



## HEAD OF SCHOOL

July 1, 2016

## RIVERVIEW SCHOOL

East Sandwich, MA

### MISSION

**“Riverview School, an independent coeducational boarding/day school, provides a caring community for adolescents and young adults with complex language, learning and cognitive disabilities. The School is committed to developing student competence and confidence in academic, social and independent living skills”**

Beyond the mission, Riverview’s most central guiding tenet is the philosophical belief that it serves adolescents and young adults with disabilities, *versus disabled adolescents and young adults*. It holds high expectations for everyone, challenges students to be at their very best, and then supports them as they achieve that.

By providing a structured, supportive, responsive, and non-competitive environment, the school fosters the development of critical social and academic skills that will ensure success in post-secondary settings or in gainful productive employment. Riverview has established itself as a leader in this field and provides meaningfully for the ongoing professional development of its own faculty and

staff. It frequently hosts educators eager to witness best and innovative practices in the field of special education.

Riverview serves differently abled students who have usually experienced difficulty in their prior academic and social settings. Their intellectual capacity can test between 60 and 90. While the primary diagnosis may be language, learning and/or intellectual disability, they may have additional neurological or medical disabilities that have made it hard for them to experience success and acceptance in regular school settings. At Riverview, they are embraced and celebrated and find at last a predictable, structured, and safe environment that allows them to reach their full potential. There are 14 students in the Middle School (6-8), 83 students in the high school, and 107 students in the transition program (17 to 22

years old, typically), which is called GROW – Getting Ready for the Outside World. Twenty-five (25) students are day, 179 are boarding,

and the entire program is supported by a total of approximately 225 employees.

*“Riverview is the happiest place on earth. The staff is incredible, the students wonderful, and parents supportive. You won’t find greater kids anywhere.”*  
Administrator

## HISTORY

Riverview was founded in 1957 as the Hopefields School. The original mission of the school was to help students with severe and complex learning needs. The school has always been a boarding school with a strong living skills component. It is a non-profit, independent school that also meets Massachusetts’ requirements for residential schools for special needs students. However, half of its students are from outside the state and come from families that either pay full tuition, or are able to negotiate some degree of public support. Maureen Brenner has been Head since 2001 and her effective leadership is evident throughout the school. The academic program has been significantly developed across the board, and especially with the addition of offerings in fine and performing arts. The plant has been dramatically improved, especially with the construction of the James Center. A strong business office deftly manages finances that are significantly impacted by public sources and forces, and the

development office is bringing new energy and organization to fund-raising that finds the school in the middle of a successful capital campaign focused on endowment growth.



*“I have never worked anywhere where the staff work so hard and love their jobs so much. The kids who come here are great. It’s just a happy place to be. The progress they make is so satisfying.”*  
 Admissions Administrator

## SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Enrollment                 |   |
| 6-12                       | 97  |
| GROW Program               | 107   |
| Boarding                   | 179   |
| Day                        | 25  |
| Geographic Diversity       | 20 states, 10 countries                       |
| Academic Faculty           | 53  |
| Residential Staff          | 93 full-time, 16 part-time                    |
| Administrators             | 8   |
| Campus                     | 20 buildings on approximately 16 acres        |
| Operating Budget FY 15     | \$17.5 million                                |
| Annual Giving FY 14        | \$445,000                                     |
| 2014 Annual Gala           | \$600,000                                     |
| Capital & Endow. Giving    | \$6.5 raised toward \$10 million goal         |
| Private Tuitions for 14-15 | \$74,745 Boarding / \$44,658 Day              |
| Endowment                  | \$9.6 million                                 |
| Memberships                | NAIS, AISNE, NEAS&C, CASE, SBSA, AISAP, MAAPS |
| Website                    | www.riverviewschool.org                       |

## CAMPUS

Riverview School is located an hour south of Boston on historic Route 6A in East Sandwich, MA, on Cape Cod. Most of the 16-acre campus is located on a gentle rise on the north side of 6A, and looks south over the expanse of Scorton Creek and its extensive marsh system. It is an idyllic setting for a beautiful and well-developed facility that includes most of the school’s facilities and playing field. There are three academic buildings, 14 dormitories, fitness center, health facility, two dining facilities, a beautiful auditorium and library in the new multi-purpose James Center, and a gymnasium that is planned for replacement in the near future. The campus is well maintained, attractive, and extremely well suited for the students the school serves.



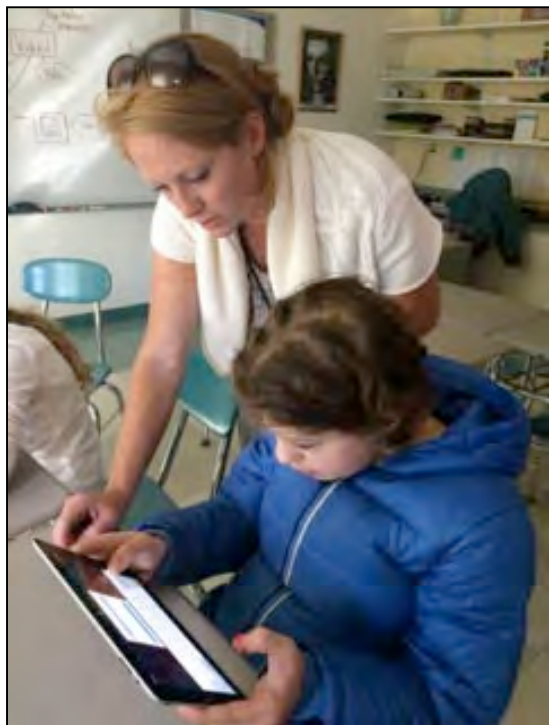
*“Riverview is a magical place. It becomes your family and your life.”*  
Residential Administrator

In addition, the school owns four off-campus residential facilities for the GROW program – two in Hyannis and two a mile east in Sandwich – and it owns and operates the thriving *Café Riverview* and *Second View* Thrift Store, also a mile east in Sandwich.

*“We have amazing relationships with families. Communication is really good.”*  
Residential Administrator

## STUDENTS

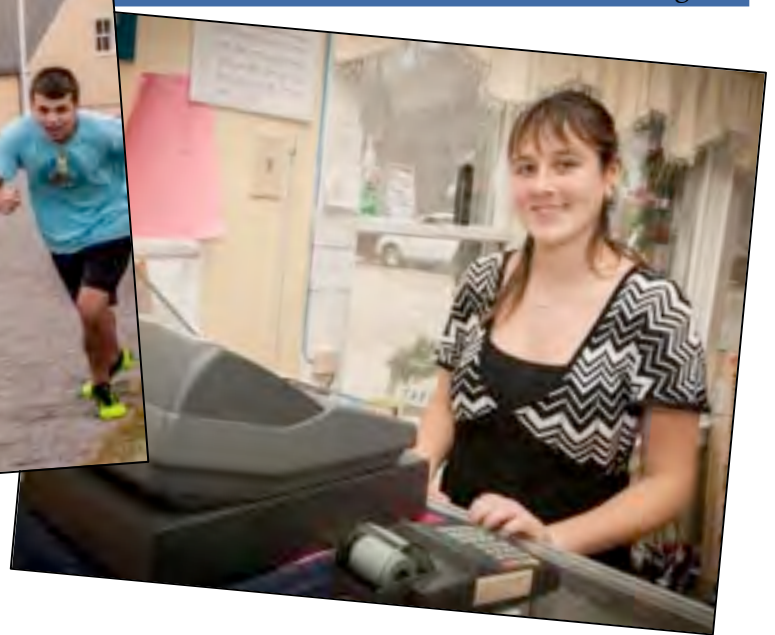
The students make Riverview School a very special and unusually warm and caring place. There are quotes from Riverview employees and parents throughout this position statement that shed light on the attitude on campus.



The feeling on campus is happy, upbeat, and extraordinarily positive. For many of the students this is their first true community experience, and it will likely be one of the best in their lives. Many have come from academic situations where they were not properly supported and felt very different from their peers. At Riverview, they are quickly one with their peers and they are treated – by adults and each other – with respect, caring, and support, with a real opportunity to be happy and to succeed.

The school is very careful to be sure that the students who come to Riverview are those who can succeed

*Continued.*



*“We help parents understand that they can put down the boxing gloves.”*  
Residential Administrator

there. Students’ “sending school” IEPs are carefully reviewed, all boarding applicants stay for an overnight at the school, and the school does not accept students with drug, alcohol, or serious behavioral problems. While the overall ability range within the student body has remained constant in the last decade, the improvements in public school programming have led to Riverview’s accepting students who have more needs than before.

While Riverview is nationally and internationally recognized for the

work that it does, it is initiating an aggressive marketing program to address the comment it hears so often even from sophisticated parents of special needs children, “Why did I never hear of this remarkable place earlier? If only we could have known of it sooner!” Half of its students are from Massachusetts, and the rest come from 20 states and 10 foreign countries. Becoming even better known can allow the school not necessarily to grow, but

*“Decisions here always flow from what is best for the students. That is the guideline.”*  
Development Administrator

to become more selective for two key reasons: first, to enable the school to best match student and program, and second, to have more predictable control of the balance between public and private revenue sources.

There is a small (14 students) population of middle school age students at Riverview, most of whom are day students. They are served by their own teaching faculty but are

included in all school activities. Approximately 90% of Riverview’s graduates take advantage of the school’s own

transition option, the GROW program. Regardless of when a student leaves Riverview, both the student and the family receive the very best counseling as appropriate occupational and residential settings are fully considered.

*“People drawn to work here are top notch professionals with huge hearts.”*  
Development Administrator

## FACULTY

Riverview has attracted exceptional people to teach exceptional students. All faculty have training and/or certification in their area of special education. They are dedicated, compassionate, and care deeply about the welfare and success of the student body. Staff training and development – which includes everyone who works at the school – is a central principle of the Riverview culture and the Head has taken a leadership role in this on-going process. The academic faculty work in teams of three or four, each led by a head teacher who has responsibility for maintaining contact with the residential staff, health office, counselors, and special services teachers such as speech/language pathologists and occupational therapist.



*“I came here as a freshman, scared to make friends. I leave here very involved with student life, sports, and most importantly, confidence.”*  
Student

There is a completely separate residential staff of 109, under the leadership of the Director of Programs. They are organized into teams that work in two shifts. Residential staff work hard and new hires discover quickly if they are cut out for it or not. Most of them are, and many of those become so taken with their work and the students that they apply for academic positions and engage in whatever additional coursework or professional development they need to remain involved with community they have come to love.

*“We provide a typical school experience for those who wouldn’t have it under other circumstances. Academics are strong, but the social experience is what is most remarkable. It’s a real community and people really care deeply. The whole package here is different.”*  
Admissions Administrator

## ADMINISTRATION

The administration of Riverview is highly effective and collaborative. The Head leads an administrative team that for more internal functions includes two Assistant Heads (Director of Education and Director of Programs), a Director of Special Services, and a Director of Vocational and Transitional Services. The more external functions of the school are handled by a Director of Finance, the Director of

Admissions, and the Director of Advancement. The team meets frequently and has developed a culture based on open-mindedness, cooperation, and innovation.

*“Magic really happens! Other places these kids are outsiders, and here they’re on the inside, which puts faculty on the inside!”*  
Teacher



*“What we do is sort of a miracle. Look for meaning in your work? At Riverview, we see it all the time. We really make a difference in the lives of people. You can’t put a price tag on that.”*  
Residential Administrator

## PARENTS

Because Riverview is primarily a boarding school, many of the families live a great distance from the school. Day students are typically transported by their “sending” school district, and so the school does not have the parental presence due to morning and afternoon drop-off and pick-up. However, the school maintains close contact between parents and the administration and faculty, and parents give teachers and residential staff high marks for the frequency and quality of their communications about their children. There are notable events on campus each year (e.g., Parents Weekend in October, Transition Weekend in February, and

*“We can do anything now because of Riverview.”*  
Student

Commencement in June) when the school engages in special and creative programming to help parents deal with and understand their unique challenges as well plan for the future after Riverview. A Parents’ Association offers help and moral support of parents new to the community, and it also works to convey the importance of the Annual Fund, especially to families who are accustomed to public support and haven’t been solicited by their school before. Parent satisfaction at Riverview is very high, largely because of the extraordinary gratitude they feel when their children’s needs are finally being met within a supportive and appropriate setting.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Faculty and staff repeatedly identify the Board of Trustees as one of the school's significant assets. The Board of Trustees consists of 22 members, including the two co-presidents of the Parents' Association. Most are current or past parents, though the school has had a practice of including outside professionals, including among others, educators from both the public and independent sectors. While Riverview is specialized in its programming, it is "mainstream" in governance and finance, and committed to highest and best practices in governance and executive leadership. This explains in part the board's support of the school's membership in AISNE and NAIS, and its practice of seeking evaluation and accreditation through the New England Association of Schools & Colleges. The board's ability to avoid micro-management reflects, again, the reality that as parents they discovered a school that excels in meeting their children's needs, and as trustees they welcome the opportunity to make their contributions at a more strategic level. There have been multiple planning initiatives in the last fifteen years, each resulting in significant and successful program additions.

*"For every 'dis'-ability of a differently-abled child, there is another superior ability. The job is to find it, and Riverview does that."*

Parent

## PROGRAM

Riverview's programs are fully described on the school's website, [www.riverviewschool.org](http://www.riverviewschool.org). There is detailed information under the headings: Secondary School (Grades 6-12), Transition Program (GROW), Program of Studies, Summer Session, and Health & Wellness. A review of these offerings reveals extraordinary depth and breadth as the school plans, delivers, supervises, and continuously evaluates an intense 24/7 program that includes attention to academic instruction, personal growth and development, residential and community life, physical education and athletics, a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, occupational and vocational services and opportunities, and transition planning for life's next steps. The very successful Summer Session's programming makes the school truly a year-around operation. The school does all this with care and exquisite attention to detail.



There is "routine excellence" embedded throughout the school's program. Examples of what the staff does routinely might include: the mindfulness practice that occurs every morning; seminal work on social thinking and executive functioning for this population; the health care staff's ability to support the 75% of the students who are on some level of medication, requiring strict attention to protocols for administration; or that in the development of educational and vocational opportunities for its GROW students, the school has partnered with the Cape Cod Community College and over 35 businesses on the Cape. In

Continued.

addition, the school has established a “Project Search” program which gives GROW students internship opportunities in health care at the nationally renowned Spaulding Rehabilitation Center nearby in Sandwich. Most recently, and again responding to demonstrated need, the school has developed “Bridgeview,” a one-year extension to the GROW program.

*“Riverview was my son’s salvation. I’m in a room full of miracles every time I come here.”*  
Parent

The school has had a long standing commitment to technology and now has an excellent technology infusion specialist, who will be working with faculty and students the help maximize the benefits of all technology – from hand-held to desktop – for this population.



## FINANCES

Riverview is extremely well-managed and its finances are healthy. The current operating budget is \$17.5 million, and against total assets of \$43 million, debt is quite small at \$1.6 million and was incurred largely for a wastewater treatment facility. There is a \$10 million capital campaign under way to increase endowment from \$5 million to \$15 million, and \$6.5 million of the goal has been raised to date.

Cash flow is healthy and the school has not had to rely on lines of credit.

Carefully managed operating surpluses have allowed the school to invest carefully in maintenance, and in the last ten years \$5 million has been invested in facilities upgrades that are part of a 40 year capital project list that is carefully monitored and updated as needed. Forty percent of the school’s tuition revenue comes from publicly supported students, and most of that is from Massachusetts.

*“School communication and support have been wonderful and thoughtful. Dorm staff have been terrific. In academics, the bar is high, but never out of reach.”*  
Parent

The school grants \$300,000 a year in need-based financial aid, and uses NAIS/SSS procedures. Financial need presents differently at Riverview, for 60% of the student body receives some level of public funding through a city, town, or state. Being aware of, and helping to manage these

payment issues, is an important part of business management at Riverview.

The Business Office handles human resources for the work force of 225 employees, almost 200 of

whom are full time. While progress has been made in the last ten years, compensation for teachers and residential staff needs attention and is a strategic priority going forward. When compared to those in the public sector, salaries tend to be more competitive for those early in their careers, and less so, later.



## POSITION

The Riverview Head of School is its chief executive officer and is responsible for all of the school's programs and employees. The head should have a relevant background in education with a focus on learning disorders and special needs. Ideally, the Head will have a "hands-on" leadership style, a thorough knowledge of the issues that face special needs students and their families, and a deep commitment to staff training and development. He/She should be able to become deeply connected to the human side of the Riverview endeavor and be able to deal compassionately and effectively with students, parents, and professional colleagues.

*"Kids become part of the tribe. There is a tribal entity. You're part of it, you're embraced, and you belong. It's a powerful and new sense of belonging, for some, for the first time."*

Parent



## CHALLENGES

Riverview School is an exceptionally well-governed and well-managed organization. Its challenges are well-understood, and the next head will be *continuing* initiatives to address the following:

- Ensuring stable enrollment that best matches the school's mission and resources
- Differentiating Riverview from public competition that gets better and keeps more students at home, and private competition that tries to catch up with and copy it
- Sustaining quality in staff, through compensation and professional development
- Succession planning to anticipate retirements of core administrators
- Succession planning to anticipate recruitment of new Board members
- Continuing partnership with the Board to sustain a vibrant vision for the future and to provide the resources to support it
- Increasing compensation, with special attention to residential staff and teachers
- Building relationships with alumni and alumni families

*"Everything is half full about this place. Some schools accept what is, but Riverview is always about excellence. The bar is always being raised, not too high, but perfectly modulated."*

Parent

## PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The Board of Trustees expects candidates to present the requisite qualifications: graduate and post-graduate degrees relevant to the task and significant successful executive experience in comparable settings, whether public and/or private. In addition, candidates should:

- Know and have experience in the special education field
- Know the impact of medical and neurological disabilities
- Understand Riverview’s public dimensions as they pertain to funding, permitting, licensure, advocacy, etc.
- Understand “the journey” of Riverview’s students, providers, and parents
- Have abundant energy and vision
- Be comfortable with complicated school finances
- Embrace the complexities of boarding school life
- Understand fully both internal and external demands of this complex job

## PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Riverview has enjoyed excellent leadership, providing not only an excellent foundation on which to build, but also setting a high bar for community expectations going forward. Those expectations include these qualities, among others:

- Be a team player
- Possess humility
- Be of impeccable integrity
- Build relationships and community
- Have a high EQ and empathy for all
- Be high tech, but also high touch

## APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Candidates are asked to submit two electronic files, WORD or PDF. The first should contain a cover letter explaining the candidate’s interest, a resume, and a statement of educational philosophy. The second should contain the names and contact information of five references.

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