council and all concerned parties, a written summary report of their attempts to resolve the issue. They will also submit copies of all written reports submitted previously by all parties.
- d) The Charter Council will review all documentation and hear all parties, after which the Charter Council will take final action within five (5) working days to resolve the dispute.
- e) The Charter Council will give written notification of the action(s) taken to all parties concerned within the same five (5) working days, and file the original in the confidential file in the school office.
- f) The Dispute Resolution Form will be completed, copies will be given to all parties concerned, and the original will be kept in a confidential file in the school office.

This policy does not supercede current Collective Bargaining Agreements applicable to River School employees, nor federal and state laws regarding due process hearings and other procedures applicable to Special Education matters.

Approved by River School Charter Council 1/15/02

District

NAPA VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Human Resources/Employer-Employee Relations

WHEN YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT

We know that from time to time things will happen in our schools with our employees that you don't like and/or don't agree with. We are committed to doing everything we can to work with you (rather than "against" you) to solve your problem. The Governing Board has adopted policies and procedures for handling many kinds of complaints. (BP1312 and following). The Governing Board believes that the quality of the educational program can improve when the district listens to concerns, considers differences of opinion, and resolves disagreements through established, objective processes. The Board encourages concerned citizens to resolve problems early and informally whenever possible. These guidelines have been developed to address this philosophy of the Board and to insure that we all understand what we believe to be the best way to address problems, and to help you to maximize the chances of finding a solution that addresses your concerns acceptably.

Here is what Napa Valley Unified School District believes about addressing conflict between and among students, employees, and parents:

We focus on problems, not people.

We are firm on our interests, that is, what motivates the complaint in each of our minds, but flexible on solutions. There may be a variety of acceptable solutions if we listen for each other's interests.

We will strive to deal with you with courtesy and respect and expect the same from you.

We will work with you to explore and develop solutions that best meet each of our interests.

We will model the level of problem solving that we expect from our students.

We will ask you to have a one to one conversation about the complaint with the person or persons most likely to be able to generate acceptable solutions with you. In most cases, that is at your local school site. We will do everything we can to make those conversations feel safe and comfortable for everyone involved.

Some things about the Napa Valley Unified School District that you may not know.

Our collective bargaining agreements require us to share complaints about employees with the employee that is involved.

We hold firmly that retaliation for complaints is not tolerated in any form. You will be encouraged to keep in touch with us after you complain

We will be honest with you about the situation and give you as much information as legally possible. That information may include information about your child's behavior and/or achievement as it relates to your complaint.

Specific personnel actions are not public information, nor is certain information related to the discipline of a student other than one's own.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

EMERGENCY PLAN

Each classroom has a copy of the 'Emergency Action Plan'. Different procedures are followed for different types of emergencies. In case of a fire or other emergency requiring an evacuation, the Faculty will lead the students to the dirt area to the far side of the west parking lot. Students will be directed to the area designated for their Advisory. The student's Advisor will then take roll for his/her Advisory class. The Director, teachers, office staff and if necessary, emergency crews will give students further directions. We will be having fire drills and other emergency drills throughout the school year. In case of an actual emergency you will be notified so you are aware of what happens at school.

FIRST AID

First Aid is located in the school office. If your student needs a Band-Aid, feels ill, etc. they will need to go to the school office. When your child becomes ill at school, we will take their temperature, let him/her make a phone call to the parent or guardian or have him/her rest in the school office. If the child has a fever, they will be sent home. The school can not administer medications unless we have the proper parent authorization form(s) on file in the office. If your child is injured at school, we will assess the injury, send the student to the nurse or call parent directly. If it is a major injury, we will call the fire department and parent immediately. We have a part-time nurse available to us, but one is not permanently on staff in the office every day.

- ◆ Do not send your child to school if he/she is ill.
- ◆ It is important to inform the school office and your child's Advisory Teacher if your child has a particular medical problem or allergy that may require special precautions or procedures. Please indicate any condition on the Student Emergency Card.
- ◆ A physician must authorize prescription medication. Medication must be provided in the container, in which it was purchased, with the prescription label attached. A parent or guardian must bring in the medicine. Specific instructions for administering the medication must be included. An authorization form (available in the school office) must be completed and on file at the school. The authorization form must be in the school office BEFORE medication can be administered.
- ◆ Over the Counter Medication must be accompanied by a parent note of explanation. An authorization form must be completed and kept on file at the school. Medication must be in its original container. Clearly marked with instructions for administering.
- ◆ If medication is needed for PE (such as an inhaler) or a field trip, the student must be responsible for picking up their medication from the school office and bringing it with them. Students that have a serious need for an inhaler (asthma) are allowed to keep the inhaler with them at all times, as long as the proper paperwork has been completed and is on file in the school office.
- ◆ Basic safety precautions need to be followed by anyone administering first aid. Gloves will be worn prior to helping a student who has a bleeding injury.

Immunization

Immunization records for the students need to be updated and on file prior to the child's entering River School. Proof of immunizations must be received upon first registering your child. The Seventh Grade students need to have started the series of three Hepatitis B shots prior to starting the 7th grade. There can be a waiver of this requirement if necessary. The NVUSD nursing staff will check immunization records during the year and will inform you if immunizations are up to date. Contact the school office for more information.

Health/Doctors Appointments

(See Attendance section of this handbook).

BUILDING COMMUNITY

CURRICULUM & ACADEMIC:

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

Back to School Night is held in the fall for parents/guardians only. This event offers parents the opportunity to meet the teachers, see the classrooms and become familiar with the student's schedule and teacher expectations. Individual student progress will not be discussed that evening as the periods are ten minutes long.

OPEN HOUSE

Open House is held in the spring. Students have the opportunity to show their parents the work and projects from both academic and elective classes. This is also a time for prospective families who are interested in enrolling their child in River School to see our program first hand.

PARENTING SESSIONS

by Kathy Baird, parent

Parent education is an important part of the River School program. As our children grow we need to grow with them. The School Director, Linda Inlay, provides parenting sessions for support and education. As our children have grown we become more confident in our parenting. Mothers and fathers in "baby groups" talked about diapering, fevers, bedtime and clothing issues. We have all that pretty much figured out now.

Our children are not fully-grown though and we have more and different parenting to do than when our children were little. The behaviors and issues are getting bigger. We are dealing with situations that require more advanced parenting skills. The issues revolve around things the child has control over; they are things we can't really make them do. How can we really make our children do their homework or get ready for school on time? Maybe we think of rewards and punishments (stickers for a chore). But what we really want is for our children to have self-motivation and confidence to do their homework on their own or prepared for school through their own efforts. We want our time with our children to be rewarding and fun and we don't want to be nagging them.

To learn to parent effectively we need to step back a bit. Our children do want to learn, they do want to mature, they do want to make us happy, they do want to feel good about themselves. They need to be needed, they need to feel that they belong and they need to be listened to. It is not easy. It will be hard. What growth ever came easily? But it will be deeply rewarding. The parenting sessions will help you understand how you can help your child grow to become empowered individuals.

Listening Sessions: Just as the students have 'Listening Groups', we will initiate listening sessions for parents to listen and support other parents. Sometimes we think we are alone in our specific issues, but through talking and listening we find we are not alone. That gives us the strength to parent more effectively.

Guest Speakers: Periodically the River School invites guest speakers for the parents of the River School. The guest may be speaking on topics such as understanding your adolescent, parenting, and the philosophy of the teaching and discipline at the River School. Attendees get credit towards their hourly commitment.

EVENTS

PLANNING FOR ANY EVENT:

Parents planning an event should schedule an appointment with Maggie Ford, the school's secretary, to get you started in planning your event. A parent will meet with Maggie about facilities and calendar coordination and with Doreen Bishop, our Business Manager, for budget guidelines. Please see Appendix for the Application for Scheduling Activities & Use of River School Facilities and the procedures for scheduling an event.

FAMILY SOCIALS

Family Socials are events that involve families, students and staff. The Talent Show is an example of a Family Social. The students get a chance to show off their numerous talents and the families share a potluck dinner. It's been a fun way for families and staff to get together. Grade sponsored events will be initiated this year.

LANDSCAPE WORK DAYS

Once a month, on a Saturday, parent volunteers work on the landscaping and light maintenance needs of our school. Watering, pulling weeds, trimming plants, picking up garbage, painting and fixing furniture are some of the jobs that need to be done. The volunteers are assigned by their child's advisory classroom. The PAC Facilities Committee supervises the work that needs to be done. Parents earn hours for their time and efforts.

AMBASSADORS

Ellen Patterson, our music coordinator, who teaches the Strings class and 6th grade chorus wheel, runs the Ambassadors, an after school program where students try out for a musical variety show each trimester which is presented at three elementary schools. Each trimester has a different troupe of River School students who have an opportunity to sing, dance, recite poetry, and act. It is a wonderful opportunity for our students to gain confidence in being on stage as well as sharing our school.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

OUTDOOR ED

The entire school goes to an outdoor education experience for 3 to 5 days in the fall in order to build community among the three grades. Students are teamed with students from the other two grades. The students are joined by parent volunteers and teachers to experience science and social studies in the natural environment. The three year cycle includes: 1/ usually a week long experience at an organized outdoor education program, 2/ Amazing Race, a scavenger hunt in San Francisco where students use public transportation, and 3/ C Cubed: Community, Connecting, and Camping, a 3 day experience of camping and field trips to various activities in Napa or Sonoma (.e.g., ice skating, Pumpkin Patch, Safari).

EIGHTH GRADE PROMOTION

The whole school celebrates the 8th graders who are being promoted to high school. This unique and moving ceremony is one of the highlights of the year. Students volunteer to speak about their experiences at the River School. 6th and 7th grade parents are encouraged to attend. The speeches help the younger students understand the mission of the school. The eighth grade parents plan the ceremony, and the dinner and dance that follow.

END OF YEAR BBQ and SWIM PARTY

During the last week of school, after a morning of cleaning up the school and completing the End of the Year Checklist of responsibilities, students are transported to a BBQ at Kennedy Park, followed by a walk to the Napa Valley College pool for a pool party. Parents organize and plan the BBQ and swim party.

TALENT SHOW

The Talent Show is another River School tradition where students perform skits, dance, sing, play instruments, tell jokes, or other unique forms of entertainment. The evening is not about perfection, but about students having the courage to share their talents because they trust that their peers are not going to make fun of them. Fun is had by all. Parents sometimes perform with their children.

FALL SOCIAL

This event is planned by the 7th grade parents and students. This is a potluck dinner held at school for all families. Typically, there is a raffle of gift baskets at this event that are donated by families and staff.

OTHER SCHOOL-WIDE ACTIVITIES:

FIELD TRIPS

We go on a lot of field trips as a school. The school policy for turning in permission slips is very strict. We give students plenty of time to do so and plenty of reminders including the daily bulletin, etc. If a student fails to turn in his/her permission slip, fees, or both, the student will remain at school and not be able to go on the trip. This becomes another opportunity for students to learn about being responsible for permission slips and fees. Despite the reminders we get students who want to call their parents to either bring their permission slips and money after the deadline. We do not allow the students to do this, as it would be contrary to our believing that they can be responsible. Generally, if a student is left behind once, it does not happen again because the student who wants to attend an event will remember to return the permission slip.

For the large community building outdoor education experiences, where we want as many students to attend as possible, we waive the strict deadlines because the goal is to include everyone.

SCHOOL FUNDRAISERS:

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

The entire school participates in the big annual fundraiser, the Napa Valley Renaissance, which includes a silent auction, a live auction, live music, costumes and food. A parent committee is responsible to organize this event. Each family is asked to volunteer for this event to fulfill their participation commitment to the school. The proceeds of this event and the voluntary parent monetary contributions help fund for our fine elective program of music, visual art, and drama; for smaller class sizes; and for the critical listening groups to support the emotional well-being of our students.

HAWAII LEIS

Each year River School offers to the community and opportunity to purchase leis from Hawaii for end of the school year promotions and graduations or special events. This is a fundraiser for our school. Please look for information regarding leis in the spring.

OTHER FUNDRAISERS

There are smaller fundraising efforts to help raise money for outdoor education. They might include selling Costa Rican coffee, flowering bulbs, read-a-thon, etc.

eSCRIP

eScrip is an easy way to bring no money to augment the school budget because it doesn't cost families any time or money. Registering online allows parents to do regular shopping and at the same time, contribute a small portion back to the River School. We ask all families to register for eScrip.

STUDENT SECTION

LISTENING GROUPS

All students are required to attend Listening Groups, which are smaller groups of advisory students who meet with their Advisory Teacher to discuss topics of interest or concern. It is one of the most effective structures in our school that supports students' emotional well-being, teaches important communication skills, empowers them to speak up for themselves, engages them in the life of the school, and develops overall self-confidence. Our students practice solving problems, expressing concerns within the safe group setting, and review academic progress or challenges. Students agree to keep whatever is shared as confidential.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The student body elects a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Activities Director, and Director of Community Service to represent them on the Student Council. Each of the nine advisories elects a representative to go to the Student Council Meetings. The Student Council is responsible for the school's activities, dance, special events and fundraisers.

Sometimes, areas of concern within the school population can be addressed by the Student Council. For example, during one year teasing of students became a concern. The Student Council was able to discuss and brainstorm solutions. They put up posters drawn by students dealing with the issue of teasing. By being able to talk openly about concerns, the students learn they have the ability to change things for the better.

Monies made by the Student Store are deposited into the Student Council's account. They prepare a budget for the year and approve all expenditures which are recorded in minutes of the meetings. The Student Council provides funding for 8th grade promotion, the End of the Year BBQ and dance, after school clubs, and more.

STUDENT STORE

The Student Store is open each day at the morning recess and at lunch. Parent volunteers staff the store with the assistance of student helpers. Students can purchase snacks and beverages during this time. There are three microwaves available for students to warm food they bring from home. The parent on duty will supervise its use. All money earned from the store goes into the Student Council Account for Student Activities. It is critical that parent volunteers report consistently to provide this service for our students and to support the fundraising for the students and Student Council.

SCHOOL DANCES

The Student Council's Dance Committee, is responsible for planning and organizing the school dances, with the exception of the last dance of the year after 8th grade promotion. Dances are usually held once a month on a Friday evening from 6-9p.m. Parents are asked to volunteer to chaperone and two River School teachers supervise. Music is provided by a DJ and all music is reviewed and approved by the Dance Committee Supervisor.

AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

The River School is fortunate to have parent volunteers working with our students after school. Sign ups for clubs begin soon after school begins. In the past we have had clubs for photography, band, art, newspaper, nutrition, Spanish and Ham Radio. The clubs can change every year depending on the interests of the students and parent volunteers. Parents who wish to form and lead a club will need to pick up a packet of information in the school office and get a fingerprint clearance at the Napa County Sheriff's Office or the Napa Police Department. Fingerprint clearance forms are available in the school office. The school office must receive a copy of the receipt from the volunteer and clearance obtained from the Napa Valley Unified School District BEFORE volunteers can work with students.

The parent in charge of the club must keep the school office and the students informed if there is a change or cancellation of a club meeting. There is no supervision after the scheduled club time ends. Students must be picked up promptly at the ending time. This is for your child's safety.

Students who get themselves on the Ineligibility List are not allowed to participate in the after school club until they get themselves off by completing a responsibility that they neglected to do. This is another opportunity for students to learn to become responsible for their choices and learn from the consequences.

AFTER SCHOOL SPORTS

River School participates in a Napa Valley Unified School District After-School Sports program. The program is shared with Harvest Middle School. Boys and Girls Basketball, Co-ed Soccer, Co-ed Badminton, Girls Volleyball and Co-ed Track are the sports offered during the school year. Please check our master calendar for the sport in season. Students that are interested in participating in after school sports will need to complete a Sports Clearance Form. The forms are available at Orientation and in the school office anytime. The student will need a current health physical on file and show proof on the Sports Clearance form. The form of proof is the health physical documentation and the physician's signature. Please see the information sheet in the Appendix.

- Students in middle school grades 6-8 are required to have a 2.0 G.P.A. without any F grades, to be eligible to participate in middle school athletics. The latest progress report (at 6 weeks) or the latest report card (at 12 weeks), which ever is more current, will determine eligibility. Students not meeting this requirement will become ineligible for athletics on the day grades are issued.
- After School Sports is not part of the regular school curriculum, are not graded, do not offer credit and do not take place during classroom time. (Education Code 35160.5)

RIVER SCHOOL GLOSSARY

ADVISORY PARENT: Parent volunteer who is the assistant to the Advisory Teacher. Parent will take care of field trip arrangements, permission slips, collect money, keep accurate records, phone calls to parents, assisting with grade level events, communicating with PAC, etc.

ADVISORY ROOM: Your child's homeroom. This is where your child starts and ends the school day.

ASSIGNMENT NOTEBOOK: Student homework assignment book/ Student Planner that they keep in their binder (ALL students are required to have one).

DISSEMINATION GRANT: A large grant of money from the state to disseminate the River School philosophy, policies and procedures to other charter schools in the State of California.

CHARTER COUNCIL: This is the 'council' of River School. It consists of members of the community that do not have students in the school, two parents from the Parent Advisory Committee, two teachers and the school director (non-voting member).

DISPUTE POLICY: Policies and procedures continue to be fine-tuned to be in alignment with our philosophy. Until a particular policy is completed and approved by the Charter Council, we are following the NVUSD policy regarding the matter. In the case of a disagreement over a policy or procedure, the Charter council will be consulted. A 'Dispute Policy' is being written to resolve disputes in a manner consistent with our philosophy. This policy will be distributed when it is approved.

ELECTRONIC/STORE CARD FUNDRAISING: River School participates in store card fundraising by shopping with local or selected merchants and businesses in the community and beyond. Businesses such as Target, Office Depot and Albertson's donate money back to our school if we shop at their stores. Electronic fundraising is done by registering certain store cards and credit cards with the eScrip or School Pop organization. There is no cost to do this. Simply register your card and shop.

GREEN SLIP: The Green Slip is a form a student fills out if they need a consequence he/she made an error in judgment/choice.

NAPA VALLEY RENAISSANCE: Annual major fundraiser. All parents are requested to participate to fulfill the parent hour commitment to River School.

OUTDOOR ED: School-wide field trip lasting two to four days to give students an outdoor learning experience in science and social studies.

PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC): Three parents elected from each grade level responsible for all parent volunteers in the school and providing two elected members to the Charter council.

RIVER CURRENT: River School Newsletter published weekly through September and bi-weekly throughout the year.

SPR: Student Progress Record. This is equivalent to a 'Progress Report'.

WORK DAYS: Days that parents and students come to "work" on the school. It is a day for landscaping, gardening, cleaning, painting, sorting and/or doing whatever is needed based on a list that is generated by the office staff and teachers.