

River Mill Academy School Improvement Plan

2022-2023 and 2023-2024

State Board of Education Goals – Future-ready Students for the 21st Century

- Goal 1** – North Carolina public schools will produce globally competitive students.
Goal 2 – North Carolina public schools will be led by 21st Century professionals.
Goal 3 – North Carolina Public School students will be healthy and responsible.
Goal 4 – Leadership will guide innovation in North Carolina public schools.
Goal 5 – North Carolina public schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century systems.

School/District Goals for River Mill Academy

<p>School Goal 1: Address student learning loss and increase EOG/EOC scores and student growth to surpass pre-pandemic marks.</p>
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Supports SBE Goal 1

North Carolina public schools will produce globally competitive students.

<p>School Goal 2: Enrich student life to rebuild school pride and excitement on campus.</p>
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Supports SBE Goal 3

North Carolina Public School students will be healthy and responsible.

School Improvement Team Membership

Committee Position	Names	Election Date
Principal	Jeff Dishmon	8/4/2021
Assistant Principal Representatives	Jennifer Bradshaw Brendan O'Malley Ronda Watkins	8/4/2021 8/4/2021 8/4/2021
Teacher Representatives	Caroleena Smith Erich Schliebe Cindy Miller	8/4/2021 8/4/2021 8/4/2021
Instructional Support Representatives	Courtney Boyd Brenna Russ	8/4/2021 8/4/2021
Teacher Assistant Representative	Brittany Tyndall	8/4/2021
Student Representatives	Gabriel Bravo Anaston Dishner Hope Andrews	9/6/2021 9/6/2021 9/6/2021
Parent Representative	Angela Osborne	9/6/2021

Mission, Vision, and Beliefs

Mission:

To allow serious students the opportunity to become confident, well-rounded individuals, prepared for a successful future while providing a safe and positive environment.

Vision:

As a college preparatory school, our goal is to assist parents in their mission to develop exemplary young citizens with superior academic preparation, equipped with analytical thinking skills, a passion for learning, and a virtuous character, all built upon a solid foundation of knowledge. Our curriculum is challenging and demanding in an age and grade appropriate manner and our standards are high. Within our small, safe, and friendly learning community, we expect high standards of conduct appropriate for a serious academic environment where honesty, respect, and civility are the rule, not the exception.

School Profile

A. Student Description:

As of May of 2022, River Mill Academy serves a total of 770 K-12 students. RMA plans on adding additional students this spring and summer through the admissions lottery, while remaining committed to keeping class sizes at or below 24 students. According to the most recent NC School Report Card (2022), 13.6% of RMA's students are considered economically disadvantaged.

River Mill Academy Student Enrollment by Race (May 2022)

Race	Number	%
Asian	12	2%
Hispanic/Latino	92	12 %
Black or African American	102	13%
White	527	68 %
Two or More Race Categories	37	5%

Exceptional Children (EC) Data (May 2022)

	Male	Female	Total
EC Active Services	31	24	55 (7%)

B. School Description

The campus of River Mill Academy is in the heart of Alamance County, conveniently located off Interstate 40, making the school an easily accessible educational option for families in central North Carolina. Despite its physical growth over the past decade, RMA has remained committed to ensuring small teacher to student ratios. All classes are capped at 24 students and grades K-3 have full-time teacher assistants in each room. Grades 4 and 5 share a teacher assistant across the grade levels.

During the 2021-2022 school year, 94% of RMA's teachers were fully certified. School leadership is committed to hiring and retaining highly qualified educators at all grade levels. NC law § 115C-218.90(a) (1) currently requires 50% or more teachers be certified in charter schools. The high school offers six Advanced Placement (AP) courses on-site which include, AP Calculus, AP Statistics, AP U.S. Government, AP English Language and Composition and AP English Literature and Composition. AP European History will be taught for the first time in 2022-2023. Students have the option to take additional higher-level courses online through the North Carolina Virtual Public School, Alamance Community College (ACC) and North Carolina School of Science and Math at no extra cost to the participating family. Students enrolled in 51 different online and in-person community college courses during the 2021-2022 school year with 10 different ACC courses offered on RMA's campus.

C. Areas of Strength

River Mill Academy has been able to maintain a family atmosphere since its inaugural school year in 1998. As a K-12 building, the students enjoy a cohort mentality with the faculty and their peers. This familiarity provides a sense of safety and comfort for students, faculty, and parents alike. High school students are required to provide a minimum of 100 approved volunteer hours as a graduation requirement. Faculty and parent volunteers are vital to the success of the school community and ensure a rich and supportive experience for the school community.

The offering of varied extracurricular activities is one of River Mill Academy's strongest contributions to the community. During the 2021-2022 academic year, RMA offered several new staff supervised clubs, along with over thirty interscholastic athletic teams at the middle school, junior varsity, and varsity levels.

Educators of all grade levels work in effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that share instructional practices, along with developing action plans to be used when students have not mastered the essential learning standards for each subject area and grade level. The school's commitment to technology has remained a consistent strength. Each classroom is outfitted with a digital whiteboard, document camera, web camera and has access to a laptop cart. Students in grades eight through twelve are issued a Lenovo laptop. New student laptops have been upgraded this summer for the third time since the 1:1 device program was instituted in 2012.

Students from grades three to eleven have historically performed well on state EOC (End of Course) and EOG (End of Grade) exams. Despite extensive remote instruction brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, students and staff have worked incredibly hard and student achievement results reflected this dedication in nearly all tested areas.

D. Areas of Focus

River Mill Academy needs to ensure academic excellence and high expectations for all its students. The school did not meet academic growth in 2017-2018 but rebounded the following school year to exceed academic growth in 2018-2019, with a School Performance Grade of 76 “B”, which was the last time NC Report Card grades were assigned by the state. Assuming NC Report Card letter grades return in 2022, leadership is focused on maintaining a School Report Letter Grade of at least a “B” for this school year and earning an “A” rating, along with exceeding academic growth over the next two school years.

High school mathematics EOC scores have lagged well behind all other tested areas over the past several years. Preparing students for these higher-level math courses will be a key area of focus for school administration and the School Improvement Team. An increased focus on science in all elementary grades will help students prepare for the fifth grade EOG exam, in addition to increasing problem solving and critical thinking skills that will be beneficial in all academic areas.

The pandemic has impacted student and staff life in ways that cannot be measured through academic assessments. Student participation in athletics is down along with school pride and morale. The School Improvement Team is excited to design strategies that focus on re-building the holistic experience at River Mill Academy.

Formula for determining the School Performance Grade, according to NCDPI:

- 80 percent of the School Performance Grade is based on the school achievement score. The school achievement score is calculated using a composite method based on the points earned by a school on all the tests measured for that school.
- 20 percent of the School Performance Grade is based on academic growth.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADING SCALE	
Grade Range	Letter Grade
85-100	A
70-84	B
55-69	C
40-54	D
Below 40	F

E. School Goals

SCHOOL GOAL 1: Address student learning loss and increase EOG/EOC scores and student growth performance to surpass pre-pandemic marks.

Strategy 1: Increase high school mathematics EOC proficiency to parallel the achievement of students in grades 3-8 (at least 50% proficient).

Action Steps:

- 9th grade students enrolled in Math 1 will take a foundational Math 1 course in the fall semester, preparing students for the traditional Math 1 course, which will be delivered during the spring semester. Class sizes in all math courses will be reduced as a new teaching position has been added to focus on this cohort of Math 1 students.
- An extra section of middle school math was added in 2021-2022 to reduce class sizes and better prepare students for high school. This will continue to be reflected in the master schedule indefinitely.
- The secondary math department will research and adopt high school curricula resources that build upon the design of Eureka Math (used in grades K-8) and will prepare students for the Math 1 and Math 3 EOC exams.
- Invest in a software program that increases teacher control over student laptop usage. “Lockdown browsers” will reduce student distractions during instruction and digital assessments.

Strategy 2: Increase vertical planning and communication between K-12 teachers.

Action Steps:

- Teachers in similar content areas will meet quarterly to discuss achievement data, learning standards, and instructional strategies.
- “Vertical PLCs” will be led by master teachers who have had documented success in their content area.
- Educators collaborating outside of traditional teaching teams will increase camaraderie and positive working conditions.
- The secondary science department will focus on inspiring hands on, engaging lessons with the K-5 teachers to spark an early interest in the school’s growing STEM program.
- The School Improvement Team and science department will seek to become STEM certified by the National Institute for STEM Education by the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

SCHOOL GOAL 2: Enrich student life to rebuild school pride and excitement on campus.

Strategy 1: Reconstruct the school's athletic program that has seen reduced participation since bringing back athletics in 2021-2022.

Action Steps:

- Revisit compensation and participation requirements with our new athletic directors and school administration to attract and retain qualified coaches.
- Encourage athletic coaches to host offseason camps, clinics, and workouts to increase interest and opportunities to grow individual programs.
- Support and encourage upperclassmen to coach camps and recreational athletic teams. High school students would receive volunteer hours and elementary students would begin establishing a sense of pride in their future team(s) at an early age.

Strategy 2: Expand school sponsored clubs and activities that are offered on campus.

Action Steps:

- Continue to support and grow the school spirit club to advertise and improve student attendance at athletic events.
- Staff and students will celebrate pride in their school by wearing RMA themed clothing each Friday.
- Expand academic club offerings, beginning with a competitive "Math 24" club to begin in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Create and support a drama club that will aim to put on a school-wide show at least once a year.
- Hold an annual "powderpuff" football game to be organized and run by the senior class each fall.
- Incorporate student news in our middle school and high school electives to celebrate the achievements of our K-12 students.

Approved by the River Mill Academy Board of Directors

Board Chair Date

Principal Date