

# North River Collaborative Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report



**North River Collaborative  
Clarice Doliber, Executive Director  
198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370  
781-878-6056**

**[www.northrivercollaborative.org](http://www.northrivercollaborative.org)**

**December 2022**

**Approved by the NRC Board of Directors December 16, 2022**



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December 06, 2022

Dear Members of the Board of Directors, School Committees, and Colleagues,

As the Executive Director of the North River Collaborative (NRC), I am honored to present to you the Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report. The report summarizes the highlights of the past school year in which the collaborative focused its efforts on our core mission of providing high-quality, cost-effective educational programs and services for students, districts, partner organizations, and communities.

In this report, you will find:

- Information on the programs and services provided by the collaborative;
- Discussion of the cost-effectiveness of these programs and services;
- Discussion of the progress made toward achieving the objectives and purpose set forth in the collaborative agreement; and
- Audited financial statements and the independent auditor's report.

North River continues to be a fiscally healthy organization as you will see in the audited financial statement. NRC maintains a fund balance just short of the maximum allowable by statute which is sufficient to support the collaborative's needs. Our Capital Reserve Fund continues to support maintenance and improvements for all our programs and strengthens our position for potential future expansion.

Throughout the past year, NRC has continued to demonstrate resiliency and a steadfast commitment to education, community, and the health and safety of our students in the midst of the ongoing challenges faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am extremely proud of the herculean efforts demonstrated by our staff in providing quality services to our students despite the significant staffing challenges brought on by the pandemic.

On behalf of the entire NRC staff, I would like to thank member district administrators and staff for their input and involvement with the collaborative. The continued success of the collaborative depends on this participation as educational collaboratives exist to "bring school districts together to form partnerships that maximize efficiency by sharing costs and expertise" in order to enhance instructional practices and the lives of students, families, and our community. Our work on behalf of and with districts surely does demonstrate that "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." (Helen Keller)

Sincerely,

Clarice Doliber  
Executive Director

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## Section 1: Governance and General Information

The North River Collaborative (NRC) is governed by the superintendents of the member districts: Abington, Avon, Bridgewater-Raynham, East Bridgewater, Hanover, Holbrook, Rockland, Stoughton, West Bridgewater, and Whitman-Hanson. Each member district annually appoints its superintendent of schools to form the NRC Board who is vested with the authority given it by Chapter 40, Section 4E of the General Laws, and all acts amendatory or supplementary thereof, to take necessary action to oversee the operation of the collaborative. In addition, there are regular advisory meetings of the special education directors/director of student services and the assistant superintendents/curriculum coordinators throughout the year to provide input and feedback about the programs and services as well as information about emerging needs in the districts. The tables below list the members of each of these groups for the 2022 fiscal year. The North River Collaborative is grateful for their service.

### Board of Directors

- |                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Peter Schafer, Abington             | • Julie Hamilton, Holbrook          |
| • Christine Godino, Avon              | • Alan Cron, Rockland               |
| • Derek Swenson, Bridgewater-Raynham  | • Thomas Raab, Stoughton            |
| • Elizabeth Legault, East Bridgewater | • Mark Bodwell, West Bridgewater    |
| • Matthew Ferron, Hanover             | • Jeffrey Szymaniak, Whitman-Hanson |

### Special Needs Advisory Committee

- |                                      |                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • James Robbins, Abington            | • Robert Compton, Holbrook        |
| • Jennifer Meek, Avon                | • Linda Maniglia, Rockland        |
| • Paul Tzovolos, Bridgewater-Raynham | • Carolan Sampson, Stoughton      |
| • John Phelan, East Bridgewater      | • Kathy Marble, West Bridgewater  |
| • Michael Oates, Hanover             | • Lauren Mathisen, Whitman-Hanson |

### North River Collaborative Administrative Team

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Stephen Donovan, Executive Director/Clarice Doliber, Acting Executive Director | • Moira Leon, Community-Based Vocational   |
| • Marc Wright, Director of Business  | • Beth Litchfield - Social Work Internship |
| • Diane Baxter, Technology   | • Ryan Morgan, Independence Academy        |
| • Keith Guyette, District Services   | • Kate Stevens, Learning Center Programs   |
| • Lauren Enos, Principal, North River School                                     | • Eileen Millett, Transportation           |
| • Deni Howley, Behavioral Health Initiative                                      | • Kimberly Beck, Professional Development  |

# 2019-2023 Strategic Plan

## Mission

The North River Collaborative cooperatively develops and delivers high-quality and cost-effective programs and services for students, school districts, partner organizations, and communities.

## Vision

The North River Collaborative (NRC) provides innovative, flexible, and diverse educational programs that engage and motivate students to reach their potential.

## Guiding Beliefs

We believe that...

- Programs, services, and facilities should be of the highest quality and responsive to the changing needs of students.
- All students should be provided with the opportunity and support to reach their potential for academic achievement and independent living.
- All students should be challenged to learn in a caring, inclusive, and flexible environment that appreciates diversity, values life-long learning, and prepares students to be successful.
- Achieving equity is a continuous process of assessment, reflection, and continuous improvement.
- High-quality professional development combined with educator evaluations is essential for improving education practice and maximizing student achievement.
- Supporting the social and emotional well-being and self-determination of our students is essential.
- Through collegiality and shared commitment, we accomplish more collectively than separately.
- To facilitate the educational process, we need to support families.
- A variety of opinions will stimulate innovative and creative ideas leading to effective solutions.
- Student assessment and program evaluation are essential to continuous improvement.

## Strategic Objectives

**Objective 1:** Evaluate and enhance existing programs and services.

**Objective 2:** Establish responsive, strategically designed programs and services.

**Objective 3:** Expand and enhance a coordinated and state-of-the-art student transportation system.

**Objective 4:** Secure and adapt facilities and operations to support high-quality programs and services.

## Serving Students & Districts

<b>Serving Students</b>	<b>FY22</b>
<b>Students Served in NRC Programs*</b>	
Multiple Disabilities	28
Autism/developmental Disabilities	19
Social and Emotional Disabilities-North River School	58
Substance Abuse and Dependence - Independence Academy	76
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>181**</b>
<b>Students Served in NRC Services*</b>	
Community-Based Vocational	17
Therapy and Other Related Services	580
Social Work Interns	292
Behavioral Health Initiative	202
Transportation	515
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,606**</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,787**</b>

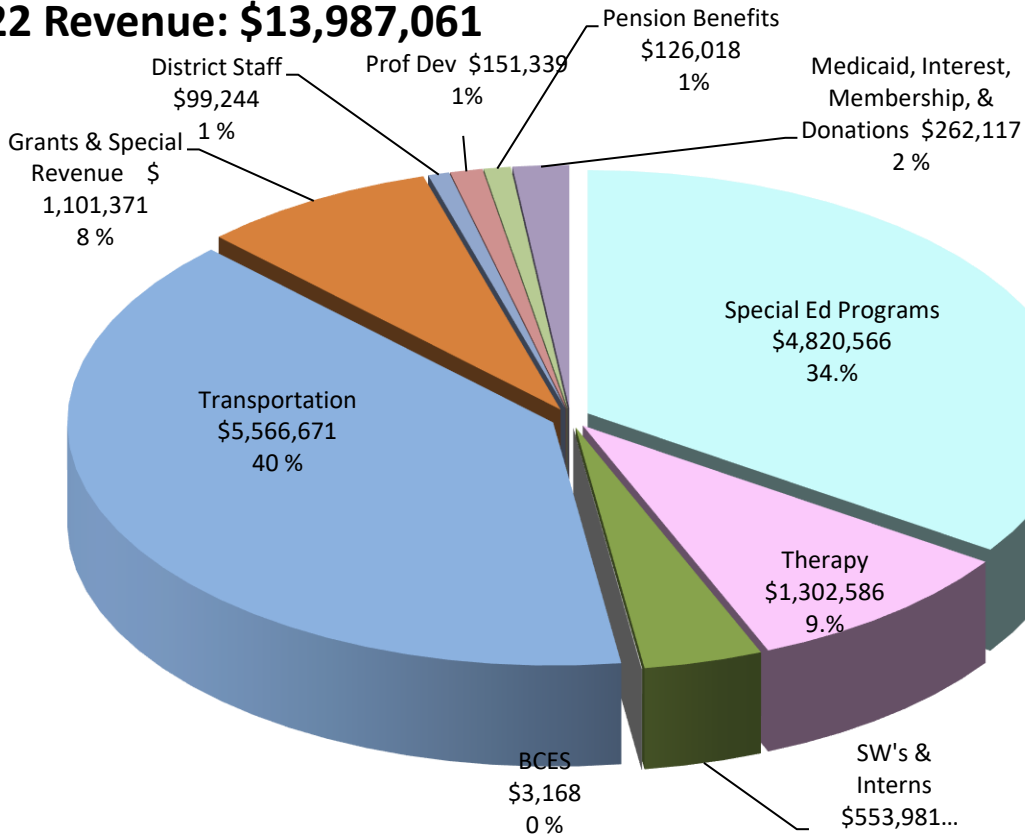
\*Each category represents the total number of students serviced in the program for the year

\*\* The totals & subtotals may include a duplicated headcount due to students participating in multiple services

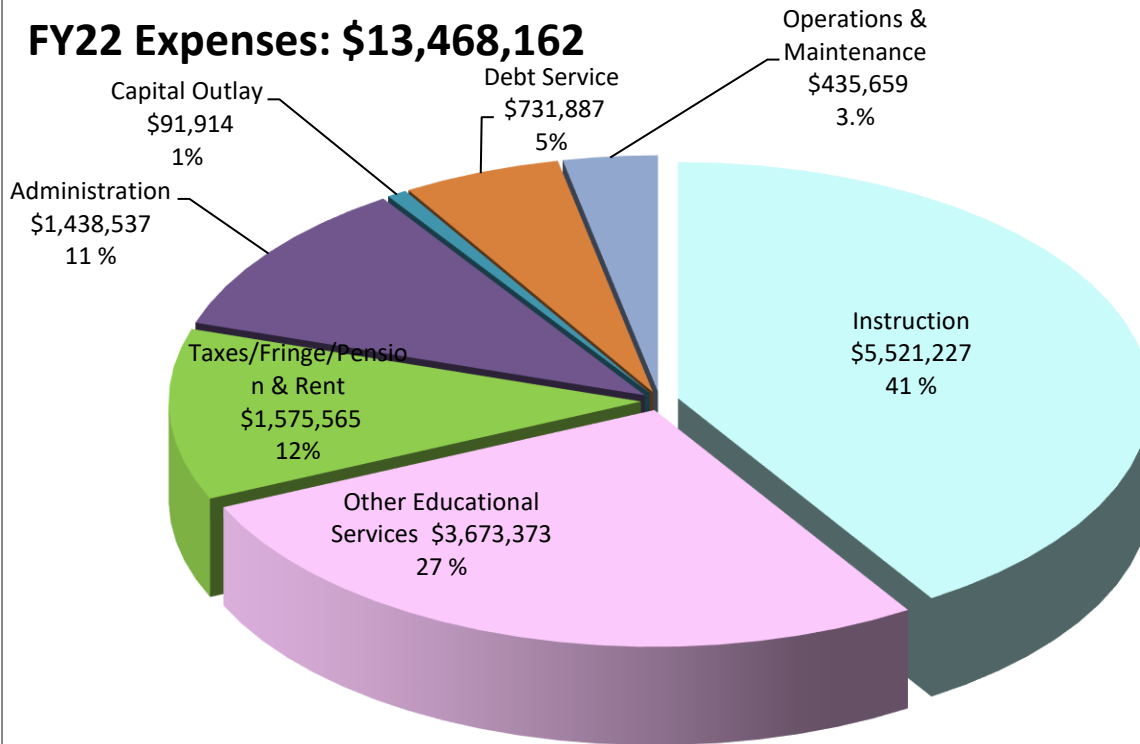
<b>Serving Districts</b>	<b>FY22</b>
Transportation	27
Municipal Medicaid	16
Grant Writing	40
Behavioral Health	5
Professional Development (PD)	107

## Financial Information

### FY22 Revenue: \$13,987,061



### FY22 Expenses: \$13,468,162



## Section 2: Programs and Services

The North River Collaborative offers the following programs and services (described on subsequent pages) in accordance with its Collaborative Agreement:

- Day School Placements (North River School) and other services for students with disabilities (Learning Center Programs)
- Alternative School Programs for At-risk Students (Independence Academy)
- Community-Based Vocational Services
- Behavior Consultation and Education Services
- Therapy Services
- Vision Services
- Social Work Internship Program
- Family Services
- Professional Development
- Transportation Services
- Collaborative Grant Applications
- General Education Supports and Services
- Psychoeducational Evaluations
- Municipal Medicaid Reimbursement

The programs/services listed above are not all-inclusive. The NRC Board of Directors, acting at the request of the NRC Executive Director and/or member districts may consider and approve other programs/services to be provided by the collaborative so long as such programs/services are in the best interest of the members and are not inconsistent with M.G.L. c. 40, sect. 4E and 603 CMR sect. 50, et seq, as amended from time to time.

### North River School

North River School provides middle and high school students with a highly structured and therapeutic environment while ensuring the 21st century skills they will require post-graduation are taught and developed. NRS addresses the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of students individually in alignment with the most current and best practices. In addition to traditional academic subjects, students also participate in daily living and transitional skills classes such as a culinary internship, the Innovation Studio, and social-emotional learning.

The NRS curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and is modified as needed to meet individual student needs, providing added supports throughout the day to facilitate success. Instruction is delivered in a small group format within a therapeutic milieu with counseling services and behavioral consultation. A strong home-school relationship is a critical and essential part of the program's success, and one that is fostered through regular, two-way communication.

The goal of the North River High School is to assist students in developing the behavioral, social-emotional, and academic skills needed to successfully return to their sending schools. Students receive academic credits toward graduation from their own school districts by completing the course of studies provided at the North River School. Vocational exploratory opportunities, including off-site internships, are offered. The Innovation Studio is a technology-based class that incorporates the most current tools and technology such as 3D printing, graphic design, desktop publishing, and model building. In addition, students in this class are introduced to small business operations through the design and printing jobs that community agencies and groups hire NRS students to complete under the direction of the class instructor. The Culinary Exploration/Food Service continuum of classes teaches students culinary and food service skills as well as addresses food safety, nutrition, work habits, and entrepreneurial skills.

Internships in the community are also offered to upperclassmen in good academic standing with support from a job coach as needed. Students, with prior agreement from their district's TEAM, also have the opportunity to participate in their district's academic and extra-curricular activities. It is the goal of NRS to incorporate flexibility and creativity when addressing the needs of students.

The North River Middle School (NRMS) is a Massachusetts DESE approved public special education day program. The NRMS's mission is to assist students in developing appropriate behaviors and improved academic skills which will allow them to achieve success in transitioning to high school and/or returning to their sending school.

North River Middle School serves students in grades 5 through 8 in classrooms designed for small-group instruction, with an integrated therapeutic milieu, counseling services, and a behavior management system with guidance from a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst. A strong home-school relationship is encouraged as an essential part of the school's success. North River Middle School has a dedicated School Adjustment Counselor as well as a therapy dog, Bodie.

The NRMS teachers work with students to earn academic credit toward promotion to high school. Core curriculum academics focus on preparing students for success on MCAS tests and overall educational achievement. The NRMS schedule includes life skills development, health and wellness education, social-emotional learning, and vocational exploration.

Both the NRHS and the NRMS have a well-developed, successful summer program that helps students prevent regression of social, emotional, and academic skills during the summer break.

**North River Middle/High School**

525 Beech Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-871-8320

Andrew Manning, Program Coordinator

## Learning Center Programs

The **Learning Center for Students with Multiple Disabilities** serves students ages 3 to 22. This program is designed to meet the academic, medical, and therapeutic needs of students with disabilities in multiple areas. Communication, self-care, mobility, and vocational and leisure skill development are addressed throughout the day and guided by the teacher, classroom staff, and an extensive therapy and vision support team. Program nurses oversee promotion of overall student health. This program offers a summer program as well as community field trips. Classroom locations within public schools allow students access to inclusive opportunities in order to help facilitate academic and social skill development.

The **Learning Center for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder** serves students ages 3 to 22. This program is within a structured ABA-based program where students are provided with the behavioral, social-emotional, and academic support to meet their unique needs. Communication, self-care, mobility, and vocational and leisure skill development are addressed throughout the day and guided by the teacher, classroom staff, and an extensive therapy and behavior support team. This program offers a summer program as well as community field trips. Classroom locations within public schools allow students access to inclusive opportunities in order to help facilitate academic and social skill development.

**Learning Centers for Students with Multiple Disabilities**

**Learning Centers for Students with Autism & Developmental Disabilities**

Kate Stevens- Program Coordinator

Phone:781-878-6056 (Ext. 103)

**Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Early Childhood)**

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 192 and Room 190)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781-293-5411 (extensions 16690 and 16692)

• **Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Intermediate)**

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 193)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781-293-5411 (extension 2693)

• **Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Elem, Middle)**

Richardson Olmsted School (Rooms 128, 126)  
101 Lothrop Street, North Easton, MA 02356  
Phone: 508-230-3205 (extension 5126 and 5128)

• **Learning Center Autism & Developmental Disabilities (Elementary)**

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 191)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781-293-5411 (extension 16691)

• **Learning Center Autism & Developmental Disabilities  
Middle School/High School**

East Bridgewater High School (Room 129),  
43 Plymouth Street, East Bridgewater, MA 02333  
Phone: 508-378-8214 (extension 1290)

• **Learning Center Autism & Developmental Disabilities  
High School**

West Bridgewater High School (Room 216),  
155 West Center Street, West Bridgewater, MA 02379  
Phone: 508-894-1220 (extension 1216)



**Independence Academy: Recovery High School**

**Independence Academy (IA)** provides programming serving students ages 14-20 from the southeast region of Massachusetts who have been identified as “high-risk” due to their use of substances. Our students are mostly referred to us by their schools when their use of substances is starting to impact their school day. However, the application process can also be initiated by families, substance use treatment programs, youth-serving state agencies, juvenile justice agencies, and others who are concerned about a student’s use of substances. In many cases, our students also have other social/emotional and/or mental health challenges that are present as well. Therefore, we have created a continuum of services utilizing a holistic approach that assesses students in 13 domains of their life. Through specially designed SEL instruction, an emphasis on health and wellness, individual and group counseling, and a customized approach to academics we engage students in a process of healthy growth and development. Although students can remain enrolled in our programs through graduation, our goal is to facilitate a healthy transition for each student that is aligned with their personal vision.

**Programs:**

The Upper Course – This is a 10-day program and the first step every student takes when enrolling at our school. The focus is on Awareness and Assessment. Through a uniquely designed model that provides a mix of individual and small group work, students are assessed in the 13 areas of healthy adolescent growth and development. The goal of the program is to provide adolescents a safe space to be open and honest about their use of substances and to build awareness around what health growth and development looks in relation to the 13 domains. Students who successfully complete the 10-day program and find our model beneficial can apply to our 45-day program. The enrollment is limited to 6 students and students are admitted on a rolling basis.



45-Day School-Based Intervention – This program provides students with a “deep dive” into the 13 domains of healthy growth and development with the end goal of developing a personalized, individual growth and development plan. The focus of this program is Acceptance and Alignment. Working with a team of experts in the fields of adolescent development, mental health, substance use, and trauma, students have an active role in developing their own growth plan. Daily wellness, SEL curriculum and instruction, small group and individual counseling and customized academics help align each student’s day to their own growth and development goals. At the conclusion of this program students have a comprehensive plan in place that is specific to their own needs and provides a blueprint for continued movement towards healthy growth and development. Students who successfully complete this program can apply to the Recovery High School.

The Recovery High School – The Recovery High School is a trauma-informed, alternative setting that provides students actively engaged in recovery, a full academic program to work towards the completion of their high school education. Students enrolling in the RHS have successfully completed the Upper Course and the 45-day program. They have a full understand and deep awareness of their own unique needs, have developed a comprehensive individualized growth and development plan and aligned their work with their vision and goals for themselves. Students at the RHS are committed to the process of healthy growth and development. The focus of the RHS is Action and Accountability. Students are expected to be deliberate in their actions towards achieving their goals that they have developed for themselves. The RHS provides a full, rigorous academic program leading to high school graduation as well as numerous service components that support a students’ transition out of high school. Some of those components include an on-site recovery counselor (LICSW), a personal development coach, health and wellness curriculum and activities, and a comprehensive summer program. Existing partnerships with community service agencies allow for program enhancements and provide unique opportunities for students enrolled in the RHS. Our small population allows us to provide an education that is individualized to best meet student needs while taking into consideration their strengths, abilities, and interests. Our carefully designed space and high-interest curriculum encourages students to be highly motivated, accept the challenge of an academically rigorous program, work independently, to take risks, and be vulnerable. Students are encouraged to seek educational opportunities outside of the traditional school day (i.e., independent study, internships, etc.). The academic counselor at Independence Academy works closely with each student’s sending school district staff to ensure that each student meets the local graduation requirements for their respective district. As a result, students are awarded a diploma from their sending school district upon completion of all requirements. Students can remain enrolled in the RHS for as long as they remain engaged in the process.

Independence Academy is one of five recovery high schools located in MA and is not a special education placement. It is important to consult the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Administrative Advisory on Special Education for more information on how students on IEPs are enrolled and serviced when attending Recovery High Schools. The Recovery High Schools are alternative schools that are focused on engaging students who are struggling with substance use in a process of healthy growth and development in order to improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed live and to reach their full potential. All of Independence Academy’s programs are voluntary.

Completing its tenth full academic year in 2022, Independence Academy has enrolled hundreds of students from over 40 different communities.

**Independence Academy**

460R Belmont Street, Brockton, MA 02301

Phone: 508-510-4091

Ryan Morgan – Principal





## Community-Based Vocational Program

The **Community-Based Vocational Program (CBV)** supports students between the ages of 16 and 21 with unique learning styles who need vocational and transitional skills training. For many, this is their first introduction to the world of work. Students are matched to community-based worksites with supervision from a job coach. The job coach's role is to teach transferable skills which can be applied in a variety of post-secondary settings. As students become proficient at community-based sites, responsibilities are increased to match their progress.

Student progress is measured quarterly through Task Analysis Sheets, evaluating specific vocational tasks according to a five-point rating scale. Twice a year, this five-point rating scale is applied to Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plans to assess students on work readiness skills at established vocational sites. Student enrollment varies from one to five days per week, depending on individualized circumstances. Programming includes a transition skills group, focusing on self-advocacy, self-determination, and post-secondary options. Several times per year, presentations from the Department of Developmental Services, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Service Coordinators, a Benefit Specialist, and a representative from a local housing authority are scheduled. Exercise at a state-of-the-art fitness center and internships are scheduled each day. All students are transported in 7D vehicles.

The Program Coordinator works closely with parents and students to facilitate the transition process. This may include tours of adult service providers, local colleges, volunteer opportunities, job placement, travel training, housing, and recreational opportunities. In-depth vocational assessments are provided for each student. Upon request, the Community Based Vocational Program will develop individualized programs outside of the "typical" schedule to accommodate unique situations.

### **Community-Based Vocational Services**

Frolio School, 1071 Washington Street, Abington MA 02351

Phone: 781-871-1589

Moira Leon – Coordinator

## Summer Work and Learning Program

The North River Collaborative's Summer Work and Learning Program provides an innovative summer program offering a broad range of transition services for students with intellectual impairments, developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, and autism. The program is differentiated for students ages 14-17 and 18-22 who may attend one or more summers. The program is located at Rogers Middle School and select community-based job sites. A broad range of transition services are tied to academic support and remediation for students through hands-on instruction and opportunities for daily work experiences such as horticulture, building maintenance, shipping, and receiving, office practices, and food service.

Students participate each day in a variety of activities offering instruction in life skills for independent living including: daily living skills (e.g., managing money, use of household tools/appliances, time management, health and safety, basic meal preparation, health and fitness leisure/recreation activities, community experiences), social thinking skills, job exploration (e.g., training opportunities and job placement, developing/maintaining appropriate work skills and behavior), and functional academics.

### **Summer Work and Learning**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 101)

Keith Guyette – District Services Coordinator and Philip Buckley – SWL Coordinator

## Behavior Consultation and Education Services

The North River Collaborative's Behavior Consultation and Education Services (BCES) includes extensive training and ongoing support in developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorders (ASD), applied behavior analysis treatment and intervention approaches, and community and school-based support services. BCES staff members have experience in service delivery to students with ASD, other disabilities, and typical students experiencing difficulties with behaviors that interfere with learning and social relationships. In addition to responsibilities of assessments and program design, Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) provide supervision and training to behavior service providers working in students' homes and to our classroom staff on a regular basis.

With input from other professionals, BCBAs focus on facilitating the development of each student's skills in the area of communication, academics, social-emotional, receptive, and expressive language, leisure/play, adaptive behavior, and activities of daily living. A strong emphasis is placed on the use of research-based applied behavior analysis (ABA) principles and strategies including discrete trial instruction (DTI) and incidental teaching within the natural environment. Strategies and techniques incorporated may include visual supports, social stories, and behavior support plans. When needed, home-based services provide parents and other caregivers training in techniques to teach, promote, and manage skills and behaviors at home and in the community.

One BCBA is certified to teach the Safety-Care™ Behavioral Safety program for North River staff, providing the skills and competencies necessary to effectively prevent, minimize, and manage behavioral challenges with dignity, safety, and the possibility of change.

### **Behavior Consultation and Education Services**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 120)

Keith Guyette – Coordinator

## Therapy Services

The North River Collaborative provides **occupational, physical, and speech therapy services** within 38 school buildings in nine school districts. Services are also provided within North River Collaborative Learning Center for Students with Multiple Disabilities, Learning Center for Students with Autism and Developmental Disabilities programs and the North River School. The collaborative's therapy staff is dedicated to excellence in student service, committed to facilitating and supporting optimal curriculum access and participation, and provides high-quality consultation services to parents and educational staff in order to maximize student success. At each location, therapists are integral members of a multidisciplinary team that facilitates student progress through a coordination of services. More than 17 licensed physical, occupational, and speech therapists, most with advanced degrees and certifications participate in monthly meetings and ongoing professional development activities to enhance knowledge and maintain an evidence-based practice. Therapists provide each student with service guided by the current developments in therapeutic, rehabilitative, and educational best practices.

### **Therapy Services**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 120)

Keith Guyette – Coordinator



## Services for Students with Visual Impairments

### **Teachers of the Visually Impaired**

The North River Collaborative employs a teacher of the visually impaired to provide program-based consultative and direct services to students with visual impairments. The collaborative also works with member/non-member district towns to provide itinerant vision services and assessments to students with visual impairments who are attending district schools.

Teachers of the visually impaired provide functional vision assessments, learning media assessments, technology assessments and instruction, consultation to staff and parent/guardians, Braille instruction, compensatory skill development (e.g., large print, optical devices, etc.), life skills (e.g., daily living skills, social interaction skills, recreation, and leisure addressed through the expanded core curriculum), and production and ordering of materials. Additionally, teachers of the visually impaired may support schools and families in accessing educational resources through a variety of agencies such as the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and American Printing House.

### **Orientation and Mobility**

The North River Collaborative provides consultative and direct services to students with visual impairments from certified orientation and mobility instructors. The collaborative works with member/non-member school districts to provide itinerant orientation and mobility services to students with visual impairments who are attending district schools.



Services provided by the orientation and mobility instructor may include functional travel assessments, consultation to staff and parents/guardians, travel instruction in school and community settings, compensatory skill development (e.g., low vision aids, use of other senses, and spatial relationships), and life skills training (e.g., daily living skills, social interaction skills, recreation, and leisure) through the expanded core curriculum.

### **Vision Services**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 120)

Keith Guyette – Coordinator

## Social Work Internship Program

The North River Collaborative's Social Work Internship Program provides school-based social work services to help students and their families face a complexity of challenges in order to foster competency in all areas central to children's lives – academic, social-emotional, and behavioral. The consultation process establishes and implements interventions to meet students' needs. Services include individual and group

counseling, crisis interventions, whole-class presentations, lessons, and consultations with parents and teachers. These services enhance teacher effectiveness related to social-emotional development of children and facilitate a functional “bridge” relationship between home and school. The interns attend Bridgewater State University, Simmons University, or Boston College.

**Social Work Internship Program**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 302)

Beth Litchfield – Coordinator



## Behavioral Health Initiative

The North River Collaborative Behavioral Health Initiative offers on-site behavioral health consultation to districts, professional development on social and emotional learning strategies, and facilitates development of student support teams. Contracted school social workers and wrap-around service support for students and their families are also available to districts. During FY22, we expanded to include a second district, Hingham, and two additional schools. We currently have school social workers in 3 elementary schools, one middle school and two high schools.

**Behavioral Health Initiative**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 301)

Deni Howley – Coordinator

## Psychological Services

**Psychoeducational Evaluations**

The North River Collaborative employs a school psychologist to provide psychoeducational evaluations to both member and non-member districts.

**Board Certified Behavioral Analyst**

The North River Collaborative employs a Board-Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA) who provides and supports the implementation of behavioral and safety plans within the North River Collaborative Learning Center for Students with Multiple Disabilities, Learning Center for Students with Autism and Developmental Disabilities, and the North River School. The BCBA also provides Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) to member and non-member districts.

**Psychological and Behavioral Services**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 120) Keith Guyette – Coordinator

## Municipal Medicaid Reimbursement

School-based Medicaid billing has become a way for cities and towns to recoup dollars for funds spent on special education programs if a student is receiving special education services and is eligible for Mass Health. Direct services claiming provides school districts an opportunity to be reimbursed for furnishing medically necessary services to eligible Mass Health students pursuant to an eligible IEP. The North River Collaborative is familiar with both school and town governance and aware of confidentiality and privacy issues, including HIPAA and FERPA, as well as the necessary recordkeeping required by districts, towns, and the Office of Medicaid. An annual cost report reconciles 12 months of direct service and administrative cost.

### **Municipal Medicaid Reimbursement**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 105)

Marc Wright – Director of Business and Finance

## Professional Development

NRC is committed to providing high-quality professional development programs based on current research and best practices that focus on improving the learning of all students. The collaborative's decisions about the selection/identification of programs and courses, audience, scheduling, duration, and implementation factors are driven by research-based standards for professional learning, such as those identified by the Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education.

Professional development offerings for the North River Collaborative and district staff are determined based on ongoing and newly identified needs of our member districts, the needs of low-incidence educational staff, state, and federal mandates, emerging issues, and current educational best practice. Curriculum coordinators from each member district and the collaborative's program coordinators work to collaboratively plan programs that address collective needs. Programs are designed to focus on knowledge and skill development to impact student learning. When educators from many school districts participate in professional development training together, they have the opportunity to share with and learn from one another, often discovering a synergy that results in understanding, growth, and solutions that were unanticipated.

Professional development training and support are provided to the North River Collaborative and district educators in order to:

- Continue to improve educational practice and maximize student achievement;
- Support supervision and evaluation to improve instruction;
- Improve curriculum and content knowledge and address pedagogy with a specific emphasis on differentiation, practices regarding assessment, and instructional technology integration;
- Address the issues of mental health, behavioral issues, and student safety;
- Address the individual needs of students including students with disabilities and English Language Learners; and
- Provide programs locally that are convenient for district staff to attend.

### **North River Collaborative**

198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 102)

Kim Beck – Coordinator



## Southeast Transportation Network

The Southeast Transportation Network served 515 students in 29 school districts in FY22, transporting to 49 different programs, most of which are from the North River Collaborative, Pilgrim Area Collaborative, and South Shore Educational Collaborative regions. Given the fiscal challenges and the growing concern for student safety, the North River Collaborative is coordinating this program to obtain cost-effective, quality transportation for students with special needs who attend public and private special education programs in the greater Boston/Southeastern Massachusetts region. Through the Network, the North River Collaborative began providing transportation with the opening of school in September 2007. In-service training is provided for all staff on topics such as: disability awareness, first aid/CPR, behavior management, defensive driving, securing wheelchairs, vehicle evacuation, and winter driving.

### Southeast Transportation Network

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Beaver Brook School, One Ralph Hamlin Way, Abington, MA 02351

Jones School, 137 Walnut Street, Stoughton, MA 02072

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 126)

Eileen Millett– Transportation Director



## Section 3: Progress Toward Achieving NRC’s Purpose and Objectives

### Purpose

The purpose of the collaborative is to provide intensive educational programs and services for students with disabilities, professional development to educators, related services to students with disabilities in member and non-member districts, and other high-quality, cost-effective services to meet the changing needs of member districts. The North River Collaborative has been successful in achieving this purpose as outlined below.

### Objectives

The overall objectives of the North River Collaborative Agreement are to:

1. Provide programs for students with low-incidence disabilities in the least restrictive environment;
2. Offer a variety of quality professional development opportunities to general and special education teachers and administrators, and related service providers;
3. Provide programs and services in a cost-effective manner;
4. Explore and pursue grant and other funding to support identified needs of the districts; and
5. Offer cooperative programs and/or services to help districts maximize cost efficiency and program effectiveness through a collaborative effort.

#### **Objective 1: Provide programs for students with low-incidence disabilities in the least restrictive environment**



#### **Objective 5: Offer cooperative programs and/or services to help districts maximize cost efficiency and program effectiveness through a collaborative effort**

The North River Collaborative provides programs and services for students with low-incidence disabilities in the least restrictive environment including social-emotional, multiple disabilities, autism, English learners, behavioral health, and substance abuse.

- The Learning Center programs are provided in age-appropriate public-school buildings with inclusion opportunities provided, whenever feasible.
- The North River School is an alternative setting for middle and high school students who have difficulty functioning successfully in public schools due to behavioral, social, emotional, and/or psychological challenges. The staff work closely with school districts to align curriculum with that of sending districts to allow students to transition back to local schools when appropriate.
- Independence Academy is an alternative setting for students struggling with substance use. The staff work closely with school districts to align curriculum with that of sending districts to allow students to transition back to local schools when appropriate.
- For transition-age students, the North River Collaborative provides supports for students within community-based job sites through the Community-Based Vocational program and Summer Work and Learning program.
- The North River Collaborative provides services in member and non-member school districts that allow students to remain in their local community schools while receiving essential services to

enhance access to the curriculum. In this way, instead of students leaving their districts, the services are brought to them and the educators that support their learning. These services include occupational, physical, and speech therapy; behavior consultation; vision services including orientation and mobility, teacher of the visually impaired, Braille-trained aides; and social work services.

- The North River Collaborative also provides cooperative services to school districts including Municipal Medicaid reimbursement and special education transportation.

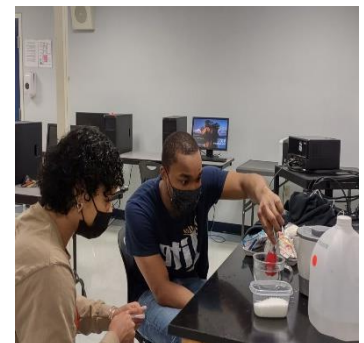
Each of these programs strives for continuous improvement in meeting student or district needs. This section includes a discussion of the progress of the North River Collaborative through program enhancements made throughout the school year.

## NRC Programs

### North River School

#### Program Enhancements

- Five (5) students earned their high school diploma from four different school districts, Boston, Rockland (2), Holbrook, and Brockton
- Heather Crowley and Lauren Enos were successfully recertified in Safety Care and will be continue to train/re certify staff. North River School staff (including new staff) are fully trained in Safety Care. Trainings have been incredibly helpful in establishing and fostering the positive culture of the milieu and classroom management.
- North River School completed 19 extended evaluations and 7 IAES' this school year, which is the highest number of evaluations that NRS has seen. Of these evaluations, 6 students went back to their district and 2 students needed a higher level of care.
- Both the Culinary program and the Innovation Lab have new instructors this year and we welcomed a new school administrative assistant.
- We continue to build on our Diversity Equity and Inclusion work and have contracted with an outside organization to help facilitate this work during our Wednesday Professional Development time.
- All staff have been CPR certified.
- The counseling staff and administrators co-teach an SEL specific class for all 9th graders.
- Academic teachers are working to use SEL standards in their classrooms to measure students' growth and mastery of both academic and social emotional skills.
- The Academic team continues to work on engaging students through Project Based Learning and will begin examining mastery-based grading this spring.





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# Learning Centers

## Program Enhancements

- Learning Center teachers and therapy staff collaborated to develop and implement monthly thematic units based on the Unique Learning System (ULS) curriculum. The ULS is an online curriculum correlated to the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards. The ULS provides thematic lessons across all domains that are age appropriate and leveled to meet the needs of students with special needs who are accessing the curriculum standards at a variety of different access points.
- The Learning Center classrooms at Hobomock Elementary School in Pembroke and Duval School in Whitman moved to Bryantville Elementary School in Pembroke in the fall of 2022.



- In the fall of 2022, professional development for Learning Center staff focused on strategies to enhance family engagement and collaboration and problem solving presented by Pinnacle Partnerships. Erin Foley, DCF presented the Mandated Reporter Training/51A Process, and Michelle LaFrance, BCBA, presented Safety Care Training.
- In the spring of 2022, professional development focused on Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED presented by Deb White.

## Independence Academy

- Independence Academy was awarded a grant from DPH to expand services to include a short-term, school-based intervention model.
- IA continued to run the Upper Course, short-term intervention, for youth suspended out of school for substance related offenses and enrolled 68 students.
- IA's 45-day Intervention model served 31 students from 17 different communities.
- IA is in the middle of a multi-year evaluation conducted by DESE and a team of consultants through the Collaborative for Educational Services.
- Due to grant funding, IA was able to hire a part-time music/art teacher as well as a full-time Humanities teacher.
- IA was able to run a full summer program which included kayaking trips, hiking, a ropes course and the annual Six Flags trip.
- 11 students who attended IA programs last year graduated from high school.
- IA students participated in a study on social networks conducted by Harvard Medical School, Mass General Hospital, and the Recovery Research Institute.



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## Community-Based Vocational

### Program Enhancements

- CBV continued participation in community-based vocational sites five days per week.
- CBV collaborated with the Disability Law Center to create social stories.
- The social stories CBV students created were aired on the Talking Information Center website.
- The Boston Bowl in Dorchester was added as a new job site.
- CBV students obtained ServSafe Food Handler Certifications.
- Two CBV students took part in competitive employment opportunities.
- Two person-centered planning meetings were held with students, parents, teachers, and representatives from adult service providers.
- An internship was established at a local radio station for a CBV student after graduation.
- A GED tutoring program was established for a student.
- Gym equipment was purchased for recreational activities.
- CBV established “planning days” for students to organize outings and promote goal setting.
- Due to a variety of factors, the CBV program was transferred to oversight of Abington Public Schools in the fall of 2022.



# Therapy Services

## Program Enhancements

- One additional school psychologist was added to perform psychoeducational evaluations.
- The OTs and PTs continued to work collaboratively on school teams using input from school teams to develop goals and treatment strategies to maximize student participation in the school setting.
- The OTs began using a Preschool Parent Report Form they created to assist in gathering information regarding parent perception of their child's strengths and areas for growth. Therapists use this tool to guide the initial evaluation process and support the transition into the public schools.
- Select OT/PT staff participated in a virtual School-Based Medicaid Town Hall sponsored by MAOT. Details of the discussion were shared with other staff at their monthly department meeting.
- Learning Center Teams continuing to grow shared drives they created to support remote collaboration between team members.
- The therapy staff continued to use a variety of digital platforms to support collaboration between team members.
- OT and PT staff provided online professional development membership to support access to continuing education (OccupationlTherapy.com; PhysicalTherapy.com) approved by state and national organizations; great feedback on quality of the courses.
- The Occupational Therapists continue to use the Teacher *Report of Function and Participation Forms* based on response from teachers and relevant information. Information gleaned from teachers is used to inform the evaluative process and to prioritize areas of concern in the school setting. Forms in use include Preschool Parent Report- home report for use with students entering preschool, Preschool Teacher Report, Elementary Teacher Report, Middle/High School Teacher Report, and the Teacher Report for Students with Complex Profiles.
- Speech Therapists continued to perform Assistive Technology and Augmentative Communication evaluations and consultations in several districts and continue to enhance and update the devices and software available for student trials.



# Behavior Consult and Educational Services (BCES)

## Program Enhancements

The BCBA staff provided four initial/recertification Quality Behavioral Solutions (QBS) Safety Care trainings for a total of 34 staff.

- Sharepoint/OneDrive or Google Docs were consistently used for objective progress monitoring of student performance across settings.
  - BCBA participated in South Shore Job Alike to support professional growth and development.
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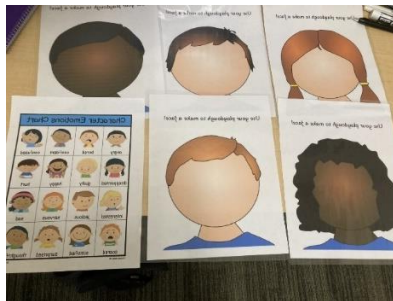
# Social Work Internship Program

## Program Enhancements

- During 2021-2022, North River's MSW Intern Program placed 13 interns across 5 districts within 10 schools serving students in grade pre-K-12<sup>th</sup>. The interns represented Bridgewater State University, Boston College, and Simmons University. Interns were in placement from late September through mid-May, completing a 34-week commitment to their placements resulting in 472-720 hours of field work per intern.
- Clinical Social work field placements are designed to provide the opportunity for students to acquire and grow in social work competencies. Each intern received two hours a week of group and individual supervision by a LICSW and was formally evaluated two times per academic year based on integration of their knowledge, skills, and value/ethics relating to the competencies and their practice.
- The program remained focused on the integration of classroom learning into the field to include the exploration of the social worker's role, professional identity, client and family engagement, assessment, intervention, and treatment evaluation while developing solid, ethical practice skills and boundaries and the application of critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
- All school staff, including principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, guidance, nurses, behaviorists, and teachers continued to be a crucial link in determining intern, student, and program success by welcoming, guiding, and supporting the interns and their learning.
- During this year of many transitions, interruptions, adjustments, loss and change, the interns rose to the challenges and continued to solidify their roles and function within the schools and responded professionally to the many challenges and needs of the schools, children, and families. They demonstrated much flexibility that resulted in rich learning opportunities while helping to meet the varied needs of our schools. Services provided by the interns, but not limited to, were individual and group counseling, whole classroom lessons, crisis intervention and safety evaluations, check - ins, academic and organizational support, pre-K screenings and parent and teacher consultations. The program enhances teacher and parent effectiveness related to the social, emotional development of children, and facilitates a functional "bridge" relationship between home and school. All these tasks and interventions were designed to meet the social emotional learning and mental health needs of students. The interns were active participants in student support team meetings, IEP/504's and transition meetings.
- Interns received a total of 298 referrals for individual and group counseling services, which was an average of 23 referrals per intern. This per intern referral average was consistent with pre-covid numbers and a slight decrease from last year when we were managing hybrid learning
- Eighty percent, (238), of referrals were made on behalf of general education students, representing once again no change from the past several years of data.



- One hundred and eighty-eight, (188), students were referred for crisis, adjustment, anxiety, and trauma, with 11 of those referrals for bereavement. Two hundred and two (202) were identified for social skills and 102 were referred for depression and anger while 27 students were referred for academic support and organizational help. The number for reasons for referrals all increased from last year's data.
- Boys continue to be referred greater than girls, with 164 boys referred vs. 129 girls during the 2021-2022 school year.
- In total, the interns provided 3,130 documented individual, group, in-class, crisis, check-ins, and supportive interventions, 1,386 parent and teacher collaborations and outside collateral contacts. And the publication of 6 parent newsletters for the parents of pre-school students.
- Interns continue to work with students and parents around mutually identified treatment goals and treatment plans allowing for the necessary involvement of parents in the change process, the engagement and empowerment of students, and the evaluation and modification of interventions and treatment successes.
- Family engagement opportunities remained significant this year as parents were quick to reach out to interns for support, and consultation and to share common challenges while striving for a shared responsibility in the students learning and development.
- Significant themes included feelings and issues related to learning loss, social isolation/interaction, social media influences, delayed developmental milestones and experiences, loss/bereavement, parent illness, gender identity, anxiety, depression, trauma, attendance issues and ineffective social and coping skills, most likely highlighted by the unpredictability of our ongoing global pandemic.
- Our preschool interns were members of the enrollment screening teams and meet with parents to conduct psychosocial assessments and to provide support during these meetings.



## Municipal Medicaid Reimbursement

The North River Collaborative coordinates the school-based Municipal Medicaid Reimbursement Program for member and non-member school districts. Since the collaborative began providing this service in 1994, more than \$35 million has been returned to the participating cities and towns. In FY22, approximately \$2,684,606 million dollars were returned to 16 districts.

The North River Collaborative uses an internet-based Medicaid billing enhancement that reduces the burden on districts' administrative and direct care staff and provides the potential to increase Medicaid reimbursement. The software allows easy access for direct care providers to assess student history and to keep up to date with student caseloads. Additionally, administrative staff can monitor services and ensure reimbursement is maximized.

### North River Collaborative:

- Coordinates enrollment agreements
  - Helps obtain parental permission
  - Reconciles paid and unpaid claims
  - Trains and works closely with district staff
  - Identifies eligible students
  - Submit electronic claims
  - Verifies amounts paid to towns
  - Endures program compliance
-

# Southeast Transportation Network

## Program Enhancements

The network provided special education transportation to 515 students (401 out of the Rockland and Abington Offices and 114 out of the Stoughton Office) in FY22.

- The Network enhanced its GPS system allowing improved monitoring and route planning.
- Additional cameras were installed on vehicles; now 100% of all vans have cameras for enhanced monitoring.
- All vans now have the Child Checkmate system and back up alarms.



**Objective 2: Offer a variety of quality professional development opportunities to general and special education teachers and administrators, and related service providers**

**Professional Development Program Offerings**

A wide variety of professional development offerings were scheduled during FY22. Below, you will find a list of these offerings.

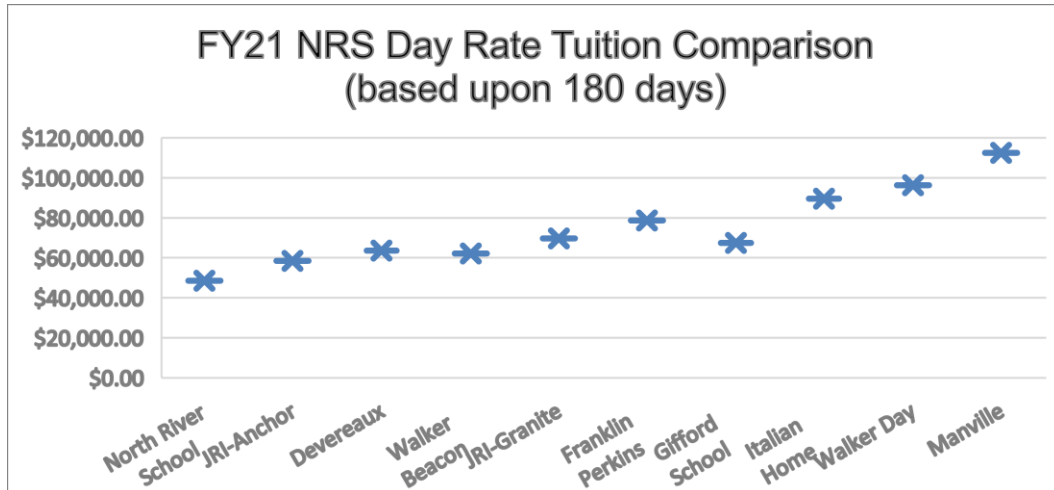
<p><b>Administration, Leadership, &amp; Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative Seminar: Legal Issues for Special Education for School and District Administrators</li> <li>• Educator Evaluation Training for Administrators</li> <li>• Mentoring for Success Trainings</li> <li>• Tiered Academic Intervention</li> <li>• Vision of the Graduate/ NEASC Training</li> </ul> <p><b>Instructional Strategies, Pedagogy &amp; Curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educator Evaluation Trainings for New Teachers</li> </ul> <p><b>Special Education &amp; Related Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCAP: Creating an Accessible Document that Supports All Learners</li> <li>• Effective Inclusive Practice Trainings</li> </ul>	<p><b>English Language Learning</b> <i>(Some funded through Title III Grant)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting English Learners in Specialty Subjects and Support Services: Building Academic Language and Competencies of ELLs</li> <li>• RETELL – SEI Teacher Endorsement Course</li> <li>• Culturally &amp; Linguistically Diverse Learners with Special Needs</li> <li>• Incorporating Socio-Emotional Learning for English Learners</li> </ul> <p><b>Social-Emotional Support &amp; Behavior Intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health Issues in the Classroom Training</li> </ul> <p><b>School Health &amp; Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult CPR/AED, Pediatric CPR &amp; First Aid Certification (American Red Cross)</li> </ul>
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**Objective 3: Provide programs and services in a cost-effective manner**

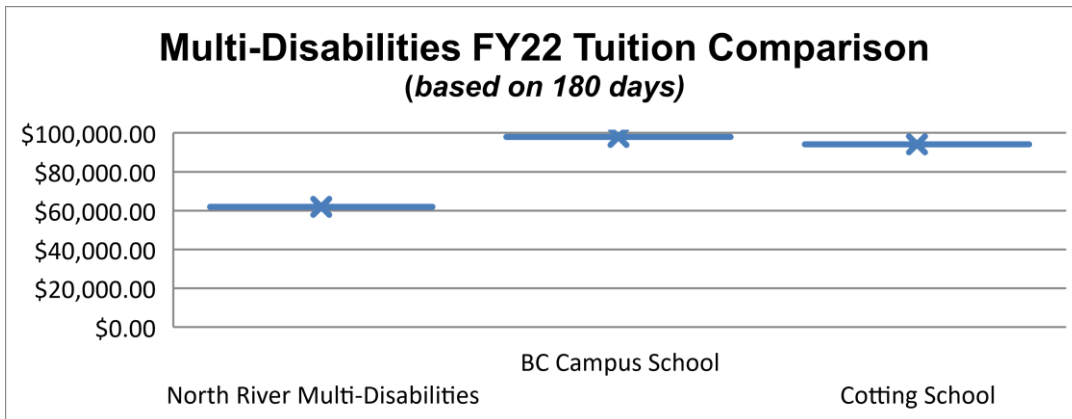
Tuition comparisons below represent programs in the geographic region of the North River Collaborative that member districts typically use when out-of-district placements are needed. The daily rate for private schools is multiplied by 180 days to establish an equivalent tuition across programs regardless of days of operation. Additionally, there are savings to districts in transportation to program locations that are closer to their city/town which are not reflected in the charts below.



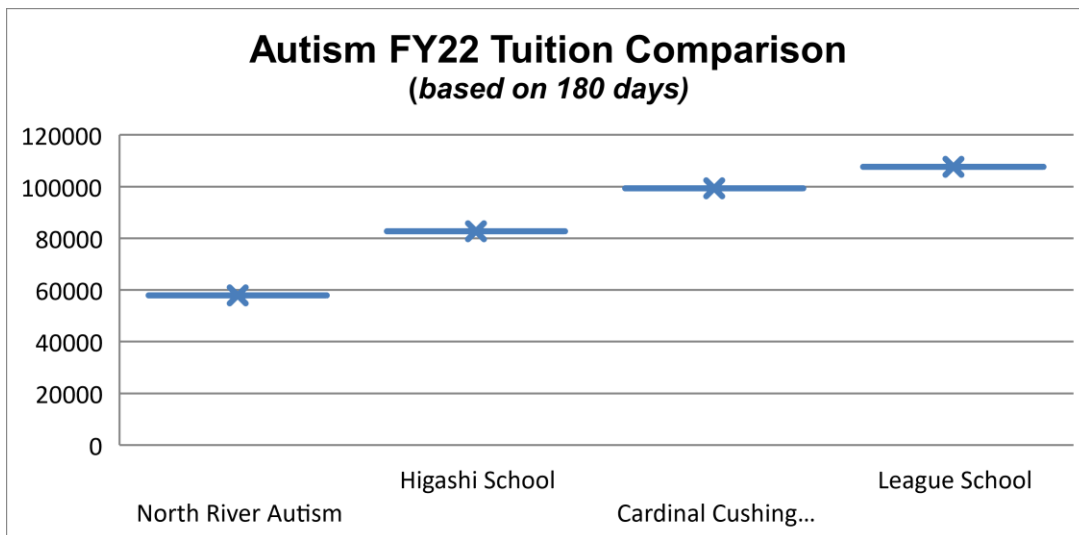
## North River School -FY22 NRS Day Rate Tuition Comparison



## Learning Center for Students with Multiple Disabilities



## Learning Center for Students with Autism



## **Independence Academy**

Independence Academy allows multiple school districts to provide a comprehensive recovery high school alternative program to at-risk students with substance abuse and dependence diagnoses. This school is a regional program and allows school districts to access services that would not otherwise be available to their students. Funding for this program is provided through shared contributions of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the local school districts. DESE provides approximately \$500,000 annually to each recovery high school and the school districts' tuition contribution is equal to the state average per pupil expenditure as determined by DESE.

## **Community-Based Vocational Program**

North River's Community-Based Vocational Program allows multiple school districts to provide a comprehensive program to students with disabilities by pooling resources and students in this program. A broad range of transition services are provided to each student and placement is available in a plethora of different job sites. If each district provided this program on its own, the range of job sites would need to be less extensive, student choice would be reduced, and options would be limited. By bringing these students into one collaborative program, the ability to place a student in a job site that matches his/her interest and skill level is greatly enhanced.

## **Summer Work and Learning Program**

North River's Summer Work and Learning Program allows multiple school districts to provide a comprehensive summer program to students with disabilities. A broad range of transition services are tied to academic support and remediation for students through hands-on instruction and opportunities for work experiences, such as animal services, horticulture, building maintenance, shipping and receiving, office practices, and food service. If each district provided this program individually, the range of job sites would need to be narrower, student choice would be reduced, and options would be limited. By bringing these students into one regional program, the ability to place a student in a job site that matches his/her interest and skill level is greatly enhanced.

## **Municipal Medicaid Reimbursement**

The North River Collaborative coordinates the school-based municipal Medicaid reimbursement program for member districts and many non-member school districts. Since the Collaborative began providing this service in 1994, tens of millions of dollars have been returned to the participating cities and towns. In FY22, approximately \$2,684,606 million dollars were returned to 16 districts.

## **Southeast Transportation Network**

The North River Collaborative's Southeast Transportation Network provides transportation for special needs and other students as a cost-effective service for districts. In most cases, the collaborative's prices are given to districts on individual routes, and the districts choose to contract for only the routes which are cost-effective when compared with prices from other providers. In other cases, North River has provided entire portions of districts' transportation programs such as all in-district special education services or all preschool services. Thus, consolidated administrative and other supports are provided for the districts, resulting in efficiencies within their administration. In addition, the Network allows for an opportunity to maximize ridership on vehicles resulting in an economy of scale and a savings to participating districts. North River's enrollment has continued to increase each year since inception in 2007 with a few exceptions, providing solid market driven evidence that school districts find its transportation safe, cost-efficient and highly reliable.

## General Education Supports and Services

The North River Collaborative offered the following general education supports and services which are described in other sections of this document:

**Social Work Internship Program.** North River's Social Work Internship Program provides school districts with low-cost counseling services for students who are at-risk. By pooling resources to provide LICSW supervision of school-based graduate level interns, the schools can offer counseling to students who would otherwise not be able to receive it. Coordination and interface with colleges and universities, families, and school staff are all included in the program.



**Professional Development.** Professional development offered through the collaborative is cost-effective for districts.

- High-quality programs are offered that would be cost prohibitive for districts to offer individually. NRC programs allow districts to share the expense and enroll the number of staff they need to send, which helps to control cost.
- Specific needs of local districts are addressed through the design and selection of programs.
- Grant funding supports professional development for district and NRC staff.
- District capacity is expanded by the collaborative organizing appropriate and responsive training that is easily accessible for their staff members, usually at a lower rate than other public offerings.

## Objective 4: Explore and pursue grant and other funding to support identified needs of the districts

The following chart details the grant funding received by the North River Collaborative on behalf of school districts in FY21 and FY22.

### Funded Grants and Contracts

Grants on Behalf of Districts:	FY21	FY22
Recovery High School (Independence Academy)	\$500,000	\$510,468
IA-45 Day Program		\$356,250
Title III Consortium Grant	\$49,111	\$80,944
Total Grants for Districts	<b>\$549,111</b>	<b>\$947,662</b>
Grants to Support NRC Programs:		
Safe and Supportive Schools Grant	\$8,000	N/A
Special Education Improvement Grant	\$7,740	N/A
Total Grants to Support NRC Programs:	<b>\$15,740</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Total Grants</b>	<b>\$564,851</b>	<b>\$947,662</b>

### Collaborative Grant Applications

The North River Collaborative has a history of successfully implementing major federal/state programs to expand the capacity of member school districts at no cost. NRC has spearheaded the procurement of grant and foundation funding through agencies such as the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and other public/private foundations, and organizations. During FY22, the total amount awarded on behalf of districts and to support NRC programs was **\$947,662**. Districts received the following grant funded supports and services:

- Transportation and extended day/year programming for students in recovery.
- Tutoring, professional development, and parent support for English language learners.