

# North River Collaborative Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report



North River Collaborative  
Paul Tzovolos, Jr., Executive Director  
198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370  
781-878-6056  
[www.northrivercollaborative.org](http://www.northrivercollaborative.org)

December 2025  
Approved by the NRC Board of Directors December 12, 2025

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December 12, 2025

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

As the proud Executive Director of the North River Collaborative (NRC), I am honored to present to you the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report. The report summarizes the highlights of the past school year where the collaborative focused its efforts on our core mission of acting as a leader in cooperatively developing and delivering innovative and cost-effective educational and therapeutic services for students, families, school districts, partner organizations, and communities in order to offer excellent, equitable, and highly relevant education for all.

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.

We as a community are particularly proud of a number of wonderful steps forward for our organization over the course of school year 2025-2026. We are excited that the trust and support of our van driver and monitor team was reflected in the dissolution of the collective bargaining agreement that we were previously operating under. We will work to ensure that these key team members continue to feel respected and supported in their roles here at North River Collaborative. We are also proud to have taken the preliminary steps to secure a second location for our Independence Academy program on Cape Cod in the coming year. These important updates along with our other action items for school year 2025-2026 are ambitious but attainable and we look forward to seeing our organization continue to flourish under the guidance of our Student Success Plan. Our administrative team members, our professional staff, our transportation staff, and our support staff are all focused on the best for our students as we strive to be leaders in educational practice and service in our region.

From a financial perspective, NRC 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 and meeting the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills.

On behalf of the entire NRC staff, I would like to thank the 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.

Sincerely,

Paul Tzovolos, Jr.  
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 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 2025 fiscal year. The North River Collaborative is grateful for their service.

### Board of Directors

- |                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Felicia Moschella, Abington         | • Julie Hamilton, Holbrook          |
| • Lori Jodoin, Avon                   | • Alan Cron, Rockland               |
| • Ryan Powers, Bridgewater-Raynham    | • Joseph Baeta, 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         |
| • Dixie Diamond, Avon              | • Linda Maniglia, Rockland         |
| • Jim Leonard, Bridgewater-Raynham | • Ed Clarke, Stoughton             |
| • John Phelan, East Bridgewater    | • Kathy Marble, West Bridgewater   |
| • Kaitlin Morelli, Hanover         | • Christine Godino, Whitman-Hanson |

### North River Collaborative Administrative Team

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Paul Tzovolos, Jr., Executive Director  | • Meredith Daly, District Services            |
| • Ellen George, Business Services         | • Ryan Morgan, Independence Academy           |
| • Diane Baxter, Technology                | • Michelle Boudreau, Learning Center Programs |
| • Marie Grable, Asst. Executive Director  | • Eileen Millett, Transportation              |
| • Andrew Manning, North River School      | • Susan Hardie, Asst Transportation           |
| • Abby Horbach, Asst North River School   | • Kimberly Beck, Professional Development     |
| • Lauren Enos, Clinical Services          | • Deborah Thompson, Outreach/Recruitment      |
| • Kelli O'Brien McKinnon, Human Resources | • Angela Corley, Team Chairperson             |

## 2024-2029 Student Success Plan

### Mission

North River Collaborative will act as a leader in cooperatively developing and delivering innovative and cost-effective educational and therapeutic services for students, families, school districts, partner organizations, and communities in order to offer excellent, equitable, and highly relevant education for all.

### Vision

North River Collaborative will utilize a culture of accountability, transparency, equity, and continuous improvement to fulfill our mission and remain at the forefront of educational innovation to meet the individual needs of students in our region within the most inclusive setting possible.

### Guiding Beliefs

#### **We believe that...**

- All students and families deserve equitable access to high-quality educational services that support student success in all domains as well as a life-long success as an independent adult.
- In an educational landscape where the needs of students are at the forefront of decision-making that includes personalized learning, individualized support systems, and a commitment to nurturing the holistic development of each learner at their highest potential.
- 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.
- High-quality professional development combined with a rigorous informal and formal staff evaluation system is essential for improving education practice and maximizing student achievement.
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and inviting feedback from a diverse community of voices will foster growth and innovation and allow us to build and sustain cutting edge programs and services for all students.
- Through collegiality and shared commitment, we as staff will continue to perform at our highest potential and be empowered to operate with agency and grow as individuals serving our organization in the fulfillment of its mission.



## Equity Statement

North River Collaborative believes that equity is rooted in reflective practice that permeates all facets of our organization. We actively seek to promote inclusion and the celebration of what makes our community members unique as we continue to maintain our collective dignity, civil rights, and safety. We understand that equitable practices guide us to continue to seek to mutually understand one another and expand the representation of all stakeholders in order to create a more diverse organization.

## Strategic Objectives

- Objective 1:** The Collaborative will be responsive to stakeholder feedback as evidenced by the development of existing programs or services and the expansion of these supports to meet the needs of students in the region.
- Objective 2:** The Collaborative will develop comprehensive internal systems and work to reevaluate the physical space needs of our programs to provide high-quality work and learning spaces that foster innovative and efficient practices.
- Objective 3:** The Collaborative will support the agency growth, and well-being of our existing staff while recruiting prospective team members to support our growing programs and services with a focus on building a community rooted in equity and understanding.

## Serving Students & Districts

### Serving Students

FY25

<b>Students Served in NRC Programs*</b>	
Multiple Disabilities-Learning Centers	26
Autism/Developmental Disabilities-Learning Centers	20
Social and Emotional Disabilities-North River School	37
Substance Abuse and Mental Health - Independence Academy	112
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>195**</b>
<b>Students Served in NRC Services*</b>	
Therapy PT, OT, SLP, Vision & O&M	620
Therapy Consult and Services-Psych Evals	122
Social Work Interns	160
Behavioral Health Initiative	716
Transportation	408
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>2,026</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,221**</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

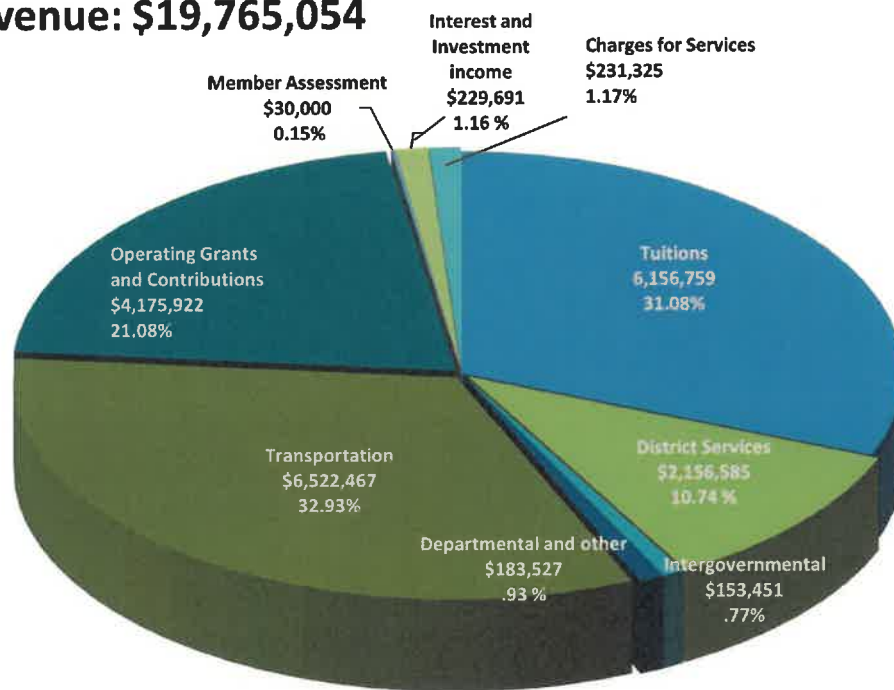
### Serving Districts

FY25

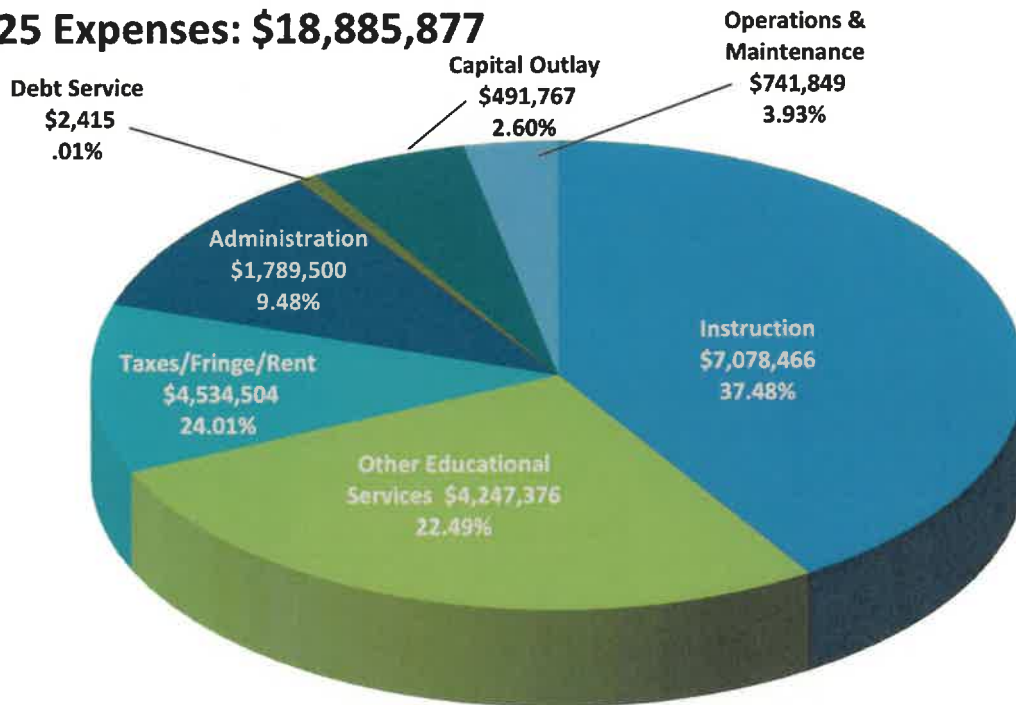
Transportation	24
Municipal Medicaid	12
Grant Writing	38
Behavioral Health	1
Professional Development (PD) participants	271

## Financial Information

### FY25 Revenue: \$19,765,054



### FY25 Expenses: \$18,885,877



## 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)
- 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 (NRS) 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 (NRHS) 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.

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 (Ext. 116)

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 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**

Michelle Bourdreau- Program Coordinator Phone:781/878-6056 (Ext. 103)

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

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 192)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781/293-5411 x16692

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

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 190)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781/293-5411 x16690

**Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Elementary)**

Richardson Olmsted School (Rooms A126)  
101 Lothrop Street, North Easton, MA 02356  
Phone: 508/230-3227 x5126

**Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Middle)**

Richardson Olmsted School (Rooms A128)  
101 Lothrop Street, North Easton, MA 02356  
Phone: 508/230-3227 x5128

**Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Intermediate)**

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 194)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781/293-5411 x2693

**Learning Center Autism & Developmental Disabilities (PreK)**

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 193)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781/293-5411 x16691

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

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 191)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781/293-5411 x16691

**Learning Center Multiple Disabilities (Primary)**

Bryantville Elementary School (Room 169)  
29 Gurney Drive, Pembroke, MA 02359  
Phone: 781-293-5411 x16669

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

East Bridgewater High School (Room 129),  
43 Plymouth Street, East Bridgewater, MA 02333  
Phone: 508/378-8214 x1290.

**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 x1216



## 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 with 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 understanding 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 the 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, 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 life and to reach their full potential. All of the Independence Academy's programs are voluntary.

Completing its thirteenth full academic year in 2025, 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



## **SAILS Program**

### **(Students Achieving Independent Living Skills)**

The North River Collaborative's SAILS Program provides an innovative program offering a broad range of transition services for students with intellectual impairments, developmental disabilities, behavioral challenges, and autism. The program provides opportunities for social skills acquisition through multiple types of social activities of the student's choice and multiple different types of internships to build vocational competencies.

The SAILS Program, through strong community connections and resources, provides opportunities in different industries for students to work and build confidence and independence. for students ages 18-22. The program is in the Bridgewater Central Square Congregational Church and select community-based job sites. 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.

The SAILS Program also offers a summer program for ages 14-17 and 18-22.

**SAILS Program**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 145)

Deborah Thompson – Outreach/Recruitment Coordinator



## District Services

### Occupational, Physical, Behavioral and Psychological

North River Collaborative provides direct and consultative **occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy** services across 10 school districts, supporting nearly 625 students. Additionally, services are offered within North River Collaborative's Learning Center Classrooms for students with multiple disabilities, autism, and developmental disabilities, as well as at the North River school.

Students with visual impairments receive support through consultative and direct services from a **Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)** and an **Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialist**. These services aim to enhance educational accessibility and promote student independence throughout the school day. NRC aims to expand TVI and O&M staffing to enhance the support available within local school districts.

Our **Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)** completed the *Safety-Care* Crisis Prevention Training certification to become a trainer, equipping our Learning Center staff with essential skills to effectively support students who may exhibit unpredictable behaviors. She also provides consultative services to students within Learning Center classrooms and at North River School.

North River Collaborative employs two **School Psychologists** who support local districts by conducting psychoeducational evaluations. This year, the team completed 157 evaluations across seven districts.

#### **District Services**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

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

Meredith Daly – 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, Michigan State University, Fordham, or Boston College.

#### **Social Work Internship Program**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street,

Rockland, MA 02370 Phone: 781-878-6056 (Ext. 301)

Lauren Enos – Clinical Services 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. We currently have school social workers in 3 elementary schools, one middle school and one high school.

### **Behavioral Health Initiative**

The Almshouse, 198 Spring Street, Rockland, MA 02370

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

Lauren Enos – Clinical Services 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 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)

Ellen George – Director of Business Services

## 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 408 students in 24 school districts in FY25, 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

North River School, 525 Beech St. Rockland, MA 02370

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 SAILS 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

- North River School graduated 8 seniors on June 4th from 7 different districts
- Teacher Ace Piesco retired after 20 years with North River School
- Three new Adjustment Counselors added to the clinical team in the fall of 2024 - Shantelle Roache, Krystal Dube-Gaspar and Tracie Sweeney
- Robert Ware joined NRS as the new NRS High School history teacher, Sara Gaylord has joined as the new math teacher and Walter Snow has joined North River School as a math tutor to support students.
- Jessica Innocent joined NRS as the new Program Secretary and Brittany Winslow joined as the new ELA teacher.
- Juniors and Seniors participated in a pre-employment training program focused on helping them build the skills needed to gain employment and be successful in the workforce. Guest speakers included instructors from the South Shore Vo-Tech and trade groups as well as a visit to Massasoit Community College.
- Partnered with outside resources to host assemblies focused on substance abuse, digital safety and healthy relationships.
- Instituted a PBIS/student incentive program and student shout outs
- Second year handing out holiday care packages to all students and families with everything to make a Thanksgiving meal including fresh turkey
- Staff continued to participate in Professional Development and PLC groups focused on Diversity Equity and Inclusion
- All staff re-certified in CPI
- Facilities improvements including new HVAC system for the gym and breakroom for transportation.



# Learning Center

## Program Enhancements

- Due to a significant increase in enrollment in the Learning Center Autism program, an additional classroom was opened. The Autism PreK classroom location adjoins the Autism Elementary program at Bryantville Elementary School.
- Learning Center teachers and therapy staff collaborated to implement monthly thematic units based on the Unique Learning System (ULS) curriculum. 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 Everyday Speech curriculum is included for the Learning Center Middle and High School programs to support the acquisition of pragmatic language skills and appropriate pro-social peer interactions.
- Learning Center programs continued to benefit from a variety of field trips to enhance curriculum themes and vocational opportunities
- Many milestones were reached within our Multiple Disabilities Kindergarten classrooms. One student learned to walk independently, another learned to brush their teeth on their own, and student attention has grown exponentially. Students were able to sit for morning circle for over a half hour.
- The Learning Center has an amazing group of teachers. Two teachers earned Exemplary scores within all four standards, and four teachers earned Exemplary scores in at least one of the four standards. Working with students with Severe Disabilities is challenging but our teachers work hard to provide instruction within an inclusive and supportive environment. They communicate with caregivers daily and fulfill all professional responsibilities.
- the Learning Center staff did an amazing job completing the MCAS alternate assessments. It is with great pleasure to announce that all students fell within the Emerging or Progressing range. The students worked hard to show mastery in an alternate way.



# Independence Academy

## Program Enhancements

- Independence Academy continued to offer short-term programming (In-school consultation, 10 and 45-day programs) to districts at no cost due to DPH grant funding. Over 112 students were served from 24 different communities.
- The Upper Course, a short-term intervention for youth suspended out of school for substance related offenses, enrolled 60 students.
- 100% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders attending IA's 45-day Program, and Recovery High School graduated from high school.
- Our STEM teacher, Kiera Herrick completed her work with a group of teachers and researchers through Tufts University on a 5-year NIH-funded grant to create a science curriculum on neuroscience and addiction.
- Students took field trips to Boda Borg, a series of mental and physical challenges that students try to complete, the Immersive Game Box, where students enter an atmospheric digital adventure that reacts to your movement and touch working to survive each challenge and advance through the 60-minute game, Supercharged, Blackstone River Glass Center, and Level 99. Within the school we continued with our Recovery Capital Building Blocks and Cohort groups in order to add further personalization to the work that students are doing at Independence Academy.
- Throughout the school year opportunities for students to engage in regular community service experiences remained a key component. Students volunteered with animal shelters, organizations for disabled individuals, homeless shelters, and children in foster care.
- In May, Independence Academy applied for grant funding to open a second location down on the Cape for the 25-26 school year. In June, we learned that we had been awarded that grant which shows that our program model is now informing systems level practices across the state and has gained attention from policymakers and thought leaders. DESE has doubled our grant award in direct response to the success and innovation of our program and the Department of Public Health is in active discussions to do the same.
- The work with Dr. Emily Hennessey on developing a relevant measure for Adolescent Recovery Capital has resulted in the development of a "rough draft" that will be piloted over the summer to gauge and receive student input on the length and overall experience of taking the assessment.
- Work has continued through the spring with DESE and the consulting group from CES and the development of statewide frameworks for the MA Recovery High Schools has been completed.



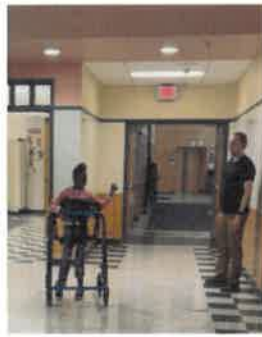


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## District Services

### Program Enhancements

- The District Service Department added several new staff members: Kate Stevens, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Christine Reilly, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Margaret McGovern, Speech and Language Pathologist, Adriana Estrada, Occupational Therapist, and Jason Rubenstein, Physical Therapist.
- Vision and O&M expanded their reach this year to work in Bridgewater-Raynham, Abington, East Bridgewater, Duxbury, South Shore Public Charter School, Whitman-Hanson, Marshfield, Pembroke, Hanover, and Kingston as well as NRC's Learning Center Program.
- The Occupational Therapy team provided evaluative, direct, and consultative occupational therapy services in Bridgewater-Raynham, at North River School, at NRC's Learning Center Program, and in NRC's newly established SAILS program.
- The Physical Therapy team provided evaluative, direct, and consultative physical therapy services in Whitman Hanson, East Bridgewater, Norwell, Hingham, South Shore Public Charter School, and in NRC's Learning Center.
- Speech-Language Pathologists provided evaluative, direct, and or consultative services at North River School, the SAILS Program and in the Learning Center Programs. They also provided embedded professional development/consultative services in Easton, Hanover, Bridgewater-Raynham and West Bridgewater.
- The District Service Team provided specialty evaluations in the area of vision, alternative & augmentative communication, assistive technology, and school psychology upon request and pending availability.
- District service team members are taking advantage of professional development reimbursement and are pursuing additional education via the Therapy in Schools Conference (November 2024), at APTA's (American Physical Therapy Association) Pediatric Annual Conference (November 2024), and with the Rare Diseases and Disorders: SLP Intervention and Assessment Online Conference (September 2024). Additionally, Physical Therapist JoAnn Hutchinson, DPT, is once again invited to share her expertise at the Interprofessional Child Development Day which is held at Mass General Hospital's Institute of Health Professions.





# Social Work Internship Program

## Program Enhancements

- During 2024-2025, North River's MSW Intern Program placed 6 interns across 2 districts within 5 schools serving students in grade pre-K-12. The interns represented Bridgewater State University, Boston College, University of Michigan, and Simmons University. Interns were in placement from September through 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 month of group supervision and one hour a week of individual supervision from NRC. Each was formally evaluated two times per academic year based on integration of their knowledge, skills, and value/ethics relating to the 9 Competencies and their practice.
- The 9 Social Work Competencies of their practice include:
  1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior
  2. Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice
  3. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
  4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice
  5. Engage in Policy Practice
  6. Engage with Individuals Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
  9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities
- The MSW Intern program 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.

## 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 \$39 million has been returned to the participating cities and towns. In FY25, approximately \$2,032,592.18 million dollars were returned to 12 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
- Identifies eligible students
- Helps obtain parental permission
- Submit electronic claims

- Reconciles paid and unpaid claims
- Trains and works closely with district staff
- Assists districts with the selection of program participants
- Verifies amounts paid to towns
- Endures program compliance
- Prepares and submits quarterly administrative claims and end-of-year cost reports

## Southeast Transportation Network

### Program Enhancements

The Southeast Transportation Network provided Special Education transportation to 408 students in FY 25.

The Network's newest addition to an enhanced Camera/GPS system has been proven to be quite impressive and very helpful to both the Collaborative as well as the districts when it comes to observing and resolving any issues that may arise during transport with students or staff. Transfinder Routing Software was purchased, and staff training was conducted throughout the year. The new routing system software began being used July 1, 2024 for the summer routing of FY25.

- The Network services over 24 school districts and delivers students to over 95 different schools.
- All staff are CPR certified throughout the year as needed.
- This past year, we continued to expand and strengthen transportation services. We increased our staff by 20.
- Have installed all new 5G 2-way radios for all vehicles.
- Purchased 4 new Dodge Ram Promaster 8 Passenger vans, 2 new Dodge Ram Promaster Wheelchair vans, and 10 new Chrysler Voyager minivans.
- During FY25 we continued to offer a \$1,500 sign-on bonus for drivers to assist with the increase in staffing.
- During FY25 we continued to offer a \$1000 referral bonus for current staff when referring someone to transportation.
- Drivers employed for 2024-2025 school year-83
- Monitors employed for the 2024-2025 school year-24.



## **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 FY25. Fifty-Eight districts were served which includes North River Collaborative staff and member districts for a total of 300 participants.

#### **Administration, Leadership, & Evaluation**

- Administrative Seminar: Legal Issues for Special Education for School and District Administrators
- Educator Evaluation Training for Administrators
- Mentoring for Success Trainings
- Tiered Academic Intervention
- Vision of the Graduate/ NEASC Training

#### **Instructional Strategies, Pedagogy & Curriculum**

- Educator Evaluation Trainings for New Teachers

#### **Special Education & Related Services**

- DCAP: Creating an Accessible Document that Supports All Learners
- Effective Inclusive Practice Trainings

#### **English Language Learning**

*(Some funded through Title III Grant)*

- Supporting English Learners in Specialty Subjects and Support Services: Building Academic Language and Competencies of ELLs
- RETELL – SEI Teacher Endorsement Course
- Identifying Multilingual Learners with Disabilities: Understanding Opportunities from the new MA IEP

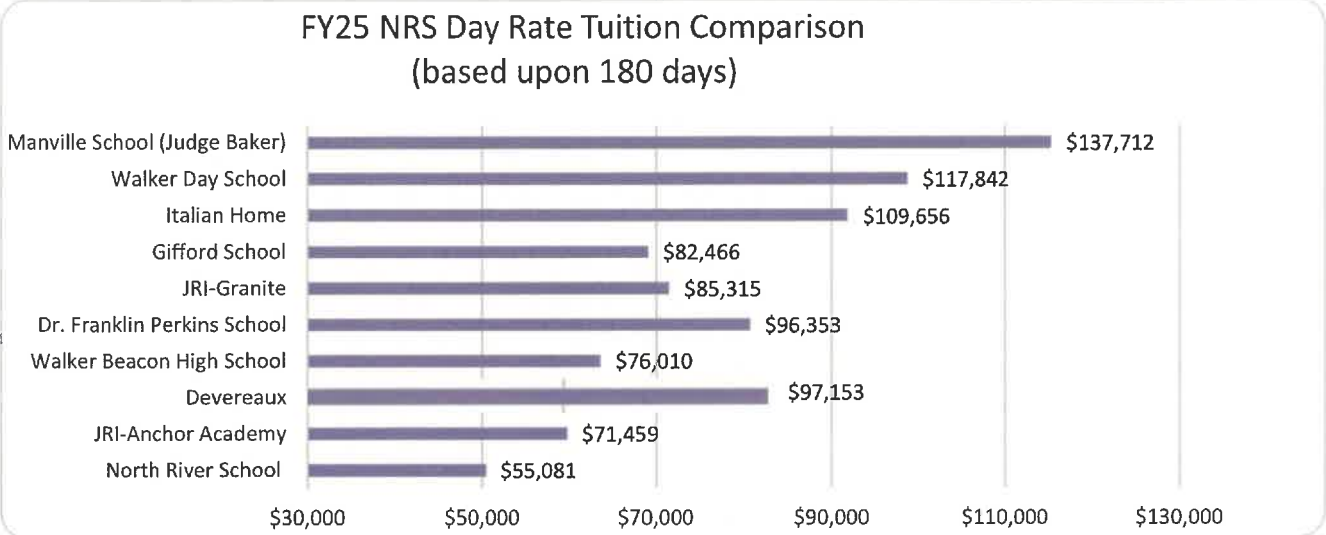
#### **Social-Emotional Support & Behavior Intervention**

- Mental Health Issues in the Classroom Training

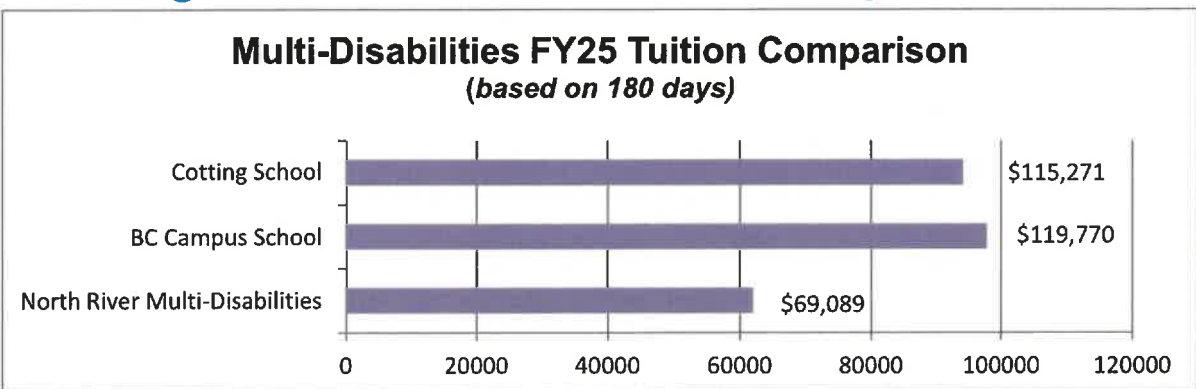
## **Objective 3: Provide programs and services in a cost-effective manner.**

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.

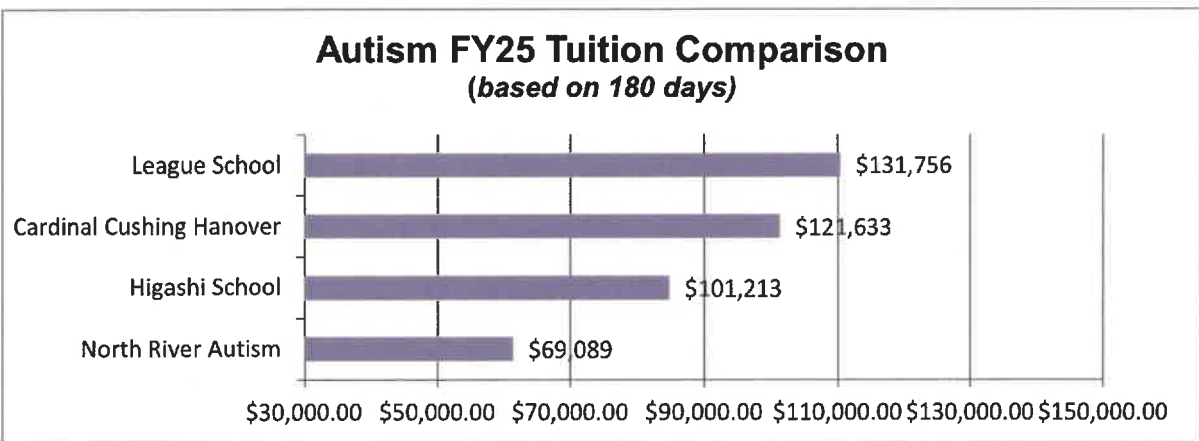
## North River School -FY23 NRS Day Rate Tuition Comparison



## 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.

## **Students Achieving Independent Living Skills (SAILS)**

North River's SAILS Program allows multiple school districts to provide a comprehensive school year and 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 FY25, approximately \$2,032,592 million dollars were returned to 12 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 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 FY23, FY24, and FY25.

### Funded Grants and Contracts

Grants on Behalf of Districts:		FY23	FY24	FY25
Recovery High School (Independence Academy)				
		\$510,468	\$540,000	\$540,000
IA-45 Day Program		\$356,250	\$475,000	\$475,000
Title III Consortium Grant		\$80,944	\$112,232	\$62,801
Total Grants for Districts		<b>\$947,662</b>	<b>\$1,127,232</b>	<b>\$1,077,801</b>
Grants to Support NRC Programs:				
Safe and Supportive Schools Grant		N/A	NA	NA
Special Education Improvement Grant		N/A	NA	NA
Massachusetts Mechanics Association		N/A	\$15,269	NA
Total Grants to Support NRC Programs:		<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$15,269</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Total Grants</b>		<b>\$947,662</b>	<b>\$1,142,501</b>	<b>\$1,077,801</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 FY25, the total amount awarded on behalf of districts and to support NRC programs was **\$1,077,801**. 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.
- North River School's Innovation Lab and Culinary Program




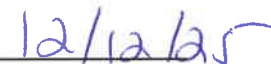
## **Acceptance of Annual Report (Board Vote)**

**For the Year Ended June 30, 2025**

We, the Board of Directors of the **North River Collaborative**, voted at an open meeting to accept the 2025-2026 **North River Collaborative** Annual Report as submitted for the fiscal year 2025.

We also certify that the representations made in the annual report are accurate and have been disclosed in accordance with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidelines.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Chairperson Signature

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Board Vote