



New Story State of the State: Virginia

Elevating Excellence: A Year of Impact and Innovation at Rivermont Schools

2023-2024 School Year



Letter from our Leadership

Elevating Excellence: A Year In Review

The 2023-2024 school year marked a transformative period for Rivermont Schools, as we embraced the theme *Elevating Excellence*. This guiding principle inspired innovation, collaboration, and reinforced our commitment to empowering students, staff, and communities. Our focus on quality drove improvements in education, behavioral support, and therapeutic programs, ensuring we meet the unique needs of each student. Through a data-driven approach, we have uncovered meaningful insights that continue to enhance our impact.

Supporting our people remains at the heart of our mission. This year, we expanded professional development opportunities through initiatives like our Grow Your Own Teacher program, where 13 staff members earned eligibility for a Virginia Professional Teaching License. Additionally, Professional Learning Committees fostered collaboration across key areas, including academics, behavior and clinical services, safety, and professional development. By equipping our teams with cutting-edge tools and continuous learning opportunities, we have cultivated a culture where excellence flourishes.

Our emphasis on quality has led to impactful advancements in instructional strategies and student programming. The implementation of live behavioral data dashboards has empowered staff to address student needs proactively while coaching and observation platforms have provided valuable feedback to refine classroom practices. These efforts have resulted in measurable improvements in student outcomes. Together, these advancements represent our commitment to delivering exceptional services while setting the standard for special education.

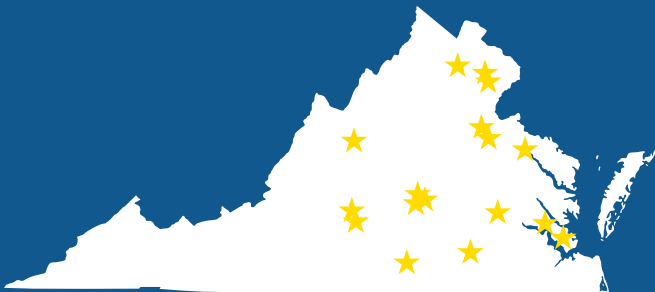
Growth has been another hallmark of this year. We proudly welcomed new schools in Alexandria, Stafford, and Sterling, broadening our reach and impact. Rivermont's presence at state and national conferences further underscored our leadership in the field, as we shared best practices and championed the transformative power of data-driven decision-making. As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our mission to elevate excellence across all aspects of our work, knowing that the possibilities for growth and innovation are boundless.



Beth Ackerman, EdD
Senior Vice President
Rivermont Schools

Rivermont Snapshot

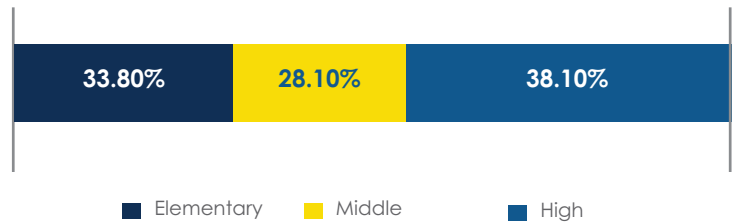
Rivermont Schools has a nearly 40-year legacy of providing special education and therapeutic services in the Commonwealth. Our autism support and emotional support classrooms are led by Virginia Department of Education-licensed special education teachers and curriculum is aligned to Virginia Department of Education state standards. Students have access to a behavioral support team including counselors, clinicians, and therapists and our therapeutic services are anchored in evidence-based practices founded on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). We partner closely with families and districts to support our students in reaching the least restrictive environment.



17
Locations

801
Average number of
students served

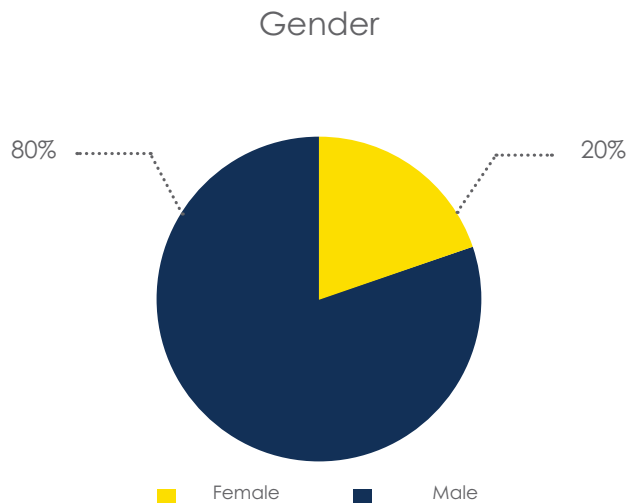
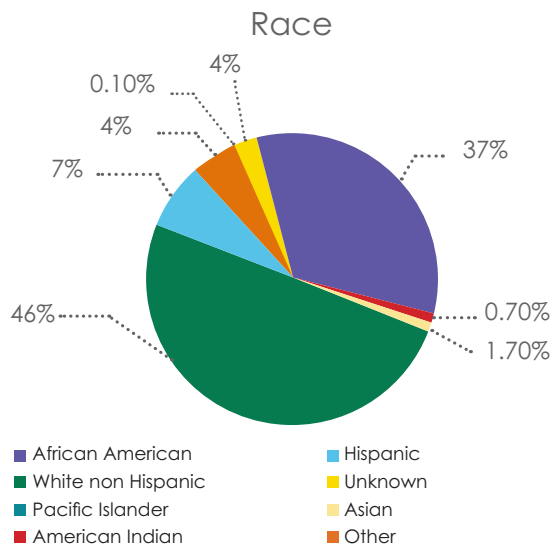
Grade Level



Rivermont Snapshot

Rivermont Students

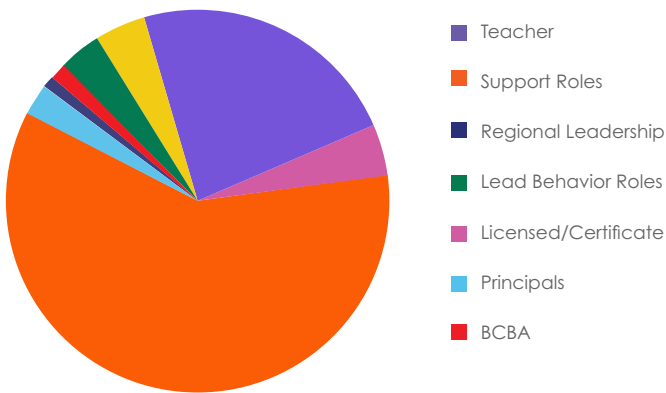
Each student comes with their own unique background, experiences, and needs. To provide tailored support, students are placed in classroom settings that best align with their individual requirements, each staffed to meet those needs.



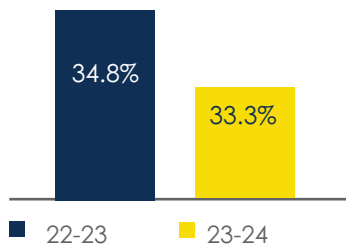
People: Our Greatest Strength

At Rivermont Schools, our people are our greatest strength. Their dedication, passion, and expertise foster a community that is unique to each school, and to Rivermont. They are the drivers of the supportive and innovative environment that defines who we are. Our 531 team members have opportunities to grow their career with dedicated resources including a University Partnership Program, launched in Fall 2023. During the 2023-2024 school year, team members earned their degrees, won awards for their incredible contributions, became licensed teachers, or even had their first job with Rivermont. It's only because of the individual contributions of each person that our students grow, thrive, and succeed.

Roles



Voluntary Turnover



85%

of staff members said they feel supported by their team

2024 Rivermont staff survey



Rachel Denney,
Assistant Principal at
Rivermont Roanoke Southeast

“I was always passionate about finding literature that would make students excited. Often, there is a slump in reading success as students transition from elementary to middle school. I had no idea to use graphic novels to help students with autism because they sometimes don’t pick up on social cues... Graphic novels allow students that rigor and reading level that is going to support them, but also teach them about social awareness and emotions through the illustrations.”

Rachel Denney, Assistant Principal at Rivermont Roanoke Southeast received the Outstanding Thesis award from East Tennessee State University for her thesis, using Graphic Novels to improve Reading Comprehension in Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and published her research in June 2024.



People: Our Greatest Strength

University Partnership Program: Growing our Special Education Teacher Pipeline

The Grow Your Own Teacher program at Rivermont School addresses the critical shortage of licensed special education teachers by providing a pathway for paraprofessionals to become provisionally licensed educators. Through this initiative, Rivermont funds coursework for staff, enabling them to transition into teaching roles while maintaining continuity and reducing reliance on substitutes. Participants bring valuable experience and a deep understanding of Rivermont's mission, enhancing the quality of education for students with special needs. The program creates a sustainable pipeline of dedicated educators committed to supporting Rivermont's students and community.

Top 200 Places to Work Designation by Newsweek

Rivermont received its certification as a Most Loved Workplace® by the Best Practice Institute, and recognition by Newsweek as one of America's Most Loved Workplaces. This prestigious certification is awarded to companies where employees are happiest and most satisfied.



13

staff members completed SPED 500 classes and are eligible for Virginia Provisional Teaching Licensure

74

staff members took part in the New Story Leadership Development program



Quality: The Foundation of Excellence

Empowering Educators, Enhancing Instruction

Rivermont Schools made significant strides in instructional support and professional development during the school year. Notably, we streamlined our teacher observation program to provide educators with improved real time feedback to inform their instruction. Coupled with curriculum, instruction, and assessment coaching programs and related tools, Rivermont empowers educators with specific information about their own areas of improvement, with the tools to support their growth.



100%

of districts surveyed said students
Rivermont students demonstrate
progress

72

graduates

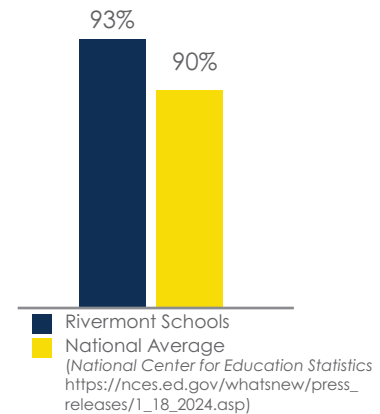


Quality: The Foundation of Excellence

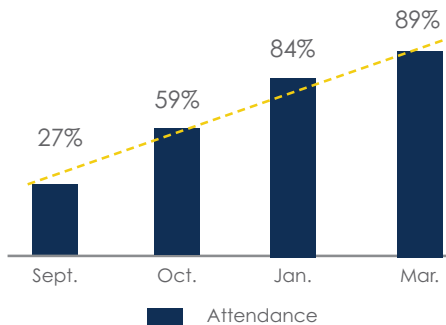
Quality: The Foundation of Excellence

Quality is the cornerstone of everything we do at Rivermont Schools to ensure the success of both staff and students. Our live behavioral data dashboards enable us to create tailored, individualized interventions for students while also providing valuable insights into broader trends across our schools. These insights empower us to make strategic adjustments to our programs, services, and training, enhancing our ability to meet the evolving needs of our students and staff. Our teams took part in year-long curriculum, instruction, and assessment coaching, and engaged in professional learning communities to identify areas of opportunity, and take appropriate action. Last year, our students made progress on their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals; they graduated and took their first step into adulthood; and returned to their home districts. Quality isn't just a goal—it's our foundation.

Attendance



Angel's Attendance



Turning Attendance into Achievement

Importantly, our data-driven approach makes a direct impact on student achievement. Angel, a student at our Tidewater campus, was chronically absent at the beginning of the school year, only attending school less than a day and a half per week on average. The Tidewater campus Behavior, Therapeutic, and Clinical (BTC) team, saw this trend and developed individual interventions aiming to improve attendance. Angel's attendance soared to 89% by March. This incredible turnaround reflects the power of focused, personalized support.

521

Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments taken

103

Classroom observations completed



Quality: The Foundation of Excellence

Behavior Transformation Through Data

Rivermont Schools leverage a PBIS and ABA framework, with insights from behavior data, to provide staff with targeted, evidence-based training aimed at improving student behaviors. This approach has yielded significant results: during the 2023-2024 school year, the use of physical and exclusionary crisis management techniques decreased by 24%.



44% ↓

reduction in behaviors

15% ↑

improvement in lost instructional time



Growth: Reaching More Students, Changing More Lives

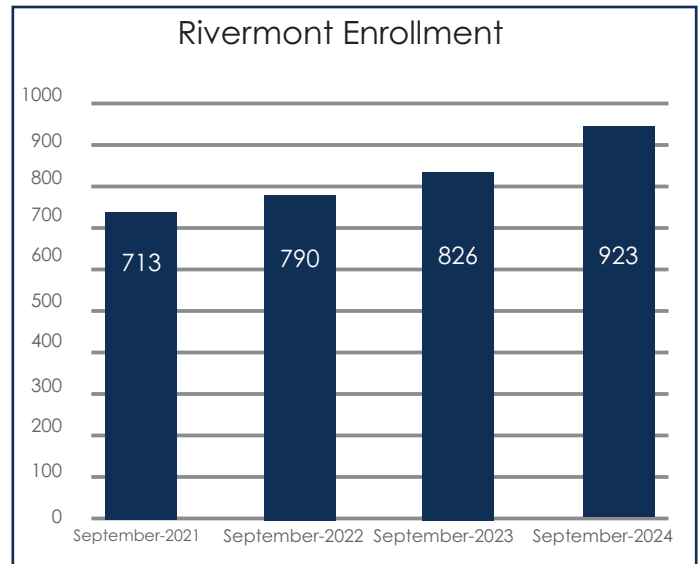
At Rivermont Schools, we believe it's our responsibility and duty to serve as many students as possible. In the 2023-2024 school year, we welcomed three new locations to the Rivermont family - Alexandria, Stafford, and Sterling. We grew our student population to nearly 1,000. This growth allows us to make an even greater impact on families across the Commonwealth. We also grew our In-district Services program, providing critical special education and therapeutic services in Virginia public schools.

“

When we first had a meeting with the teachers and we were so used to the bombardment of the negative things that he was doing in the classroom. And the first thing that this team of teachers said was, “You’ve got such a funny kid. We love seeing him every day.” My husband and I went home and cried because to have your kid, someone understood that they were a joy to have, we had never experienced that.

”

Ginny Lebeck,
Parent



77

district partners

+ 28

new district partners



Growth: Reaching More Students, Changing More Lives

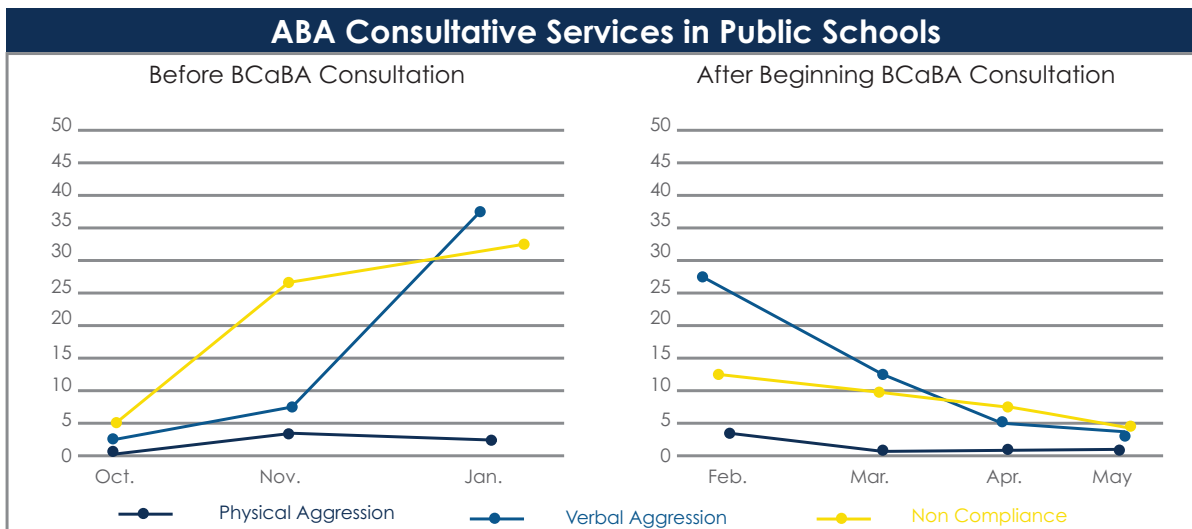
Supporting Students in the Least Restrictive Environment

After a successful pilot year, Rivermont Schools proudly launched expanded In-district Services designed to keep students in the least restrictive environment while meeting their specialized needs. With over three decades of student services in out of district schools, Rivermont brings its evidence-based, best practice programs to the public-school sector. Rivermont programs now span the in- and out-of-district continuum, ensuring students receive tailored support in the setting that best suits them.

Building on our strong foundation in autism support, Rivermont introduced new mental health and alternative education programs, addressing a wider range of student needs. Our school-based behavioral and emotional support programs now offer targeted interventions aligned with students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. While some students benefit most from an out-of-district placement, many are better positioned to succeed within their home schools—and Rivermont is here to make that possible.

In-district Services Partnering for Success

Rivermont's collaboration with Lynchburg City Public Schools was designed to empower student with autism, behavioral, and emotional challenges, as well as those in general education, equipping them with skills to thrive in their public-school classrooms. Grounded in the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model, Rivermont staff applied ABA techniques alongside positive behavioral supports to help students manage behaviors, build essential skills, and progress toward their IEP goals. These interventions were crafted in close partnership with Lynchburg Schools' leaders and educators, enriching the learning environment and providing instructional staff with valuable tools to support student success.



About Rivermont Schools

Located throughout Virginia, Rivermont Schools provide a therapeutic educational program for students ages 5-22 in grades kindergarten through 12 with special needs, including those associated with autism spectrum disorder, behavioral challenges, and have difficulty learning in a traditional school setting. With a 35-year-legacy helping students understand, develop, and manage their emotions and behaviors, Rivermont's teams of educators and specialists meet students where they are in their development, and work with them to get them to reach their milestones so they can return to their home schools.

Rivermont Schools is part of the New Story network of schools and services.

About New Story

New Story is a leading provider of special education and therapeutic services in the United States. Through our network of schools and services, we embrace the incredible potential of each child and young adult. Our tailored education and therapeutic programs are designed to support their unique needs, fostering achievement, growth, and development. We offer a comprehensive spectrum of support for children and young adults with special needs, leveraging the diverse expertise, methodologies, and legacies within our network. Together, we empower every child and young adult to reach their highest potential.

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