



**RAINIER VALLEY
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**

**Charter Schools Program for Innovation and
Excellence Application Narrative**

Prepared by: Rainier Valley Leadership Academy
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Executive Summary

Rainier Valley Leadership Academy (RVLA) is a public charter school serving grades 6-12 with a Kindergarten class of 50 opening in school year 2024/25. RVLA is located in the Rainier Beach neighborhood of South Seattle and opened in 2017 as a Green Dot CMO school. After Green Dot pulled out community organized and took the school back, filling it with leaders that came from or were strongly connected to the community RVLA serves.

The data from RVLA middle and high school reveals a true need for a stronger start for RVLA scholars as up to one third of RVLA scholars arrive at least three or more grade levels behind. Although our growth assessments show we are successful in growing our scholars 2-4 grade levels in one year many are still left behind where they should be academically and socially.

This grant would ensure a successful start for our first 50 Kindergarten scholars that will be starting school year 2024/25. It is clear that more support and a higher quality education is needed for our youngest scholars to thrive. By the time they arrive to RVLA they have already been traumatized and alienated by an education system that is failing them. Their self esteem suffers and they don't see themselves as learners.

Using RVLA's Panther Habits of perseverance, integrity, responsibility, drive, and excellence RVLA can accomplish our vision and mission of providing a high quality antiracist, collaborative community, and leadership focused education to all RVLA scholars. Creating a continuum of education from Kindergarten through graduation is the best chance RVLA scholars have of breaking through barriers placed in front of

them by institutional and systemic racism they face both in and out of public educational institutions.

NARRATIVE

A. Grant Project Goals

Goal: Curriculum purchased for all 50 scholars and new scholar for the following two years.			
Justification: This will be RVLA’s first Elementary, so we are starting from scratch to provide the highest quality curriculum that aligns with our pillars of antiracism, collaborative community, and leadership. The CSP grant would ensure we will be able to purchase the curriculum our scholars need to thrive.			
Performance Measures	23-24 Targets	24-25 Targets	25-26 Targets
The Elementary Dean of Academics and Principal (ET) will work to identify curriculum that aligns with state standards and furthers as well as RVLA’s pillars and mission & will provide ongoing monitoring of data and other outcomes to determine if the curriculum is appropriate and effective.	The ET will purchase just Kindergarten curriculum to be used the first year and the Elementary team will assess whether the curriculum delivered on what we envisioned.	Depending on how the Elementary team felt the Kindergarten curriculum that was purchased did we will either purchase more of this same curriculum or try a different one that might better align with our desired outcomes. This year RVLA will need both Kindergarten and 1st grade curriculum.	By this time we should know which curriculum delivered the highest quality instruction and educational activities. We will need to purchase 2nd grade curriculum for this year, as well.

Goal: Furnish the Kindergarten classroom and classrooms for 1st and 2nd grade the following two years.			
Justification: RVLA has plenty of space for the first several grades to have classrooms in the building we are currently in. The furniture we have is for middle and high schoolers so we will need to purchase Elementary appropriate classroom lunchroom furniture for every scholar.			
Performance Measures	23-24 Targets	24-25 Targets	25-26 Targets
Inventory and tracking are done by the Dean of Operations to ensure furnishings are accessible and appropriate for all scholars and are tracked.	The Dean of Operations will work with the ET to determine what furniture will be needed for the Elementary program and find the best possible	The Dean of Operations and the ET will identify and purchase appropriate furnishings for the incoming 1st grade class.	The Dean of Operations and the ET will identify and purchase appropriate furnishings for the incoming 2nd grade class.

Goal: Recruitment and Marketing for Enrollment and Retention			
Justification: Setting aside money and resources for recruitment and retention are essential to having a fully enrolled school. Marketing and ads are a effective way to get the word out and find aligned scholars and families that are seeking the kind of education RVLA is providing.			
Performance Measures	23-24 Targets	24-25 Targets	25-26 Targets
The Chief Operating Officer will oversee the recruitment and marketing strategy to ensure it is accomplishing the desired outcome and we are full enrollment every year.	The Dean of Recruitment (DRT)will work with this team to determine the most effective marketing and ad placements in the communities we serve. Purchasing those ads in a strategic and timely way.	The DRT will analyze the prior years methods and modify if needed. If they were successful we will maintain he same strategy and purchase those same marketing outlets.	The DRT will analyze the prior years methods and modify if needed. If they were successful we will maintain he same strategy and purchase those same marketing outlets.

B. Educational Philosophy, Key Design Elements, & School Culture

Rainier Valley Leadership Academy (RVLA) stands with and for our community as we build an anti-racist collaborative of critical thinkers focused on dismantling systemic oppression through scholar leadership and college success. We anchor our planning, process, and evaluation in our legacy as a community-based school. We are built upon a deep knowledge of and connection to the communities we serve.

Eighty-two percent of our scholars merit free and/or reduced-price lunches. Further, 26% are learning English;. 21% percent are scholars with disabilities.

The larger Rainier Valley geographic community is served by many public schools where academic success has been hard to sustain. It is within this context that parents

of scholars presently enrolled at RVLA, both long-time and new residents of Rainier Valley, began petitioning school leaders to expand to grades K - 5. With our expansion approved in January 2023, we are driven to build an elementary school culture that comprises elements of community that are child-centered, age-appropriate, and research-based.

We recognize that all scholars/families come to us with an innumerable amount of assets and gifts; it is our responsibility to tap into those assets and cultivate scholars' innate brilliance in a place that is safe to explore, grow, question, and lead. We hold a high bar of excellence and rigor for our scholars and as a staff we recognize that when we set goals for ourselves and our scholars, we also set up systems of support that make the goals accessible and attainable. When our scholars achieve their goals, no matter the size, we celebrate them loudly and proudly.

As we expand to elementary grades, much of the development of school culture will be shaped by the principal, school teachers, students, community elders, and families in ways that are organic to their experience. To sustain this approach, RVLA sets and meets a high bar for administrative and instructional staff representation. Nearly 76% of staff members share Global Majority heritage.

In nearly all instances where elementary schools are formed subsequent to middle schools under a single charter, the academic performance of rising scholars exceeds that of the existing middle school group. RVLA is likely to change in ways that we generally expect and welcome. To achieve our goals, our elementary school's key design elements are rooted in seven core beliefs and philosophies that span RVLA's grade levels: Anti-racism, Mentorship, Decolonized Curriculum, College & Career Readiness, Sankofa, Soft Skills & Mental Wellness, and Outdoor Education.

Anti-racism

We believe in acknowledging the urgency of dealing with racism on a daily basis. We provide safe spaces for our scholars and staff to discuss racism based on their real life experiences. We train our teachers to take feedback from scholars advocating against racism to continuously grow as educators in the space, and allow for scholars to grow as activists. We deal with bias, racism, and micro-aggressions seriously, actively, and urgently; we recognize racism may make adults uncomfortable, but it directly harms scholars. We are in the business of putting scholars first, no adult can be in our space and not be practicing anti-racism.

Anti-racism education can be obvious, but at times it is more subtle. Sometimes these practices are seen as common educational approaches, but often RVLA adjusts these approaches to ensure they keep our pillar of antiracism as a steadfast guiding principle.

A few examples can be found in the chart below:

General Practice	The RVLA Way	Antiracist Concept
Valor Powered by Compass Camp SEL Program	Antiracist Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	Acknowledging that SEL work can further harm scholars if not done through an antiracist lens. Badgework and Circles used from Valor Compass , but antiracist concepts are unpacked and challenges to institutional and systemic racism are discussed thoroughly as a priority.
Hiring Staff & Leadership	Great attempts are made to hire staff and leadership that reflect the community.	We usually have a ~76% Global Majority staff & 100% District and School Leadership. We tap into our collaborative community approach to seek out staff and leadership that come from or are deeply connected to the communities we serve.
Access to Mental & Physical Well Being	Tubman Center for Health and Freedom opened a medical clinic right inside the school.	Instead of sending our scholars and families away in hopes a referral will be enough to affect change for them, we have partnered with the Tubman Center to ensure our scholars, their families, and our staff have access to a variety of both western medical practitioners and holistic practitioners to address their needs. These

		practitioners are located right inside of the RVLA building and appointments can be made with the permission of families free of charge or through insurance.
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Mentorship

We believe in deep-rooted relationships between caring adults and scholars, and peer relationships between scholars. Mentor time allows for scholars to engage with one another, learning across diverse perspectives by leading with understanding and respect for one another. Families know they can count on mentors to keep them aware of all that is happening on a day to day basis with their scholar. Scholars build a deeper sense of community within mentor groups, participating in mentor competitions during all school meetings, and pushing one another towards academic success as they compete with other mentor groups for PRIDE points (Panther PRIDE habits are pride, responsibility, integrity, drive, and excellence, and are the essential life skills RVLA seeks to inculcate in all scholars.)

Teachers have mentor classes that meet daily. Tracking of scholar work and attendance are discussed in mentor group, as well as the various opportunities that are available. This is where SEL work and weekly circles are done. This is vital to building a strong culture where bullying is at a minimum and scholars and teachers are supportive and understanding with one another.

Decolonized Curriculum

We provide an anti-racist environment where teachers and curriculum are diverse and mirror our scholars. Ensuring we provide as many opportunities as possible for critical thinking in all subject areas allows for scholars to critically analyze and reflect on what has occurred pre and post-colonialism in all discipline areas. It is paramount that scholars

who rarely have representation in curriculum begin to see themselves in the teachings, building confidence in who they are, and debunking myths and stereotypes that are contrary to who they are. We believe in culturally responsive education that allows for connections between academics and real-life lived experiences. Our scholars read books that mirror them, they cognitively learn math and have rich math conversations, they look at science through their own lived experiences. Curriculum is cross-curricular, meaning subject areas build upon one another as much as possible to increase engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking.

College and Career Readiness

While college and careers may seem far off, we know it is not. This is why we begin the conversations in Kindergarten. We recognize language may need to be more age appropriate and also recognize scholars will live up to the expectations with high levels of scaffolding and opportunity. Each class will adopt the college of the teacher and provide scholars with opportunities to learn interesting facts about the respective colleges and universities. Developmentally appropriate exposure may include watching videos, identifying mascots, learning about famous alumni, memory and math games, and visits by graduates.

Sankofa

Sankofa is our model for supporting restorative justice in our school setting. Sankofa is a word in the Twi language of Ghana that means to “go back to the past and bring forward that which is useful.” This means we take wisdom from the past to remake our future and grow from mistakes. We believe in reflecting upon behaviors, reinforcing the ones that support success, and reflecting on misbehaviors to learn to replace them with more

positive behaviors through restorative practices. We use a point system where scholars can never be deducted points that rest upon our P.R.I.D.E. rubric: Perseverance, Responsibility, Integrity, Drive, and Excellence.

Soft Skills & Mental Wellness

We teach scholars and staff social-emotional skills through curriculum, circles, and course work:

- Social awareness: advocating for self and others through empathy and observation
- Relationship skills: Building relationships with others across diverse perspectives, and positively dealing with conflict
- Self-awareness: better understanding one's own emotions, strengths and growth areas
- Self-management: learning to self-regulate strong emotions, and how to leverage emotions for successful goal completion
- Responsible decision making: developing an ethical moral compass that supports emotional and physical behaviors

Outdoor Education

Our ancestors lived on the land and from the land; we took care of the land and in turn were healed from the land. Through enslavement, racist systems, and urban jungles, our youth and families have been separated from the land, as well as made to fear the outdoors. RVL A invites scholars, families, and community to join the movement to be protectors and advocates for environmental justice.

Being in nature is a spiritual experience, it is healing, and can bring peace to those who wish it to do so. Outdoor education is an entry point to environmental justice efforts by

bringing our community into the conversation, starting with our youth and their families. We are intentionally taking advantage of the Northwest landscape and reintroducing the beauty of the land to the beauty that is our community.

Our Elementary Education will align with the Middle School and High School so they are prepared for the experiences they will have during their upper level outdoor education program. The teachers will be responsible for taking their class on at least one outdoor education outing a semester working their way up to a hike or overnight trip depending on the grade. Some options for these trips are as follows: Farm Trip, Horseback Riding, Fishing, Boating, Clamming, Marine Biology Exploration, Ropes Course, Skiing/Boarding/Snow Shoeing, Camping, and Nature walks.

C. Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, and Technology

The educational program at RVL A draws directly from our philosophy and comprises four fundamental terms and design elements::

1. Teaching and Instruction: Students experience effective teaching aligned to our framework and multiple assessments to measure growth and inform instruction.
2. College-going Culture: Students experience college-going culture by participating in academic counseling, college tours, and taking college prep core content.
3. Eliminating Barriers to Learning: Students access the academic intervention, counseling and clinical services necessary to break down the barriers to learning.
4. Promoting Leadership and Life Skills: Students learn a broad set of tools to prepare them for college and beyond through student leadership opportunities, partnerships with community programs, and attending an Advisory/Mentor program that will build students' social emotional skills and college awareness.

RVLA uses a 1:1 model for the Elementary School, similar to the Middle/High School model. RVLA recognizes the technological demands that society has placed on virtually every person in order to be a fully functional global citizen. Laptops will be distributed to each scholar and used daily for instruction. Laptop carts will be utilized to create a mobile laptop library where scholars can store their laptops for safekeeping when not needed and ensure they are charged for the next use. Laptops are able to be tracked and virtually locked if not returned at the end of the year or if a scholar withdraws or transfers schools.

Teaching and Instruction

At RVLA, our core teaching and instruction value is multi-faceted and scholar-centered.

Our plans for elementary grades K-5 are as follows:

- Deliver mastery/competency-based instruction providing students with multiple opportunities to learn and demonstrate content knowledge and mastery;
- Use high-quality standards-aligned curricular materials ensuring all students equitable content access;
- Structure early grade opportunities wherein students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment;
- Extend additional support (through dedicated staffing and relevant instructional materials) to encourage literacy and fluency by all students; and,
- Use high-quality evaluation materials aligned to provide students/families with accurate feedback and to inform modifications to instruction and support.
- One classroom teacher with an Instructional Aide (IA) to support with special services and small group instruction in grades K-2 (6 teachers, 6 IAs), with one shared IA for grade bands 3-5 (6 teachers/3 IAs).

RVLA will achieve these plans through a comprehensive launch strategy for elementary education. Teachers will receive training ongoing professional development to support students with disabilities and multiple language learners. Over the course of the charter term, we modify curriculum and our instructional practices to approximate our middle school experience. For example, “upper elementary” scholars in grades 3-5 will have exposure to rotation centers, community-engagement activities, and opportunities to lead. In lower grades (K-2), teaching will focus on conducting regular assessments of students’ exposure to new content, processing and recall of key ideas, and facility with conveying understanding using oral and written means. Beginning in Fall 2023, RVLA is evaluating select elementary curricula and choosing those best suited to our students.

- For Literacy acquisition, phonics options include *Roots*, *Phonics for All*, and *Stepping Stones*. English language arts (ELA) will be supplemented with *Wired for Reading*, *Accelerated Reader*, *Lexia*, and *Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading*.
- In math, we will use *Illustrative Math K-5 with a focus on Cognitively Guided Instruction* and math conversations. In science, we will rely on *Amplify* as we have for the past few years at the middle school level.
- In social studies, physical education and the arts, we will use project-based curriculum from *Wit & Wisdom*, the *Buck Institute*, and *High Tech High*, and teacher-created, decolonized materials while adhering to our standards-aligned scope and sequence.
- For social emotional learning RVLA will continue using the *Valor Compass Camp circle model* with some decolonized tweaks, and *Second Step for SEL*. The

Committee for Children suite to support younger scholars with bullying, and safety including safety from sexual abuse will be implemented as well.

Eliminating Barriers to Learning

Among the most resistant barriers to learning and inclusion are those of literacy, numeracy and language. At RVLA, we remain committed to eliminating those barriers in several ways. First, our practice is to remain an accessible Rainier Valley institution. We live and work in the community and we partner with parents and families in the shared responsibility of educating scholars.

With the expansion to serve elementary grades, the push for literacy will look and feel different. RVLA teachers focus on building decoding skills and language comprehension skills. We expose scholars to a high volume of words they can learn from stories, from group activities, and from phonetic practices. Our teachers will ensure our young scholars have time to work together in small groups, and to process our checks for understanding in ways that do not damage their self-concept.

Promoting Leadership and Life Skills

All RVLA scholars will receive the support of a one-to-one mentor or buddy while enrolled. Our middle school and high school scholars have all been matched with a teacher mentor. For the elementary grades, we may match our middle school scholars with elementary school students to smooth the adaptation period. Kindergarten students are sure to be inspired by big brothers and sisters who take an active interest in their development and who model Panther PRIDE schoolwide. Panther PRIDE habits (pride, responsibility, integrity, drive, and excellence) are the essential life skills RVLA seeks to inculcate in all scholars.

Structured opportunities to lead extend to scholars through community service projects. While middle school scholars also have opportunities for internships and entrepreneurship, we will scale opportunities to age-appropriate activities in grades K-5.

Curriculum

RVLA uses high-quality, standards-aligned curriculum materials in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science to ensure rigor and increase the likelihood of high academic achievement by our scholars. Whether students enroll and are high performers, score within the largest distribution of their peers, or are initially identified elsewhere in a learning continuum, RVLA administrators and teachers are intentional about creating challenges with support. All scholars experienced varying degrees of academic disruption during the pandemic, including our first cohorts of kindergarteners whose crucial early development was impacted by isolation and toxic stress. To the extent those disruptions are exacerbated by special needs or language acquisition considerations, our teachers will be employing customized solutions for each scholar.

Instructional design strategies will incorporate whole class strategies, the leveraging of small groups, blended learning opportunities and universal design practices across all content areas. Each classroom will use blended learning styles like rotation stations that leverage differentiated instruction. There are professional development opportunities to ensure teachers and IAs feel confident. We have adopted the *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching* framework by Douglas B. Fisher/Nancy Frey.

English Language Arts

English language instruction will incorporate a wide variety of curricula intended to provide all RVLA scholars with opportunities to achieve literacy. Our possible selection of Success

for All's *Reading Roots* curriculum is anchored in their four core values: *Reading Roots* supports cooperative learning, is dynamic and differentiated for our universe of learners, offers extensive support for new teachers, and is research-based. To build verbal strength, RVLA will adopt *Phonics for All*. We will use [Stepping Stones Handwriting without Tears](#) and [Gear Up](#) resources to teach writing and support that work using fiction and non-fiction resources gleaned from over 240 leveled pair books. Additional options will include: Fountas & Pinnell Guided Reading, Accelerated Reader, Wired for Reading, [Lexia](#).

Mathematics

Math instruction will incorporate resources from [Illustrative Mathematics K-5](#). This research-based curriculum offers extensive guidance and support to teachers, incorporates culturally responsive pedagogy, centers on academic language development, and provides a coherent progression of learning. Consistent with our core values, Illustrative allows students to build math fluency with numeracy.

Historically, RVLA scholars have performed well against their peers in comparable schools and across Washington State. We believe that our increased capacity to get an early jump on closing gaps will only increase our aggregate performance. Moreover, as we build literacy and numeracy bridges for all students, we will be creating a community where multi-language learners acquire core skills at the same time as their peers.

For scholars who need additional support we have partnered with Stemtac and Fear No Number, which provides expertise in equitable/culturally responsive math instruction and tutoring. Scholars receive free of charge targeted tutoring in groups and 1:1.

Science

RVLA's science curriculum will be [Amplify](#). This research-based and independently-reviewed curriculum "blends hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers." Importantly, Amplify Science is aligned to Next Generation Science Standards and the three core dimensions. As noted throughout our application, RVLA is committed to a quantitative and empirical balance across instruction and school operations. Amplify positions scholars to apply their classroom methodologies to principles and questions of leadership.

Social Studies

Consistent with our pillars of anti-racism and collaborative community, RVLA teachers will continue to develop curriculum aligned to our core values. We take seriously the ongoing work of decolonizing curriculum to emphasize the agency and authority of our scholars as leaders. To that end, curriculum in grades K-5 will be reviewed by staff and selected school partners to test for consistency with our principles.

Outdoor Education

For elementary scholars, outdoor education will be effectively delivered as field trips throughout the community and the region. These are low-cost activities that have already been scoped out. Outdoor education opportunities tied to rites of passage are hikes, trail walks, outdoor based activities including inner tubing, snowshoe walks, herb identification walks, community P-patch gardens, field trips to urban farms, Seattle Aquarium, and the Woodland Park Zoo. These opportunities are tied to global and local Indigenous practices. Many of the field trips are a short bus ride or walking distance. Other supplemental materials will be created and supported within the content and

grade level team meetings. Whenever possible curriculum will be purchased to take the burden off teachers and allow them the space and capacity to decolonize curriculum and infuse diverse perspectives across all content areas. District-wide PD will support the development of the skills needed for elementary teachers. The Principal and Deans will support the facilitation and coaching along with Lead Teachers in the current middle and high school until elementary Lead Teachers emerge.

D. Assessment & Data

RVLA is strongly committed to and deeply immersed in the work of quantitative analysis of scholar achievement: as measured by absolute performance, comparative performance, and growth over time. We routinely gather and discuss assessment data at multiple levels: classroom, grade, and subject or domain.

RVLA school leaders deliver training sessions on data analysis for teachers. At the conclusion of these sessions, teachers can apply key indicator analyses, trend analyses and other tools to their work. In doing so, teacher pairs can customize teaching and re-teaching to meet a number of purposes: increase differentiation for scholars with special needs, shift modifications for groups of multiple language learners, create accelerated work for cohorts of students who rapidly assimilate new content and demonstrate mastery.

Data is fundamental to the work of telling accurate and compelling stories about qualitative findings. We position our teachers to achieve that goal as they talk to parents about what is next for their scholar, and, as they build a culture of scholar ownership of performance outcomes.

Assessment Tool	Subject	Grade
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NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) suite of standardized assessments	ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies	K-12
Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) Suite	Social-Emotional	K-8
DIBELS Dynamic Indicators	Basic Early Literacy	K-2
WaKids Whole-Child Assessment	Everyday activities (transitions, instruction, learning centers, etc.)	K
SBA Smarter Balanced Assessment	Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA).	3-8
WCAS Washington Comprehensive Assessment	Science	5
World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment	English language proficiency, both knowledge and skills, in reading, listening, writing, and speaking for Multilingual Learners.	K-12
Teacher-created curriculum-based assessments	Any subject needing testing	K-12

These specific assessment tools were chosen because they provide complementary pieces of information that we can use to support scholar growth and development. We use summative assessments such as the MAP to understand how scholars are growing along testing bands, to ensure our scholars are performing aligned to Washington State standards, to set goals, and to plan targeted interventions such as small group instruction, tutoring, and time on Lexia. The DESSA takes a strengths-based approach to screening and aligns directly to our social emotional curriculum. DIBELS subtests measure critical skills and abilities that are necessary for reading success, and offer opportunities for both benchmark and progress-monitoring. In accordance with Washington State mandates, we assess using WaKids, SBA, WCAS, and WIDA, throughout the school year, in line with state testing windows.

We know summative assessments were not designed to show the brilliance of scholars farthest from educational justice, so we draw upon a range of curriculum-based and teacher-developed assessments to make instructional decisions. The MTSS team meets weekly to look at data from classroom teachers and the data team to support scholars. We take a holistic look at data to understand patterns across academic assessments, SEL assessments, attendance, grades, missing assignments, mentor feedback, and summative assessments like the MAP. We use data to make decisions about tiers of support within our MTSS.

In keeping with our existing practice, parents and families are notified of schoolwide performance expectations and supports. School leaders convene an orientation session for new scholars and families that is delivered initially in English, with translation services available upon request. Essential written materials will be distributed at meetings, with translations made available in writing at the time of the meeting. RVLA has on staff multilingual family support services staff to provide one-on-one and small group guidance on essential matters for families. Our teams are also accessible on a daily basis in the building, and available for meetings by appointment. Within our general discussions around performance expectations, we also inform parents of the rights of scholars and families, as well as mechanisms for seeking support, or filing complaints to seek redress. Historically, these various means have been sufficient to meet the needs of all scholars, parents and families. As we continue to solicit feedback from the community and serve younger scholars, we will regularly request information from parents about ways to improve our communications, fact-finding efforts, and overall effectiveness.

E. Effectively Serving All Students

RVLA is strongly committed to educating all students in the least restrictive environment and to providing differentiated instruction on challenging content.

RVLA uses a multi-tiered system of instructional support for students. Classroom teachers, special education specialists, multi-language learner (MLL) specialists, and our social workers come together on a weekly (and more frequent) basis to discuss individual students, socio-emotional events and outcomes, academic achievement, and all relevant data points to constitute qualitative and quantitative action plans for scholars. Throughout the year, teachers will receive professional development from RVLA instructional leaders, external partners, and peers on how to establish classroom routines, engage students facing unique daily challenges, enlist the support of administrators during those times when planned routines fail, and how to continue delivering quality instruction to the entire class.

At RVLA, we see literacy instruction as a driving feature of elementary programming. Aligned with our robust MTSS strategies, our elementary phonics programming will include systematic screening, appropriate groupings, and individualized support for each scholar. The table below describes our MTSS framework across academic, behavioral, and social outcomes. Part 1 describes the universal supports for all scholars and outlines the responsibilities of teachers, administrators, mentors, and scholars for ensuring a strong Tier 1. Part 2 describes the screening tools used to determine needs for more intensive supports or additional challenge, and Part 3 describes our decision rules for differentiating instruction at Tiers 2 and 3.

Part 1: Tier 1 (Universal Support)		
<i>Academic</i>	<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Socio-Emotional</i>

<p>Teachers & Mentors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers teach only Grade-Level lessons - Teachers plan for and provide differentiation and scaffolding for scholars who are needing support and acceleration - Teachers & Mentors provide scholars with an opportunity to utilize goal setting and tracking: weekly tracking of grades, attendance, behavior - Teachers only enter Summative Assessments in the gradebook: -Teachers share exemplar scholar work -Teachers share lesson objective on board -Teacher posts all resources on Google Classroom by end of the week -Teachers provide opportunities for reflection in class on “soft skills” or skills that lead into a standard -Teacher design and implement decolonized and scholar centered curriculum <p>Admin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dean of Academics emails families on Tuesday of any missing assignments and attendance (Grades are pulled on Tuesdays at 8am) -Office Manager (Operations Team) sends out monthly progress reports -Operations team provides home supports 	<p>Classroom Procedures (how scholars are participating)</p> <p>All CT3 look fo are present: Precise directions, Positive Narration, Incentives/Consequences, Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Teacher posts and refers to classroom expectations/ school-wide PRIDE expectations -Teacher implements PBIS (PRIDE) Incentive System <p>Teacher utilizes Office Referral System- via Dean's List (Sankofa Room & Re-Commitment)</p> <p>Admin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reset space (Sankofa Room & Re-Commitment) -Behavior Response Personnel (Sankofa Team) <p>Reintegration & Restorative Conversations</p>	<p>Scholar Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentor adheres to the facilitation of weekly Badge work coaching and scholar circles in mentor group, -Mentor leads in mentorship group <p>SEL Skill Building: Second Step Curriculum implementation during Mentor Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentor facilitates weekly 1:1 check-ins -Teachers make time for a brain break during every block <p>Admin</p> <p>Conduct weekly walk-throughs of scholars circles & badge work coaching and provide feedback to mentors</p> <p>Maintain relationship with Committee for Children (access to Second Step and supports)</p>
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<i>Part 2: Universal Screening</i>		
<i>Tools</i>	<i>Who Administers</i>	<i>When Administered</i>
MAP Testing	<i>Mentors</i>	Fall, Winter, Spring:
DESSA	<i>Mentors</i>	Fall. Winter, Spring
Teacher created assessments	Teacher assessment	Ongoing

Rainier Valley Leadership Academy MTSS Referral Process

Step 1: A teacher or mentor is concerned about a scholar and has implemented relevant Tier 1 supports

Step 2: In addition to the Tier 1 supports, the teacher tries out a minimum of 3 targeted Tier 2 supports for the scholar and track data, and bring up the scholar in Grade Level Team meeting. 1) Utilize data in discussion about scholar of concern 2) Tier 2 supports are planned and implemented with clear progress monitoring

Step 3: Submit an MTSS referral if scholar does not make sufficient progress

Interventions should last 6-8 weeks to give ample time to see if they are effective.

F. Staffing & Professional Development Plan

Over the course of the 2023-2024 school year, it is our expectation that all teachers will know what to teach, and how to teach it because we provide them with the necessary tools and skills. We will provide teachers with many instructional methods to deliver

content. We ensure through professional development that our methods will rely on effective and age-appropriate communication practices/behavioral support practices.

RVLA administrators expect that teachers will make use of abundant resources for effective classroom management and for other needs that emerge daily and over a semester. Among the practices that we encourage teachers to build sustainable communication and learning discipline are [No Nonsense Nurturing](#)® and exploratory learning. RVLA collaborates with community partners and incorporates external curricular resources for these approaches. No Nonsense Nurturing is less a tough love approach to discipline as it is an asset-based approach to supporting scholars in seeing all that they can achieve through the exercise of their directed will. This program equips teachers with the tools to authentically and honestly engage students and parents in affirming conversations and accountability practices.

To do our work as an anti-racist institution, it is incumbent on us to set the nature of discourse as one that affirms who scholars are when they arrive. We hold them in a place of possibility and address the imposition of adverse conditioning that may be embedded in our adult population. This reversal, of sorts, establishes a sound basis for fair and equitable conversations between home and school, between scholar and teacher, between community and institution.

RVLA's professional development practice focuses on instructional data at various levels (classroom, grade band, school-level, district). PD's will continue to be held each Wednesday for all staff (90-180 minutes). In addition, there will be quarterly full day PD's, and summer PD that will be for three weeks.

For entering elementary grade teachers, the onboarding process will be greatly facilitated by our established cadres in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Elementary grade teachers will be able to call upon their peers for a great many resources they can calibrate throughout grades K through 5. We imagine that this, in addition to their own collaboration, teachers will tap into this unique resource. Each week, elementary grade teachers will have opportunities to engage with peers at the middle and high school levels.

Weekly Professional Development:

Each week, school-based professional development meetings (90 – 180 minutes) for all staff will be focused on improving the craft of teachers and providing staff with opportunities to engage with one another. Our administrators will be particularly mindful of keeping the purpose and function of these meetings on professional development, rather than administration and management.

The annual agenda for professional development topics is informed by teacher input in various forms. We solicit teacher input through annual surveys, informal questioning, ongoing meetings, and informal outreach. Teachers have the latitude to pose topics, and to present on topics. As our instructional team grows, we envision more teachers assuming leadership roles as master teachers and as instructional leaders for their peers on all elements of the craft.

The first part of the PD is Adult Based SEL that transfers to scholar practices: Circle. Adults do the same homework as scholars to internalize what is called badgework, they then present their work in Circle. The Adult Circles are compartmentalized based on school levels; elementary, middle, high. Once a month there is no actual Circle, and

instead district-wide or school level Circle training; at which level depends on data collected from Circle walkthroughs. If trends are across all Circles, training can happen district-wide, or it can be compartmentalized for school levels.

The last two hours of training will continue to be based on scholar data, staff surveys, and programmatic elements. If they are programmatic they can be district-wide, or school level, they can also be based on content areas. Once a month there is special services training for MLL and SPED services. RVLA teachers also attend district-wide training in specific areas. Examples of district-wide training include coaching, no-nonsense nurturing, RVLA systems and platforms, district data deep dives, rotation stations, cognitively guided instruction models, outdoor education, SEL, and exploratory learning supports.

Content Team Meetings:

RVLA hosts content-based professional development on K-12 practices using smaller groups humanities, math/science, electives teachers and special services will rotate in content team meetings to ensure cross curricular development. Content team meetings will happen once a week. There are bi-weekly meetings district-wide to ensure fidelity of programmatic elements across school levels as well as bi-weekly content-team meetings that support school level collaboration.

Grade Level Team Meetings:

Grade level meetings happen weekly; this will support outdoor education, cross curricular supports, culture, and other programmatic design elements. These meetings start at the school levels, and as the district grows it will be more specific to individual grade bands

(K, 1st, etc.) with biweekly school level meetings (elementary, middle, high). These meetings will be led by a Grade Level Team Lead.

Grade level meetings are scheduled by teachers and offer them a critical opportunity benchmark and course correct instruction, curriculum, and all aspects of teaching and learning. Just as teachers have worked diligently to deliver a high-quality standards-aligned curriculum in grades 6-12, our focus is as intentional for grades K-5. The balance we attempt to strike in grade meetings is one where we can empirically and anecdotally discuss how all students are receiving instruction and demonstrating knowledge, while also putting a spotlight on adverse trends, incorporating external resources, or repositioning our work in collaboration with higher and/or lower grades.

Special Services/Culture:

Special Services and Culture teams will also meet weekly to assess data, and will begin meeting district-wide, and then alternate biweekly between district-wide and school level as the district grows.

Summer PD:

During the summer months, district-wide onboarding happens for new staff. This consists of being acclimated to district wide systems, processes, school culture and climate ensuring all staff has the core elements of programming and specific content area PD. The elementary staff takes part in PD with middle school and high school teachers for anti-racist training, classroom management, relevant platforms, systems of accountability, Circle, joy activities and team building, Special Services, and technology as some common areas. When staff goes into specific content area PD, school level teams break out for their respective training sessions.

All school level teams will get the relevant PD on their specific curriculum, when it is programmatic or district wide it will be district-wide. Even during district-wide training there will be opportunities for school level teams to split out and plan accordingly for their scholars being served. Teachers all have 1:1 coaches that meet weekly and provide meaningful and consistent support. For more details on what that looks like see documents linked below:

G. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

RVLA is a newly independent charter school at the beginning of an unconditional five-year renewal. We are expanding our grade configuration to bring stability in enrollment planning to our community of parents and families. Our model is one to which the community is committed. We built our current model collaboratively and with a long-range plan in mind. Our philanthropic partners, namely the Gates Foundation and Charter School Growth Fund, share our approach to building sustainable success. It is their extensive support and commitment to the Washington State charter sector that innervates our turnaround effort. We continue to anticipate significant financial contributions for our expansion. Confirmations of these contributions, as always, are available from funders subsequent to formal trustee approvals beginning in each new fiscal year. Our CEO and trustees actively outline plans and contingency considerations with funders throughout the expansion process. In the absence of contraindications, we continue our work to build a springboard for high academic achievement in the Rainier Valley community.

Our CFOO, financial team and trustees are building out our academic, staffing, and co-curricular models conservatively. Over the course of our initial term, and for the next several years, RVLA will lean heavily on philanthropic support. RVLA scholars continue

to generate interest in and support for the school by virtue of their perseverance and achievement. At this stage in our new evolution, trustees and administrators have prioritized using our philanthropic support to optimize the rigor of our curriculum and the richness of our support for socio-emotional learning. The RVLA budget is conceived and crafted as a student-centered, needs-informed projection of our revenues and costs. We anchor our process in the sound practices of ongoing consultation between school administrators, our various polled constituencies (staff, parents, community partners, students), and our policy-setting experts on our board of trustees to ensure that programmatic needs are aligned with financial allocations that support the overall school budget. Annually the school has allocated funds specifically for curriculum that gives each core content area flexibility to adjust curriculum but also supports the extensive research for the core curriculum that has been selected. We strive for open source and well tested curriculum that affords the school cost savings.

Beginning in 2023-2024, with a proposed enrollment of 295 students, RVLA projects total revenues of \$5,474,168 with total expenses of \$6,973,480. The significant shortfall in Year 1 of nearly \$1.5M will be offset by philanthropic contributions pledged through the course of the charter term. Whereas our leadership team greatly appreciates all of the support received to date, we recognize that program based, enrollment driven sustainability is an attainable goal. In Year 2, as revenues increase to \$7M and expenses increase to \$7.75M, our annual shortfall decreases by more than fifty percent to \$705,178. By Year 4, we anticipate a surplus on revenues of \$9.27M and expenses of \$9.12M. Subsequent to Year 4, we believe that RVLA will achieve sustainable economies of scale,

and be able to develop a teacher pipeline that improves retention through creating new opportunities to lead.

Each year, we project cost increases of three percent against revenue increases of 1-3 percent. In doing so, we reflect revenue trends in the state and nationally. We recognize that as the cost of capital increases and discretionary funding from certain sources becomes less available, we may have to make programmatic decisions. None of our budgetary planning for the K-5 expansion envisions program cuts. In the event that contingency planning is necessary, the school will prioritize core programmatic areas and reduce non-essential spending to fill any gaps. Furthermore, the school will target grant and philanthropic funding to support specific areas within the organization to avoid reduction of personnel. Given our experience with the high cost operations of a high school and middle school, we do project significantly lower costs K-5. On a per pupil basis, our yield will be greater, thereby allowing our teams to structure rich layers of support where they are most acutely needed. For example, students in grades 3-5 (beginning the testing regime) may require additional academic and SEL support. We intend to meet those needs through extensive planning beginning in Years 2 and 3.

H. Board Capacity & Governance Structure

Our existing governance structure is anchored in policy decision-making at the level of our board of trustees. Trustees bear responsibility for RVLAs compliance with charter laws and regulations in Washington State and of the Commission, respectively. Further, trustees establish directives and goals for RVLAs, while delegating the practical implementation of most matters to our Chief Executive Officer. The team hired by our CEO provides administrative and operational leadership for the school, inclusive of supervision, coaching and support of managers, teachers, and non-instructional staff.

Instructional leaders comprise part of the senior leadership team and receive operational aide from a dedicated team under the leadership of our Chief Financial Officer. While the trustees do delegate, they also continue to advise. RVLA's CEO regularly convenes meetings of three board advisory groups with expertise in instruction, development, and finance. These meetings and informal conversations with our trustees allow for RVLA to plan, course correct, and continue to execute on strategy, to test innovative ideas, and to practice accountability. Under the approved expansion, this rich advisory structure will remain intact. Advisories will meet monthly or as needed. The current structure allows for thoughtful deliberations on issues emerging from or impacting any school constituency group.

I. School Leadership and Management

RVLA staffing and leadership model may look different than other educational institutions as up to 30% of RVLA scholars arrive three or more grade levels behind. Attempting to catch them up to grade level and beyond, while simultaneously repairing the damage done by the previous institutions they attended, requires an incredible amount of support and human capital.

To ensure the youngest scholars have the strongest start an Elementary Principal and Dean of Academics has been hired for zero year planning. They will lead the school and its day to day functions. District/Executive Leadership is shared with the Middle & High School and the current CEO and CFO/COO remain in place serving as District/Executive leaders who work closely with the Board of Directors to ensure effective communication and collaboration. Compliance monitoring and governance are undertaken by the Executive/District leadership already in place.

The RVLA elementary school has a higher staff to scholar ratio compared to other public schools in Washington State. If one considers the systemic and institutional racism that our community, scholars, and families have endured from prenatal care through kindergarten entry, RVLA is merely providing an equitable foundation for scholars to counteract the community trauma they have encountered over the years. Trauma from poverty and racism, as well as educational injustices that have placed so many barriers to their education in front of them, can only be overcome by a strong network of support. This includes mental health specialists, medical and holistic practitioners for scholars, staff, families, culture/instructional aides, and specialized leadership positions for the areas of growth most needed. With this many staff and scholar supports we have leadership that supervises and oversees them all. School leadership includes an Elementary Principal and Middle and High School Principal along with Deans that head the departments. These include Dean of Academics, Operations, & Culture. Our Special Education numbers usually hover around 25%, much higher than the Washington State average, which means our staffing model needs to reflect the importance RVLA places on providing Special Education scholars with the education/resources they need to thrive. RVLA has a Special Education lead teacher heading the department with the Principal supervising.

J. Student Demand & Community/Local Support

RVLA is a school defined and deeply influenced by our community. RVLA actively centers the community in our planning and execution of activities ranging from curriculum to program evaluation. Parents and families have agency to express themselves, to be authentically heard, and to shape our practice through annual surveys, monthly town hall meetings, and the Family Action Board.

Our extended community includes dozens of local and national organizations sharing our mission and vision. RVLA school leaders and trustees fashioned our robust partnerships based on shared experiences, unique alliances, and our embrace of feedback from parents and families. For example, RVLA worked closely with Culturally Transformative Teacher Training (CT3) to bolster staff alignment to our mission and methods. We energize community-home-school connections in partnership with Africatown, the Tubman Center for Health & Freedom, the Willie Austin Foundation, and the Rainier Valley Food Bank. RVLA leverages institutional wealth and human capital through alliances with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, New School Venture Fund, Canopy, Education First and numerous other sector-leading partners.

The roots our leadership established within this community are organic. The school was born of a vision widely discussed and refined within Rainier Valley. The most profound vision was for our youngest children to be educated in a sound, thoughtful and safe manner from the time they depart the wise instruction of home until they pursue higher education for the joint purposes of personal and communal elevation.

In 2017, RVLA began as a middle school with the intention of meeting an acute need. In 2018, our learning community expanded to include grade 9. Still, the community conveyed a desire for a comprehensive schooling option beginning in kindergarten. Since that initial expansion, the RVLA trustees and senior leadership team have navigated through a grand organizational restructuring, leadership changes, the SARS-COVID-2 pandemic, and charter renewal. Our parents, families, and community partners have been with us every step of the way.

We are encouraged by our successes, and so are so many of our new partners who have embraced our school, model, key design elements and instructional strategies. For

example, [The Canopy Project](#) (operating under the leadership of Transcend and the Center on Reinventing Public Education) is featuring RVLA as an innovative learning environment. This relationship centers the hard work of our team in the national conversation on best practices for our target community.

Our daily routines, celebrations, struggles, and triumphs exist along a continuum of experience for each of us. We are organically connected and remain in dialogue with one another each day, and with recurring frequency over varying intervals to check in on trends and to make course corrections. The Family Action Board establishes the primary vehicle for parents and families. As we expand to elementary, we will develop an elementary school council of families to support the ongoing development and integrity of our elementary program for the expansion year. This council will transition into the K-8 Family Action Board, mirroring our current middle and high school Family Action Board.