

# RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT



PK-12 Curriculum Audit  
Summer, 2021



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# Introduction

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Chapter PI 8 of the [School District Standards](#) stipulates that

Each school district board shall develop, adopt and implement a written school district curriculum plan which includes the following: A kindergarten through grade 12 sequential curriculum plan in each of the following subject areas: reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, computer literacy, environmental education, physical education, art and music. Each sequential curriculum plan shall specify objectives, course sequence, course content, resources, an objective process of determining whether pupils attain the specified objectives, and an allocation of instructional time by week, semester and school term. The school district board shall establish in the school district curriculum plan the allocation of instructional time, by week, semester and school term, among all subject areas (WI DPI <https://dpi.wi.gov/science/elementary/why>).

In January, 2021, newly hired District Administrator Loren Glasbrenner contacted CESA 3 about supporting continuous improvement efforts. After reading a sample audit report from another district, he stated, “This is what we need.” Lisa Arneson developed a proposal for a district curriculum audit, which was subsequently approved, and the audit began in March, 2021 with Lisa Arneson and Brad Van Epps conducting the work on behalf of CESA 3.

To start, auditors examined district performance on statewide assessments, federal accountability measures, and local assessment results. In addition, various documents and the district website provided context and additional data for reporting. A data summaries are embedded within the report

The primary methodology for the audit was focus groups, as teams of educators were pulled together for focus group sessions with either Arneson or Van Epps on specific content areas from March-May, 2021. At the elementary level (PK-4), grade level teams met to provide information on the core content areas, while in grades 5-12, teachers of related contents met in departments for the focus groups. The general questions were the same for all groups. Most of the sessions were recorded so the audio could be transcribed at a later date for accuracy in reporting, but some written notes were also taken when warranted.

This report is organized by topic, with a Table of Contents (on top of page 1) complete with bookmarked links to help readers navigate directly to topic(s) of interest. Each topic includes statutory and data findings, descriptions of current practices, as well as recommendations for further discussion in areas that warrant attention. An Executive Summary is provided for those seeking a brief overview of recommendations.

# Executive Summary

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A curriculum audit is designed to articulate the current state of curricular programs and practices across a district. The many recommendations included in this report are designed to push existing practices toward excellence and more equitable outcomes for all students. It is impossible to address everything at once. Teachers and leaders should be thoughtful and purposeful about the order in which improvement strategies are implemented so that a cohesive, collaborative, multi-year plan can be developed for each building and the district as a whole.

Much of this work falls upon the shoulders of teachers. As knowledgeable professionals, they deserve the time, training, and trust to be successful in implementing the changes asked of them. Their voices should be integral in improvement planning resulting from this audit, and equal attention should be given to what can be removed from their workload in order to elevate these improvements.

This summary includes those recommendations with high-leverage practices that have the potential for greatest impact on measurable outcomes for all students. The report in its entirety contains additional recommendations and more specific details.

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## Elementary School

- Strengthen the quality of universal/tier 1 literacy instruction K-4 with specific high-leverage, research-supported practices in all classrooms so that fewer students are in need of (intensive) intervention. In addition to time, this will require training, coaching, collaboration, and administrative support. Efforts should be monitored, evaluated, and adjusted over time, as needed, and plans should be made for refresher activities for experienced staff and onboarding for new staff every year. Many of these practices can/should be used in other content areas for greatest impact.

## Middle School

- Examine more flexible grouping options for students in lieu of leveled math courses so that all students have access to and become proficient with grade level standards. Among other things, this will require professional development for the teaching staff to empower them in implementing instructional strategies to better support all students, as well as time to collaborate with one another to monitor, evaluate, and adjust, as needed. Administrative support will be key, particularly with scheduling.
- Improve practices to build independent reading for all students by moving beyond reliance on Accelerated Reader. While teachers have observed benefits with this program, it does not benefit all children, and they could see even more success by expanding options and improving practice in order to create lifelong readers. Professional development, opportunities to co-plan with library media staff, and collaboration time is needed.

## High School

- Revamp mathematics courses and support to ensure that “every student has common outcomes in the first two years of high school, denoted as (F2Y), as well as a third year of further mathematics. Together this completes the 3 years of mathematics required for graduation in Wisconsin state statute.” ([WI Standards for Mathematics](#), 2021)
- Develop, identify, and market unique programs and opportunities available for all students. For example, CTE programming and dual credit opportunities greatly impact students and their lives after graduation, especially students with IEPs and students from poverty. Celebrate and promote existing opportunities and explore opportunities to build more.

## District

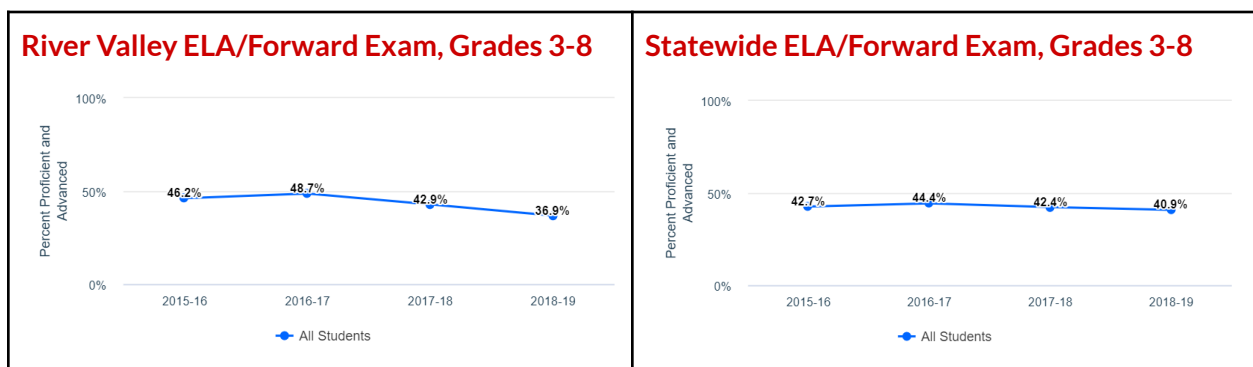
- Make a concerted effort to improve the overall culture of teaching and learning across the district by establishing a culture of high expectations for all students. Shifting the paradigm to a strength-based/asset-based approach will aid in this work, as will adopting shared values and beliefs. Improving culture will likely have the biggest impact on equitable outcomes for all students and improved teacher practices, but it will also take the most time to build.
- Focus on inclusive practices for all students, which will require further examination into how and where instruction is delivered, as well as classroom environments. Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a foundational framework will provide a lens through which equitable practices can be elevated for the benefit of all students.
- Identify standards-based learning targets for all courses and provide teachers time to collaborate on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.

# Literacy

[Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), [High School](#)

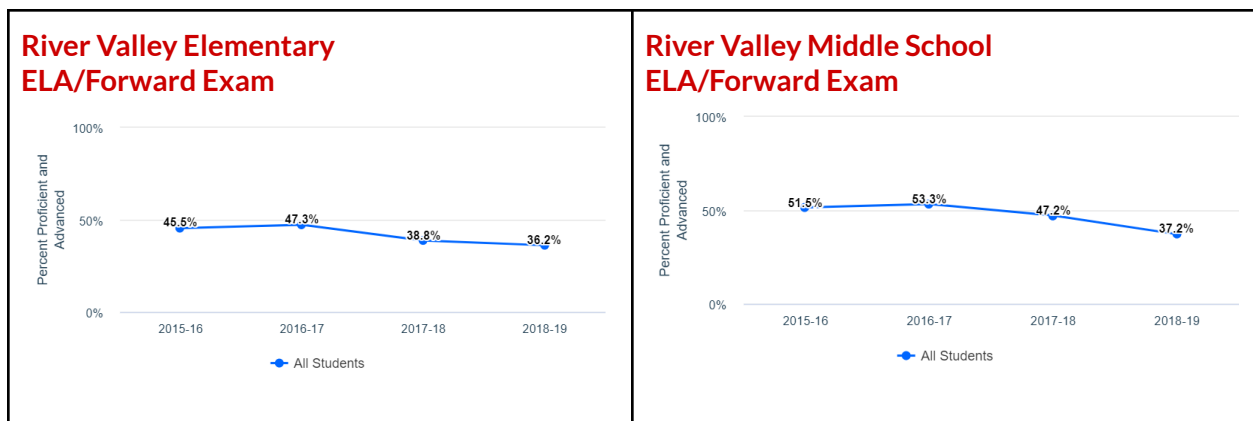
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State assessment data trends in English Language Arts indicate that River Valley students in grades 3-8 had a slight downward trajectory in proficiency rates from the spring of 2016 through the spring of 2019. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic precluded testing from 2020, and the most current results from 2021 are not yet available as of this writing. While local students scored above the state in most years, students in River Valley did not score as well in 2018-19.

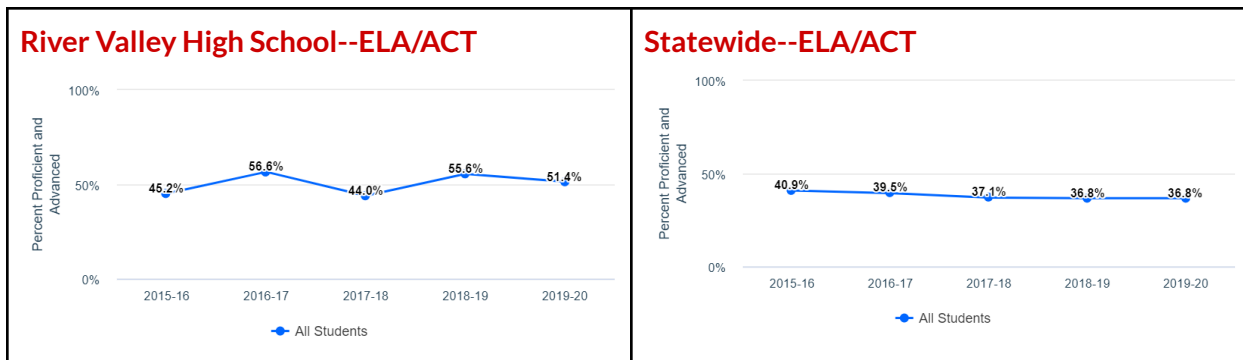


WISEdash Public, accessed 6/8/21

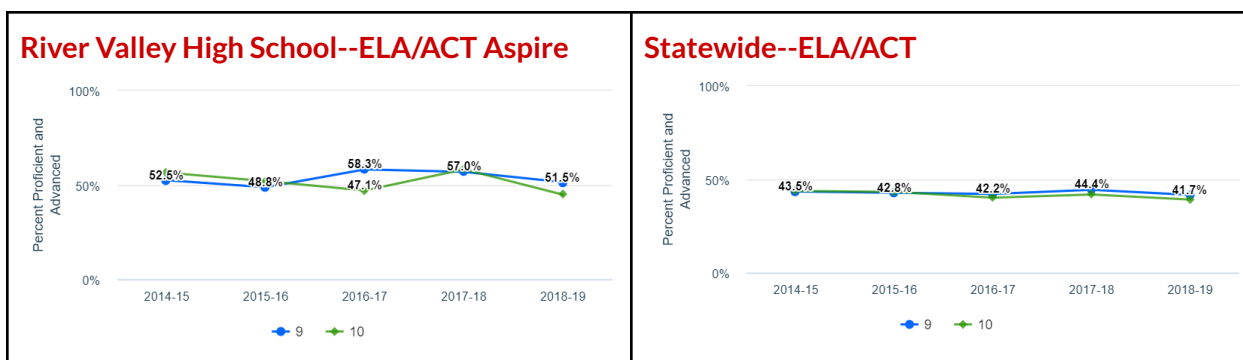
Examining ELA scores from the Forward Exam at the school level indicates similar proficiency rates on the 2018-19 assessment at just above 35%. The middle school had proficiency rates of over 50% in both the spring of 2016 and 2017 before the downward trend, which is noteworthy in CESA 3.



ACT results for 11th graders indicate a fairly consistent proficiency rate of above 50% in three of the five years shown, scoring above the state each year.



The district's 9th and 10th graders take ACT Aspire each spring, and five-year trends there indicate that River Valley students score above the state in both grades. Proficiency rates are near 50% in both grades for all years, as well.



Local assessment data comes from the Renaissance Star assessment, given to students three times a year in fall, winter, and spring.

These assessment measures tell only part of the story and more inquiry and investigation is required to get more information. Through a broad lens, though, between 50% and 65% of students in River Valley are not proficient with grade-level standards in English language arts, indicating the need to examine the universal curriculum and the support given to all students.

### Elementary School

The basal series Journeys (2014) was adopted in grades K-4 after it was piloted in Lone Rock in 2014. "Each grade level went down to Lone Rock to observe a lesson" and review the books. Staff reports that the teachers who used it "raved about it." According to teachers, the district made this selection because they were lacking an ELA curriculum at that time. Instead, teachers were using "a hodge podge of things" with "everyone doing their own thing."

[EdReports.org](http://EdReports.org) does not provide a review of Journeys (2014) so additional sources were consulted to examine the level of quality and alignment to state standards. [Achieve the Core](http://Achieve the Core) has done considerable work with Journeys (2014) and has made recommendations for adapting it to

improve overall quality and alignment to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). *\*Note that Wisconsin has adopted [revised ELA standards](#) in 2020 that differ slightly from the CCSS.*

There was a two-day training at the time of adoption, with no training for staff on using Journeys (2014) since. Staff hired since that time rely on their colleagues to help them learn to use the basal series. Additionally, there are components of the series, like the digital platform, that are not used because teachers reported not knowing how. In addition, multiple teachers referenced a lack of training in standards, indicating that they don't know how well the series is aligned to the standards.

Teachers report differing expectations on how Journeys (2014) was to be used from its adoption. A common response was "we were supposed to be using it with fidelity." However, teachers shared different ideas on what they thought fidelity meant based on interactions with the building principal at the time-- from "you didn't miss a beat of what's in the book" to "I definitely don't feel like it meant everything. I felt that it meant that he wanted everyone on board." Currently, there seems a lack of consistency in the use of Journeys, with one grade level using another resource entirely.

Staff identified pros and cons with Journeys (2014). Some like the stories, especially the combination of fiction and nonfiction text, while others do not think the text selections are high quality and engaging for students. According to some, "writing is lacking, I don't necessarily like the workbook pages. Many mentioned that "We go out to buy a lot on TPT to supplement Journeys."

The intervention process to provide additional support for students striving to meet grade level standards seems to warrant attention, as reported by both interventionists and classroom teachers. The district has interventionists supporting both reading and math needs at the elementary level. The current trigger for students to begin the process to work with an interventionist is scoring at the 15th percentile, which was lowered because of the high number of students scoring in the previous range of the 25th percentile. Teachers indicate frustration with the time and process necessary to get a student additional help. Interventionists indicate frustration with the lack of data use and tier 2 instruction occurring in the classroom.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- There are [research-based, recommended instructional practices](#) that should be included as part of high quality tier 1 literacy instruction at all grades at the elementary level. (N Duke, 2021) These should be present regardless of the resources used or the standards being taught, and while these are likely present in many classrooms, as [Nell Duke states so eloquently](#). "There's reading aloud to kids, and then there's reading aloud to kids the right way." In addition, Wisconsin has new [English Language Arts \(ELA\) Standards \(2020\)](#) reflecting some [changes](#) that warrant attention, particularly related to "the science of reading." Training all teachers in the necessary elements of high quality instruction at the



universal level might be a good first step to better equip them to address the ELA standards and meet the needs of all learners.

- Ensuring teachers better understand grade-level standards is important, and teams can continue the essential standards work they've previously started. Standards should be broken down into skills and learning targets, which will help teachers focus their instruction, assessment, intervention, and grading; it will also help parents understand what it is their children need to learn at different grade levels. Simply using "I can" statements from outside sources isn't enough, as this work has considerable value when teachers do it themselves.
- If Journeys (2014) remains the district's choice of foundational ELA instructional materials at the elementary level, teachers should spend considerable time working together to define fidelity, especially given the Early Learning Center and the Elementary School are different sites and teachers from the two buildings rarely have opportunities to collaborate with their peers. A good start would be to consult the work done by Achieve the Core in their [Materials Adaptation Project](#), which provides "recommendations to help Journeys users improve the effectiveness of their basal by setting aside less effective portions of the basal and devoting more attention to high-value texts and activities." This may lead to revision of existing pacing guides and essential standards.
- A clearly defined equitable multi-level system of support must be developed and implemented. All levels, from Tier 1 (universal) through Tier 3 must be defined, with consistent criteria and guidelines for effective support for all students. There must be regular communication and collaboration between interventionists and classroom teachers, and training is necessary to support classroom teachers in both Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies.

## **Middle School English**

The curriculum for middle school English Language Arts (ELA) has been built organically. All of the teachers are conscious of following the Common Core Standards and have identified standards that need the most attention, as well. It will be important for the team to examine Wisconsin's new ELA standards, adopted in 2020, to examine both the changes that have been made, but also to ensure that all of the language arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening ) are taught and assessed throughout the middle school grades.

Most resources and text choices are determined by the teacher who is responsible for that grade level. There is a Prentice Hall textbook for grades 6-8, but it's generally used only as a resource. There is some discussion among the three teachers who teach sixth grade Reading, but most staff dialogue happens as time permits. That sixth grade reading class curriculum, however, is an existing curriculum from a former RVMS teacher and is used by all of the teachers.

The MS English team takes care to talk about language using similar approaches and vocabulary and feel like that consistency is a strength for the department.

The team has mixed feelings about a new textbook series. There is a desire for continuity, scope and sequence concerns, a need to align the curriculum with what the students are learning in elementary school. A textbook might help with those things. One teacher said, “I think of it as the spinal cord of the curriculum.”

At the same time, teachers want to be responsive to the students sitting in front of them and desire the freedom to use their expertise to stray from the master plan to professionally address student needs in the moment. The team needs to meet and come to a consensus about the advantages of going, or not going, to a textbook series.

Finally, [Accelerated Reader](#) is used grades 5-8. Accelerated Reader is a digital platform purchased by the district that provides quizzes on books within a child’s reading level. The program is aligned to the Star reading test. Books are labeled with stars and levels so that students can easily choose books that are “just right” for them. Students read the book and take a computerized quiz of 5 or 10 questions. When quizzes are passed, students receive points. Many times, teachers set goals for their students to earn a specific number of points. The staff has a desire to continue this, but current research can not support its effectiveness. When studies do show gains by students who use AR, the results don’t identify which specific aspects of the program have led to the gains. Student choice, access to good books, and time to read can all be supplied to students without Accelerated Reader, and many accountability alternatives to the quizzes can be found.

In particular, the leveling of students and restriction of their choices needs to be addressed. Ultimately, the biggest factor for reading achievement is “time spent reading” and limiting student choice will have a chilling effect on that metric. Studies have also shown that setting point goals for a grading period can inhibit reading “I met my point goal, so I’m done” and create frustration around reading as an activity when students aren’t meeting their goals.

The ELA staff at RVMS is professional and insightful. The LMC director, very knowledgeable about motivating young readers, is ready to help. Working together they can come up with a plan that will exceed the benefits of AR.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- The use of Accelerated Reader should be examined, as experts have long questioned whether this program is beneficial in promoting lifelong love of reading. [What Works Clearinghouse](#) found “no discernible effects in reading fluency and comprehension for adolescent learners” using Accelerated Reader. One resource that might be helpful, and there are many, is Stephanie Harvey’s brand new book, [Intervention Reinvention](#), which focuses on systems to build students’ volume of reading.
- As part of meeting Wisconsin’s new [English Language Arts \(ELA\) Standards](#) (2020), the middle school ELA staff should examine their instructional practices across the language arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and implement those essential for high

quality universal literacy instruction for all students (see page 7+, [Essential Practices for Literacy Instruction in the Secondary ELA Classroom](#) (2021) from Michigan's Disciplinary Literacy Taskforce). Once these elements are in place, the staff should meet and come to a consensus regarding the need and desire for a textbook series.

## High School English

The HS English department has a fluid connection regarding curriculum, but would like more time to meet and do the work. "Whatever we do [re: curriculum work], we have to take the initiative and find the time within our schedules, so it would be nice to have some built-in time to meet as a department and to have a connection with the middle school."

The English staff has a strong preference for agency in curriculum work. If they are given flexibility in doing the work and creating an end product, they believe the time will be well-spent and the product will be most useful.

Students face a rigorous curriculum with AP classes and several electives. All students take four years of core classes with AP options at the junior and senior level. All other electives are open to all students who express interest. The teachers feel supported and express a willingness to expand their repertoires because they feel supported as professionals.

There is concern within the department that not enough attention is paid to equity. In particular data should be gathered regarding economically disadvantaged students. An effort is made by the English staff to give all kids access to opportunities like APT - all ninth graders attend a play most years, but are students from all income levels accessing challenging coursework? Data needs to be gathered, followed by a discussion about the findings. Also, the lack of access to technology for many students is an issue as schools move to more and more online work.

There is an acceptance by the staff of the role they need to play in classroom discussions and thinking regarding diversity, as well. All teachers are conscious of the books they are asking their kids to read and are making sure that the authors and characters represent a diverse world. Students are able to explore their thoughts and engage with others regarding difficult topics.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- As part of meeting Wisconsin's new [English Language Arts \(ELA\) Standards](#) (2020), examining current instructional practices and comparing them to those essential for high quality universal literacy instruction for all students (see page 7+, [Essential Practices for Literacy Instruction in the Secondary ELA Classroom](#) (2021) from Michigan's Disciplinary Literacy Taskforce).
- Continuing the department's laudable efforts in equity and diversity, perhaps exploring ways to model to other educators or collaborate on cross curricular projects on social justice topics

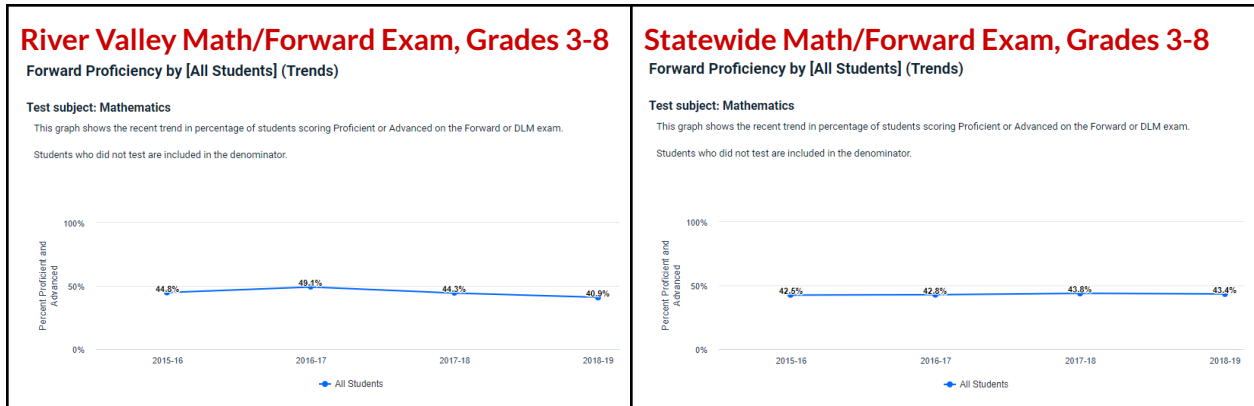
- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.

# Mathematics

[Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), [High School](#)

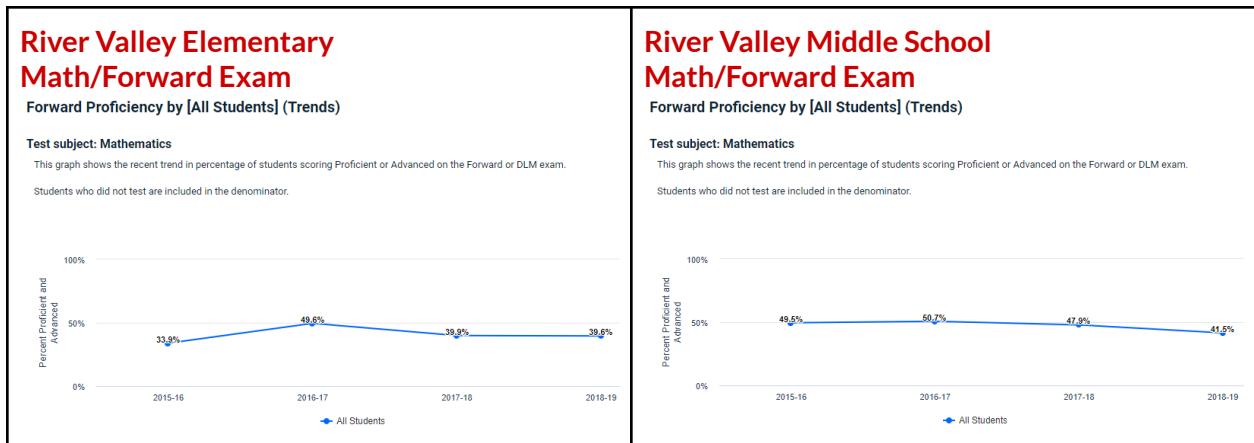
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A five year trend of the Forward exam outcomes in mathematics indicates approximately 45% of students in grades 3-8 are proficient in mathematics each year. This is in line with statewide results.



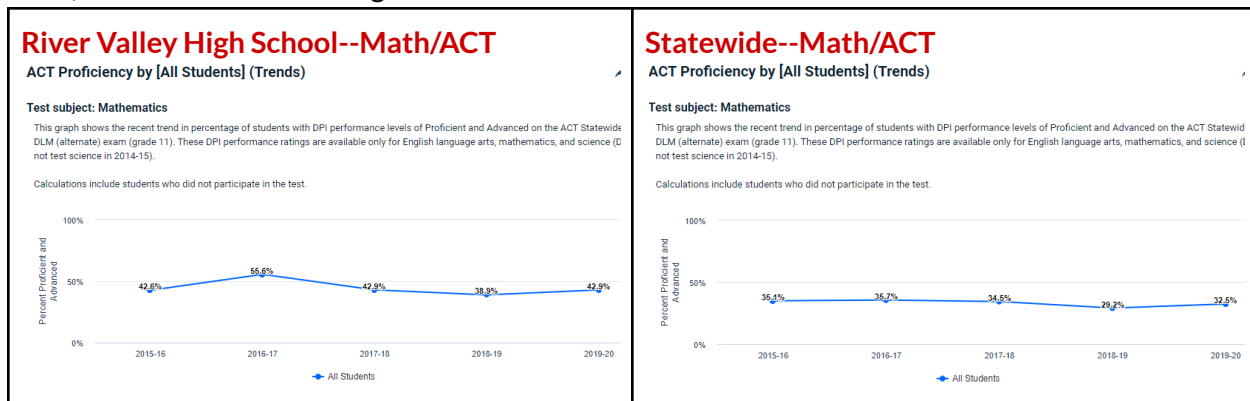
WISEdash Public, accessed 6/9/21

Disaggregating outcomes for the elementary and middle school, we see slightly higher outcomes in grades 5-8, with proficiency rates ranging between 41 and 50% in mathematics.



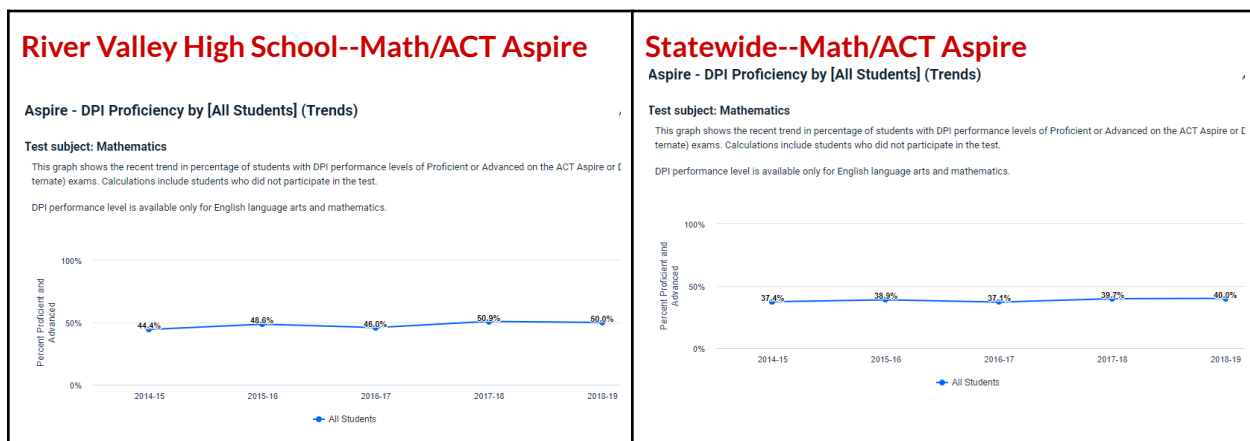
WISEdash Public, accessed 6/9/21

River Valley 11th graders scored at or near 40% proficient on the math ACT in four of the five years from 2015-16 to 2018-19, with an average score of 20.2 out of 36. This is also above the state, where we see an average score of 19.4.



WISEdash Public, accessed 6/9/21

Approximately half of the ninth and tenth grade students taking the ACT Aspire exam in mathematics score proficient over a five year period. This is consistently above the state during that same period. In 2018-19, the average scale score for 9th graders was 428, which is proficient, compared to the 10th grade average of 429, which is below proficient. Examining scale scores more in depth would allow a glimpse into student growth over time as individuals, as student groups, and as grade cohorts.



WISEdash Public, accessed 6/9/21

Wisconsin's [revised standards in mathematics](#) were adopted in June 2021, and central to the teaching and learning of mathematics are the [Standards of Mathematics Practice](#); "the practices describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students." (WI DPI) When asked, most of the teachers in the district were not aware of the new standards and unfamiliar with any of the shifts proposed by the state's Math Standards Advisory Committee.

## Elementary Mathematics

Math Expressions Common Core (2013) is used consistently throughout the elementary as the primary resource for math instruction. It was selected in 2014 by a group of teachers who reviewed numerous programs. One teacher remembers, “We had a rubric, a series of discussion questions, and were really looking for something that had scaffolding and built up.” Previously the district used Everyday Math. EdReports.org [review](#) of Math Expressions Common Core (2013) found that the program does not meet the expectations for alignment (to the CCSS standards) and, therefore, was not reviewed for usability in grades K-5.

Teachers received training in using Math Expressions Common Core (2013) when it was adopted. One teacher stated, “Those trainings are so broad we only take tiny little bits out of it.” Since that time, however, there has been none, and no formal way to support teachers new to the district/grade level in its use. One new teacher described their experience as follows: “When I first started, I knew we would be doing Math Expressions, and I got the teachers manual and everything. But other than that, it was ‘There you go, see you in September.’ There’s not really anything for incoming teachers.” Most elementary teachers wish for grade-level professional learning and coaching in using the program so they can go more in depth with specific material for their grade level.

There are pros and cons to the program. Teachers indicate that they like Math Expressions Common Core (2013) because it establishes a common language across grade levels, and the skills and content spirals.

Some drawbacks of Math Expressions Common Core (2013) include the amount of reading students are required to do in order to solve math problems. The program also offers multiple methods to solve problems, many of which are not the traditional way teachers and parents are used to. This can be confusing to students because they don’t have the opportunity to practice one method in depth before another is introduced. It also can be a barrier for parents supporting children with math at home.

Some grade levels use the [FastBridge](#) math screener, as well as Star math assessment. A variety of digital tools are used to support mathematics instruction in the district.

The [Guided Math structure](#) is used in some classrooms to support small group instruction because individual teachers have had training on their own in the past. It is not consistently used, nor has there been formal training at the district level. One teacher said of Guided Math, “It’s a way for us to support each little group grouped in their ability levels. There’s more discussion, and we can meet their needs.” Another teacher explained that with Guided Math, they have a chance to hear what students are thinking, which was never evident with whole group instruction.

The intervention system in place was described in the literacy portion of this report; it is the same for students needing math support.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- A clearly defined equitable multi-level system of support must be developed and implemented. All levels, from Tier 1 (universal) through Tier 3 must be defined, with consistent criteria and guidelines for effective support for all students. This should be a fluid process to allow movement in and out of supports based on progress. There must be regular communication and collaboration between interventionists and classroom teachers, and training is necessary to support classroom teachers in both Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies, as well as formative assessment strategies so as to move beyond an over reliance on Star results.

### **Middle School Math**

The staff is happy with the problem solving and cooperative work asked of students in the [Connected Mathematics Program](#) (2014) from Michigan State University. The state Forward Exam questions are “exactly what students see in our curriculum.” Also, the blend from Math Expressions at the elementary school to this middle school curriculum is a plus. [EdReports](#), though, has concerns about the *Focus and Coherence* of this program at the sixth and seventh grade levels. Given the experience of staff, the focus and coherence of *instruction* appears solid, so no change would be recommended, but the staff should look at the report and discuss.

Students are ability grouped, which has been “one of the most controversial educational practices for more than a century” (Steenbergen-Hu et al, 2016). It’s not clear whether the grade level curriculum is offered to all students. As one teacher stated, “...if we’re going to move away from the ability grouping and have a more inclusive classroom, I need to learn more about how to do it. I feel like I fail my bottom kids and my top kids every day.” Finding and visiting area schools who are able to organize *extra* time for math students who need that, while still delivering the core curriculum could be explored.

There is an interventionist at the 6-8 grade level who supports students in both reading and math. Providing time for the staff and the interventionist to meet and plan together would help the students served by the interventionist. These meetings could also be used to identify students in need of intervention. Using STAR scores, which are generated three times per year in most cases, to determine participation is less responsive to what the kids’ needs are at any given time, and your kid/content experts could make those placements flexibly and effectively through the use of formative assessments.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Examining more flexible grouping options for students in lieu of leveled math courses so that all students have access to and become proficient with grade level standards. While research indicates that ability grouping can be effective to a small degree in within-class groups and gifted populations ([Steenbergen-Hu et al, 2016](#)), attention is warranted as to how this practice “affect(s) students’ experiences in school, including the courses they take, the curricula they receive, the peers with whom they learn, and the teachers who provide

instruction” (Steenbergen-Hu et al, 2016). Refer to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics’ (NCTM) [Catalyzing Change in Middle School](#) to begin critical conversations about middle school math. Regardless, teachers need time, training, and trust to effectively shift their practice.

- Developing and implementing clearly defined equitable multi-level system of support. All levels, from Tier 1 (universal) through Tier 3 must be defined, with consistent criteria and guidelines for effective support for all students. This should be a fluid process to allow movement in and out of supports based on progress. There must be regular communication and collaboration between interventionists and classroom teachers, and training is necessary to support classroom teachers in both Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies, as well as formative assessment strategies so as to move beyond an over reliance on Star results..
- Co-teaching may be a strategy worth exploring, as interventionists and special educators could bring support into the classroom in middle school math classes.

## High School Math

There are several opportunities for students to earn college credit in Math: AP Stats, AP Calculus, and Pre-Calculus (Math 4). On the other end, students can take Algebra 1 or a two year sequence of the same class: Algebra A and Algebra B. There is also a unique class called Math 1 that emphasizes algebra and geometry skills.

A stated goal by the department is to get as many students to Algebra 2 as possible.

However, as a consequence of the ability grouping at the middle school, many students “self-track” through Algebra A, B, and Math 1, meaning that some students are asked to do tenth grade math in tenth grade, and others may never get there. According to a special ed teacher, “Once you get on that track, you can’t get out of it. There isn’t an opportunity to change course. There’s no math disability. No one has ever challenged tracking. Just because they have a learning disability in reading doesn’t mean they don’t have other strengths.”

The Math staff is rightfully concerned about kids' learning and likelihood of success in more rigorous classes, but the current sequence establishes a path that does not give some kids much opportunity to progress. The intentions are well-meaning and understandable, but consideration should be given to an alternative - “double dose Algebra”. Instead of a two year class, identified students would take a two period Algebra class their freshman year, doubling the time they spend in math class. Here’s some research about the approach:

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512287.pdf>

The result of this change would mean that all of your students would be in line to start Geometry as sophomores and have the possibility of reaching Algebra 2 by junior year.



The department should also discuss Math 1. If double dose sounds like the right approach, is Math 1 still needed? If yes, does it need to change, or will its original purpose still be useful?

Recommended points for further discussion include:

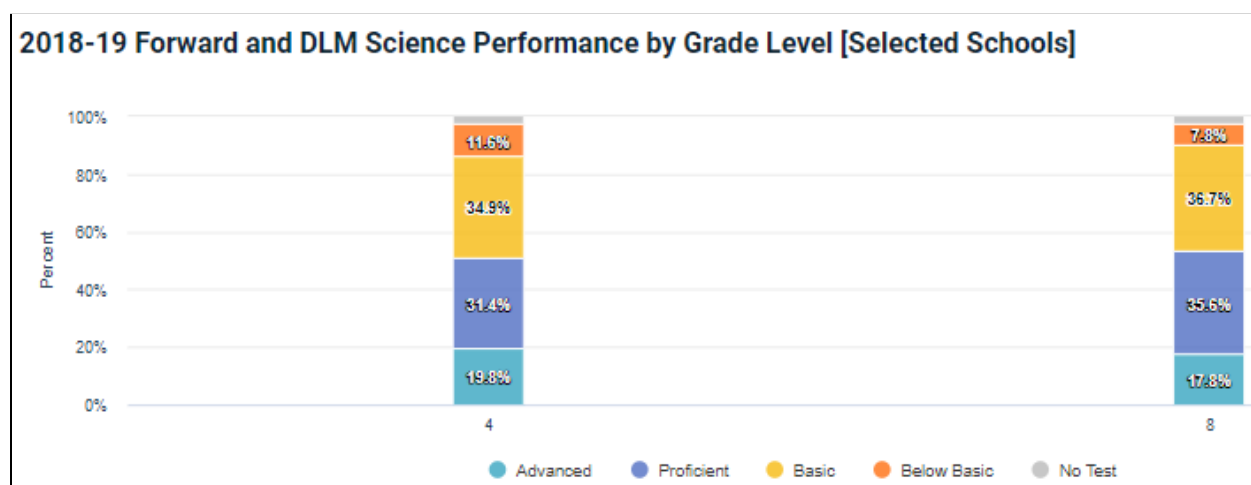
- Revamping 9-12 course offerings/sequence in mathematics to ensure that each and every student has the mathematical experiences necessary to increase their opportunities for personal and professional success. This is both a state and national movement. Examine NCTM's [Catalyzing Change in High School Mathematics](#) to begin these critical conversations. Also, utilize the [revised WI state standards](#) (2021) and research recognizing that every student needs to have some common outcomes in the first two years of high school, denoted as (F2Y), as well as a third year of further mathematics. Together this completes the 3 years of mathematics required for graduation in Wisconsin state statute.

## Science

[Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), [High School](#)

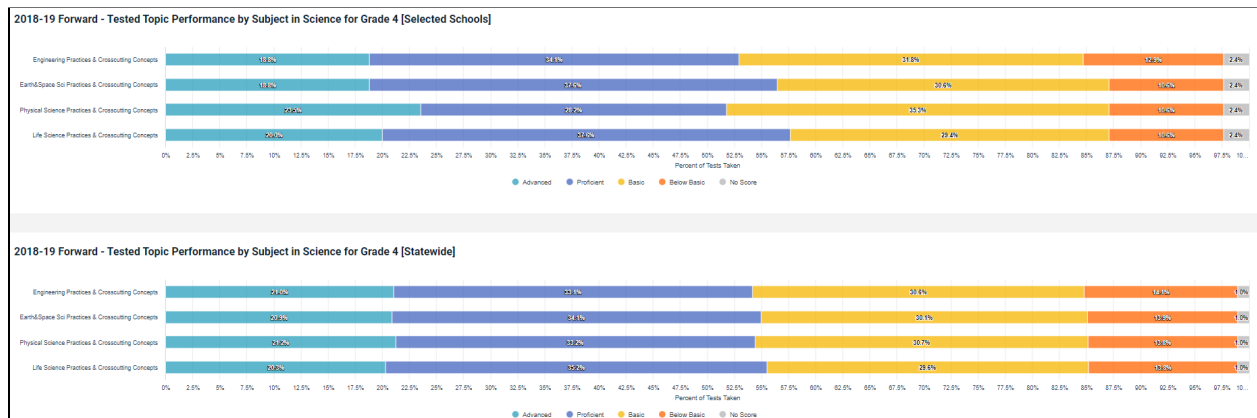
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In November of 2017 Wisconsin adopted new [standards for science](#), largely based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and those standards have been included on the Forward Exam in both 4th and 8th grade since 2019. State assessment results in science indicate that as a whole, River Valley 4th and 8th graders score above the state at or above 56% proficiency rate from 2015-16 - 2017-18. When disaggregated, 4th graders score at or above 52% during the same period, while 8th graders score higher, ranging from 57-62% proficiency. The bar chart below illustrates science performance levels for River Valley students in grades 4 and 8 from 2018-19.



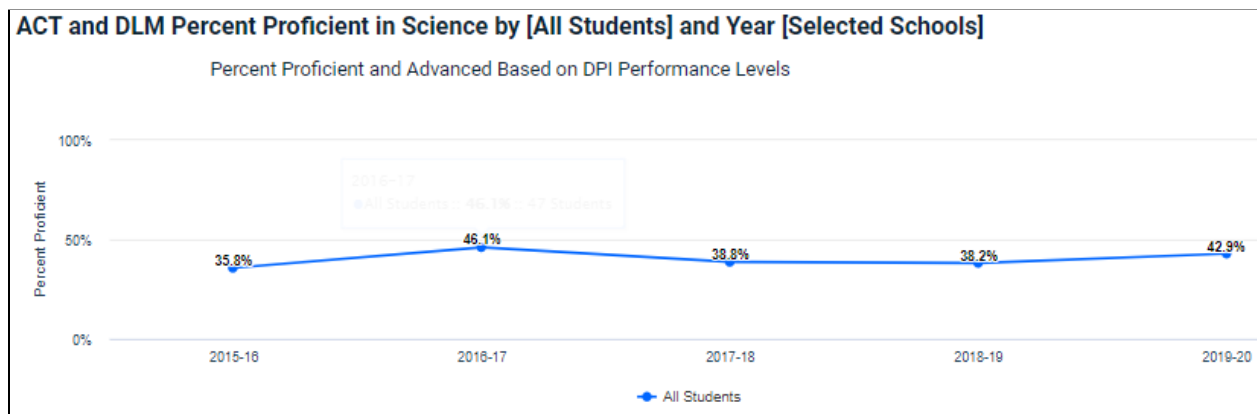
WISEdash for Districts allows users to examine performance on tested topics, as shown below, allowing educators to compare outcomes to local assessments, as well as use to update curriculum

and learning targets. Below, 4th grade results show River Valley outcomes (top) compared to the state (bottom).



Science results for 11th grade students taking the ACT show a five year trend of between 35% - 46% of students scoring at proficient or advanced.

The content of the science test includes biology, chemistry, physics, and the Earth/space sciences (for example, geology, astronomy, and meteorology). Advanced knowledge in these subjects is not required, but knowledge acquired in general, introductory science courses is needed to answer some of the questions. The science test stresses science skills and practices over recall of scientific content, complex mathematics skills, and reading ability. ([ACT Description of the Science Test](#))



## Elementary

As previously noted, Wisconsin's PI 8 requires a written K-12 curriculum plan for science, as well as "regular instruction" instruction each week for the entire school term" in grades K-4. (WI DPI) However, there is no formal science program or foundational resource at the elementary level, nor are teachers aware of specific expectations related to science teaching and learning. Primary teachers noted textbooks from 2003 sitting on shelves in their classrooms as their only resource, and most teachers K-4 self-identify science topics to teach. The resources most used/mentioned throughout the focus groups were [Mystery Science/Mystery Doug](#), [Scholastic News](#), and Teachers Pay Teachers. According to one teacher, "I need more direction on what I'm supposed to do. I

don't know if it's the best or the right thing to do. I know it's not a priority for us at all, but kids love it."

Teachers at every grade level mentioned The Stem Lab, which is a room in Spring Green Elementary dedicated to housing all science materials from Arena, Plain, and Lone Rock elementary schools after consolidation. Due to grant funding at individual schools, there are myriad resources that include...

Teachers were paid for four hours to organize the space into one district collection of STEM resources. "We have a room but we never really had time to get it all together. We wanted to really turn it into something. Our dream would be to bring someone in to teach science lessons, make it an exciting place for kids to go do science."

The [statutory requirements](#) for environmental education are included here due to the close connection to science, though the topic is considered a stand-alone:

State law requires that every school district develop and implement a kindergarten through grade 12 sequential curriculum plan for environmental education. In addition, environmental education objectives and activities shall be integrated into the kindergarten through grade 12 sequential curriculum plans, with the greatest emphasis in art, health, science and social studies education [see Wisconsin Administrative Code PI 8.01(2)(k)]. (WI DPI)

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Defining a clear [vision of science education](#) in the district is an important first step. Ensuring stakeholder involvement and communicating the vision will provide focus for the work. All decisions will be guided by the vision.
- Establishing a K-12 science scope and sequence will ensure staff at all levels know what to teach and are able to identify clear and specific goals for science teaching and learning. Consider using the models and resources on the [DPI website](#) to guide this work. The [Wisconsin Standards for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability](#) should be included as they relate.
- Identifying consistent grade-level expectations for "regular science instruction" at the elementary level to meet statutory requirements. Since time in the schedule is often a barrier; consider these [DPI resources](#) to establish structures and strategies for integrating and prioritizing science. Once that is established, include plans to fund science supplies, establishing a space in each building designated for everything teachers need for the hands-on labs in their curriculum.

### **Middle School Science**

The MS Science department employs a curriculum provided by Kesler Science, an online resource by Chris Kesler. The teachers inherited a brand new textbook purchase that was clearly above grade level.

Kesler Science provides many instructional materials that address the Next Generation Science (NGSS). The teachers have purchased lesson plans, inquiry labs, activities, bell-ringers, and interactive notebooks. Everything is there for grades 6-8.

Fifth grade uses many resources - Brain Pop, Mystery Science, Generation Genius, etc. “We try to be as hands-on as possible. That’s how fifth graders learn best.

On occasion, the textbooks are used for supplemental instruction, but the vast majority of content is generated through Kesler Science...”or from other places like Teachers Pay Teachers, but being very cautious about what I pull from Teachers Pay Teachers. Sorry, Sun Prairie.” (This comment was repeated several times during various interviews. River Valley teachers understand that professionalism requires they use strong, thorough analysis of the resources they use with students.)

In Earth Science at the 8th grade level, Kesler Science comes up a bit short on the subject of climate change, so modules for a consortium out of Concord supplement the unit.

The MS Science department feels ready to do the work to communicate their curriculum. They are looking forward to getting the time to create their scope and sequence.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Defining a clear [vision of science education](#) in the district is an important first step. Ensuring stakeholder involvement and communicating the vision will provide focus for the work. All decisions will be guided by the vision.
- Establishing a K-12 science scope and sequence will ensure staff at all levels know what to teach and are able to identify clear and specific goals for science teaching and learning. Consider using the models and resources on the [DPI website](#) to guide this work. The [Wisconsin Standards for Environmental Literacy and Sustainability](#) should be included as they relate.

## High School Science

The HS Science classes are aligned to the Next Generation Science (NGSS) with the exceptions of the AP courses which follow the College Board curriculum, Anatomy and Physiology which is articulated with UW-Richland (agreement ending), and Medical Terminology which is aligned with Madison College.

The general sequence of courses has changed in recent years to align more with the NGSS. In particular, meeting the physical science standards motivated the staff to make the changes. Freshman students take Biology, sophomores take Earth and Space Science, and Juniors take Chemistry or Applied Physics/Chemistry. There are several electives along with the AP classes to fill out the offerings for students.

River Valley science students have opportunities to earn college credit at the university and the technical college level, plus have paths during their junior and senior years to either get practical

content and skill for careers, challenges for university bound students, plus enrichment for students who enjoy science and would like to explore more.

Textbooks and resources serve different purposes and needs depending on the class. Generally, the textbooks are used as resources, but a textbook for the Applied Physics/Chemistry class would be helpful to provide visual representations of content, as well as a reliable reference to use with kids who are missing class.

The staff would love more time to explore and become familiar with the NGSS and how those will help them build curriculum for their courses. Vince Mancuso has provided professional development work to the district regarding block scheduling, but the science teachers would love to work with him regarding NGSS. More than any other group, the science teachers would like guidance and an ongoing professional connection/resource person for their work.

The framework and talent are in place for this department. An investment in their professional development would be a wise choice. Tailoring the assistance to what the staff sees as most useful is highly recommended

The science staff approaches their work independently, often due to the content differences between the physical and life sciences and their respective backgrounds, but sharing work time together will promote shared goals and understandings.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

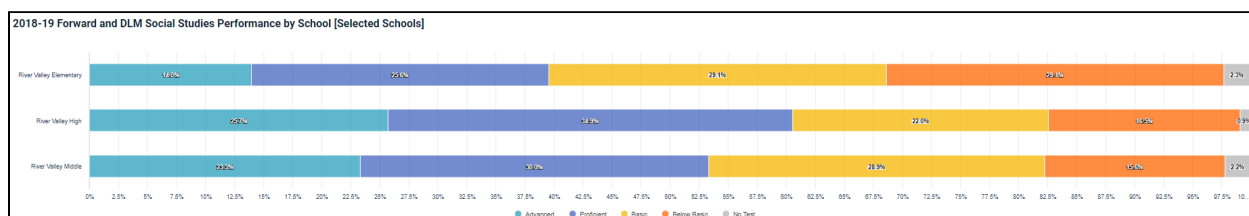
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- Examine equity and access to explore whether or not there are barriers for students who wish to participate in upper level classes. Disaggregating roster data can be a good first step. This is always a concern with elective courses, which are so important for students' growth and development.
- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.

# Social Studies

[Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), [High School](#)

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Social studies is tested each spring on the Wisconsin Forward Exam in grades 4, 8 and 10. A comparison of student performance levels per school from 2018-19 is below. In 4th grade, 39.6% of students scored proficient or advanced, while 53.3% of 8th graders and 60.6% of 10th graders scored similarly. Note that these results are not reflective of the most recent revision of the [Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies](#) (2018), which were tested for the first time in 2021. (K McDaniel, [Updates on the Wisconsin Social Studies Forward Exam Changes](#))



Per Wisconsin Statute, students in grades K-8 are to have "regular" instruction in social studies. "Regular" is defined as [instruction each week for the entire school term in sufficient frequency and length to meet district curricular requirements](#). See Elementary [Wis. Stat. sec. 121.02(1)(L)1] and Grades 5-8 [Wis. Stat. sec. 121.02(1)(L)2]. Grades 9-12 require access to an educational program that allows students each year to study social studies. See [Wis. Stat. sec. 121.02(1)(L)3]

Additionally, there are a number of statutes specifically related to social studies curriculum development:

1. Act 31 (American Indian Studies) requires districts to include instruction in the social studies curriculum in the history, culture and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in the state in at least two grade levels K-8 and at least one grade level 9-12.
2. The Holocaust Education Bill [requires](#) schools to include curriculum about the Holocaust and other genocides at least once in grades 5-8 and at least once again in grades 9-12. (As of this writing, guidance on this statute is forthcoming)
3. [Citizenship](#): Each school board shall provide an instructional program designed to give pupils:
  - a. An understanding of the basic workings of all levels of government, including the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.
  - b. A commitment to the basic values of our government, including by appropriate instruction and ceremony the proper reverence and respect for and the history and

- meaning of the American flag, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. constitution and the constitution and laws of this state.
- c. The skills to participate in political life.
  - d. An understanding of the function of organizations in society.
  - e. Knowledge of the role and importance of biological and physical resources.
  - f. Knowledge of state, national and world history.
  - g. An appreciation and understanding of different value systems and cultures.
  - h. At all grade levels, an understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans and Hispanics.
4. Each public and private school must display the U.S. flag, and in public schools, either the pledge of allegiance or the national anthem must be offered each day in grades 1-12. No pupil may be compelled to recite the pledge or sing the anthem [Wisc. Stat. [sec. 118.06](#)].
  5. Federal law requires any school district receiving federal funds to offer programming on the U.S. Constitution annually on September 17.
  6. Any student graduating from a public, charter, or choice school in Wisconsin must pass a civics test identical to the USCIS immigration test [Wisc. Stat. [sec. 118.33\(1m\)\(a\)](#)].

### **Elementary**

As a rule, elementary teachers did not have a social studies textbook or program, nor could they articulate social studies instructional expectations or knowledge of standards. Instead, many teachers said, “I use literature to address those topics. Scholastic News is really the only resource I’m utilizing.” Most teachers do not have time set aside in their schedule for social studies instruction, focusing instead on literacy and mathematics.

It is a common misconception among some staff that Wisconsin history is a required topic in fourth grade. That’s not true, according to Wisconsin DPI Social Studies Consultant Kristen McDaniel:

It is 100% tradition, not required in any way. That being said, understanding WI history, politics, etc is important, which is why our suggested S&S for grades 3-5 offers the chance to do WI Studies over three years. There is evidence from research that attaching local (WI) events to national events helps students understand both better.” (Email correspondence, May 20, 2021)

The 4th grade teachers use [Core Knowledge](#) for the ELA curriculum, and it is heavily based in world history, geography, history, and government; teachers bring in state history as it aligns to the core knowledge topics, giving students a current local perspective related to historical events they are already learning about.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Establishing consistent guidelines for social studies instruction, a scope and sequence based on content standards, and learning targets for each grade level. It is important to note: “The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study shows that social studies is the only subject

with a clear, positive, and statistically significant effect on reading improvement. In contrast, extra time spent on English Language Arts (ELA) instruction has no significant relationship with reading improvement.” ([Tyner & Kabourek, 2021](#))

- Ensure compliance with different statutory requirements related to social studies by embedding required content in curriculum maps

## **Middle School Social Studies**

The middle school Social Studies curriculum is US History in Grades 5 and 6, 7th grade Geography, and Civics in 8th grade. All classes are following the Wisconsin State Social Studies standards.

The experienced staff has moved in from the elementary and high school. All of the teachers use social media to network and gather ideas and resources.

The fifth and sixth grade classes follow the *Weekly Studies* curriculum. The teachers feel like this curriculum has a strength in being current and diverse. Geography’s textbook is McDougal-Littel’s *World Cultures and Geography* (This is a bit outdated, but still effective). Civics uses a textbook as a resource, but most of the lessons and units are built from various resources.

There is a commitment to using primary sources to learn history. The overall emphasis on Inquiry is clear. The importance of civic engagement and thinking like a historian are focussed on, as well. All of the teachers are responsive to student needs and current events. “We talked about what happened at our nation’s Capitol. That is important. That’s a historic event. I feel like I would be a poor Social Studies teacher if I didn’t.” All of the River Valley Social Studies teachers see the creation of involved, informed citizens as part of their jobs.

The staff is sensitive to diversity at the middle school and incorporates that concern into curriculum, as well as their interactions with students.

These teachers, in the past, have had time to collaborate on curriculum, but lost some of that flexibility this past year. They are committed to working together to help their students.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.
- Continuing the team’s laudable efforts in equity and diversity, perhaps exploring ways to model to other educators or collaborate on cross curricular projects on social justice topics

## **High School Social Studies**



The sequence of classes in Social Studies is World Studies for freshman, US History for sophomores. Starting junior year, offerings include AP History and semester courses in Psychology, Law, Psychology of Fear, Western Religious Thought, Current Events/Social Issues, and Political Science (Honors). River Valley students have many more options for electives than most schools. A third credit is required for graduation, so all students must take either AP History (year) or a minimum of two electives (semester).

In World Cultures, the curriculum is organized around the themes from an old textbook, but the teachers bring in multiple resources, Internet and primary resources, maps, infographics, etc.

US History and Psychology use a similar approach.

Law gets most of its resources from a network of people who have experience in law enforcement, medical experts, trial lawyers, etc. Psychology of Fear uses a text written by the instructor.

The Social Studies department was the only group that expressed concern about attendance as an equity issue.

When it comes to social justice and equity in day to day instruction, "There's really not a topic we won't dive into, unless it's local...not necessarily to give our opinion, but where do you want to go with this?" The Current Event class has a diversity unit, as well. "We try to stress culture because we're a little sheltered here."

The Social Studies department is like-minded, but due to the compartmentalized nature of the semester course assignments, they see the most value in time spent working on classes that they all teach together. Because of their experience together as a staff, they underestimate how much they have to offer one another when it comes to being responsive to current events and ideas, as well as to their students. Their curriculums are constantly being adjusted, so keeping their fingers on the overall pulse will be time well-spent. Asking "OK, I teach this unit and I just added lessons on \_\_\_\_\_, how does that fit into the whole picture of our curriculum?" might help teachers see the purpose of this work.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Examining equity and access to explore whether or not there are barriers for students who wish to participate in upper level courses. Disaggregating roster data can be a good first step. This is always a concern with elective courses, which are so important for students' growth and development.
- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.

# World Language

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Wisconsin state statutes require Wisconsin school districts to provide access to standards-based world language education in grades 7-12 (Wis. Stat § 121.02(1)(L)5). Roster data, disaggregated here by gender and students with disabilities, indicates the number of females, males, and students with IEPs take the Spanish courses offered in River Valley.

COURSE NAME	GENDER		SPED		Totals
	Female	Male	SwD	SwD	
	SwD	SwD	SwD	SwD	
Braille		1			1
Spanish Conversation and Culture	33	5	40	7	85
Spanish I	19	2	38	6	65
Spanish II	39	1	37		77
Spanish III	23		26	1	50
Spanish IV	17		15		32
Totals	131	9	156	14	310

However, in the case of world languages, it would be helpful for Spanish educators to know student outcomes on college entrance exams, which would indicate the number of students eligible for retroactive foreign language credit, available at many UW campuses. In contacting Dr. James Wollack, Director of the Center for Placement Testing for the UW System, he indicated that accessing this data is possible. In an email, he wrote:

...we are happy to provide you with summaries of your students' performance on any of the placement tests over the last three years if you can provide us with a text file or spreadsheet with the legal names, birthdates, and graduating year of your students. Because the scores themselves may not be particularly meaningful, we will share with you the proportion of students who place into various levels, using the cutscores for whichever campus you designate (email correspondence, June 4, 2021)

This is worth exploring further, in not only world language, but other content areas, as well.

River Valley currently offers up to five levels of Spanish for students in grades 8-12, with Spanish 1 available to 8th graders when student interest and class size warrant it. In addition, Spanish exploratory is offered to students in grade 7. World language is not a graduation requirement for students in the River Valley School District.

There are two Spanish teachers at the high school, one serving freshman and sophomore students in Spanish I and II, and the other instructing juniors and seniors in upper level Spanish courses. Only one teacher was available to provide information on Spanish curriculum and instruction for the focus group.

Spanish is taught with the comprehensive input based approach, in which the teacher provides meaningful interaction in the language being taught so that students acquire the language by hearing it. As the teacher describes,

Research shows that you acquire a language, you don't learn it. Learning the rules of the language--more grammar based, doesn't work. Studies show that when you hear things--you get that input. You're able to soak it in rather than learning the rules of the language.

The order of language acquisition is 1) listening comprehension, 2) writing and reading the language, and 3) oral language/speaking. The teacher said, "Eventually, they should be able to produce the language just by hearing the input so much."

The teacher goes on to say, "It is definitely harder for some students, but I would say, after the first year, they're able to adapt. It's a very different learning style. Very different teaching style."

The [Somos](#) curriculum, in use for three years, is used for Spanish I and II, while *Huallas*, a resource from Teachers Pay Teachers, is used for Spanish III and IV. Students in each level also read a novel chosen by the teacher.

The teacher indicated that any student who shows interest in Spanish can sign up. Reading scores and English grades are examined, however, because, according to the teacher, "If they're low in reading and English, that tends to correlate with lower success rates in learning a second language." With regard to students with IEPs, the Spanish teacher communicates regularly with the case manager and provides opportunities for extra time and/or modifications, if needed.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Examining equity and access to explore whether or not there are barriers for students who wish to learn Spanish. Disaggregating roster data can be a good first step. This is always a concern with elective courses, which are so important for students' growth and development.
- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.
- Exploring ways to obtain data on the number of students earning retroactive foreign language credit and continue studying Spanish in postsecondary settings (See [article](#)). In addition to working directly with the UW system, alumni surveys might be another way to gather more information. Retro credits can save students tuition dollars, which given the poverty rate of the district, would be a significant benefit for many.

## Counseling

[Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), [High School](#)  
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Four school counselors serve the district, with one serving PK-4 students at the Early Learning Center and Spring Green Elementary, one supporting student needs at the middle school, and two serving at the high school. Furthermore, at the high school, the two counselors have areas in which they concentrate, with one supporting Social Emotional Learning/Mental Health, while the other focuses on academic and career advising. Focus group discussions centered around the following topics: Social Emotional Learning (SEL)/Mental Health, College & Career Readiness, and Connections with Content Curriculum.

### **Elementary**

To support students with SEL and mental health, the counselor serves two buildings and goes into each classroom every week to teach a lesson with students, spending 15 minutes with PreK, 30 minutes with grades K-2, and 45 minutes with grades 3 and 4. There is no formal process, and in most cases, teachers stay in the room to reinforce the skills and use consistent language. Topics are “things pulled from life skills” with different curriculum resources used. Next year, [Choose Love](#) will be used, but [Everfi](#), [Second Step](#), and [Healthy Kids Learn More](#) were also mentioned. The counselor is concerned that anxiety among students is increasing and plans to organize a weekly lesson calendar to organize topics.

The counselor identified the need for a consistent system for behaviors, to establish protocol for how they are reported, addressed, and communicated. They also stated, “I would like a monthly theme that the entire staff focuses on” that would include “relearning/reteaching behaviors and using a common language on expectations.”

The counselor talked at length about the current support system in place to help individual students. A collaborative coaching team meets monthly, and teachers can sign up to come to ask for support and ideas for students who need additional support. The team in attendance brainstorms ideas and develops a plan for the teacher to try. According to the counselor, “we follow it each month and bring the child up again, to follow up and make people accountable.”

However, frustration was evident with what the counselor called the “roadblocks for the RtI Process,” because academic support is based on following the state’s SLD rule, which has specific requirements for time, duration, and record keeping. Indicating that following that rigid process wasn’t always best for kids, the counselor said that there is a “fine line between common sense and the rules.”

The counselor said of collaborative coaching, “we’ve tried so many different things and some have been a complete waste of people’s time. I think right now it’s more efficient, but I don’t know if it’s more effective.”

### **Middle School**

SEL support at the middle school looks similar, with the counselor teaching lessons with 5th graders for 45 minutes twice a month; 6th graders have 18 lessons, 45 minutes in length; 7th graders have an exploratory class for 9 weeks that focuses on learning for justice, and 8th graders meet with the counselor in quarterly meetings. In addition, the counselor works with individual

students who have been referred by teachers, parents, or friends, as well as small groups based on the connections survey. In this instance, students who indicate they have no connections to teachers or other students meet with the counselor for work in a social skills curriculum.

The counselor also organizes and attends weekly meetings with the principal, at-risk teacher, Rtl coordinator, nurse or ESL teacher to discuss the needs of individual students, plan interventions, referrals, and so on.

One concern expressed by the counselor is that “teachers aren’t consistent in writing behavior referrals.” Instead, they may have a face-to-face conversation to discuss a situation with the counselor, which then requires the counselor to deal with the situation twice—once in person, and then again in writing the necessary referral to document the incident.

The counselors pointed out that there are a number of outside services with which to connect students and families, including Oregon Mental Health, various county services and outreach, Upland Hills, Pauquette Center, and others. These resources are consulted on an as needed basis.

### High School

At the high school level, SEL skills are more targeted by class. For example, the counselor teaches one day a week in the freshman health class using the [DBT Skills](#) curriculum. In addition, teachers want to get together to focus on a Freshman support course that will include mental health and careers. At the Sophomore level, the English Teacher and history coordinated themes and the counselor worked with them to embed SEL skills. Finally, seniors are provided with strategies for success, where counselors come in as guest speakers for career topics, anxiety management, and soft skills

Academic and Career Counseling occurs in grades 9-12 during a monthly 45 minutes Blackhawk Academic and Career Planning (ACP) period. Students participate in the following activities:

- Xello scope and sequence used to guide activities
- Grade level activities
- Plan for field trips to workplace/campuses, etc.
- Use Xello course planner for course selection/registration

Also during this time, counselors try to give them more exposure to what’s out there given that people change careers often in life. Asking, Did you even know this job existed?

Counselors have a significant role in the scheduling process, registration day, and getting kids in line with offerings. They also do individual conferencing /scheduling meetings with students to guide decisions on electives., and once students pick classes, they can come in to meet with counselors. Teachers work together to develop a course sequence for their department, and counselors use that to guide student schedules. Advanced Placement (AP) courses have prerequisites, and at times, teacher recommendations are involved. The counselor said of this, “Recommendations are usually spot on--we have good luck.”

However, the counselors described what was called a “battle we see in the counseling office” during the scheduling process. In some cases, “even when kids meet the prerequisites, a teacher

will tell a kid “no.”” Some teachers recommend to students that they not take the next level course, to which the counselor said, “Classroom teachers should not have the power to say no to that.” While this was not described as widespread, the counselors agreed that there are “pockets of informal prerequisites.”

The counselors went on to point out that “Math is different and requires foundation skills so that’s different.” Math is the only content where counselors “look at levels starting w/ freshman” based on teacher recommendation. The counselor said,

Tracking in math creates a cohorted model for the other courses because we are so small. It bottlenecks some of the kids some of the time. It benefits the advanced kids because they can move so much faster. But if you split them up too much, there isn’t the modeling that students need from their peers. Some of my best groups are when I can include a role model.

It should be noted that this practices has been identified as a recommended point for further discussion for the math department.

Recommended points for further discussion include:

- Sharing responsibilities for Social Emotional Learning among all staff. Wisconsin’s [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#) include a full spectrum of behaviors, many of which can and should be taught in the classroom alongside content standards and included in the curriculum for all grades/courses. Consider modeling for others the cross-curricular and content collaboration that has been done with specific teachers (at the high school). This could be replicated with others more broadly throughout the school.
- Establishing a multi-level system of support for behaviors, ensuring a universal level of support, along with additional layers for students who need more support. Determine if this is a need for each building or if it should be a more unified system throughout the entire district.

## Student Services

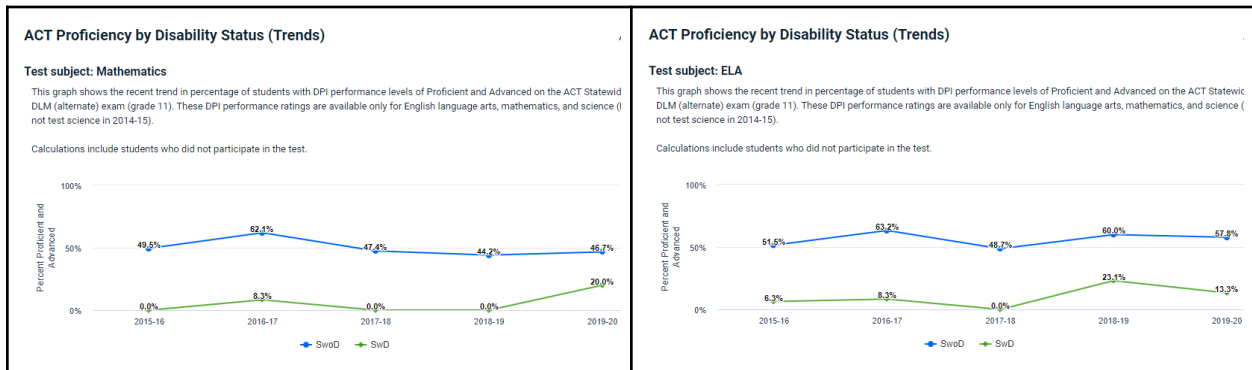
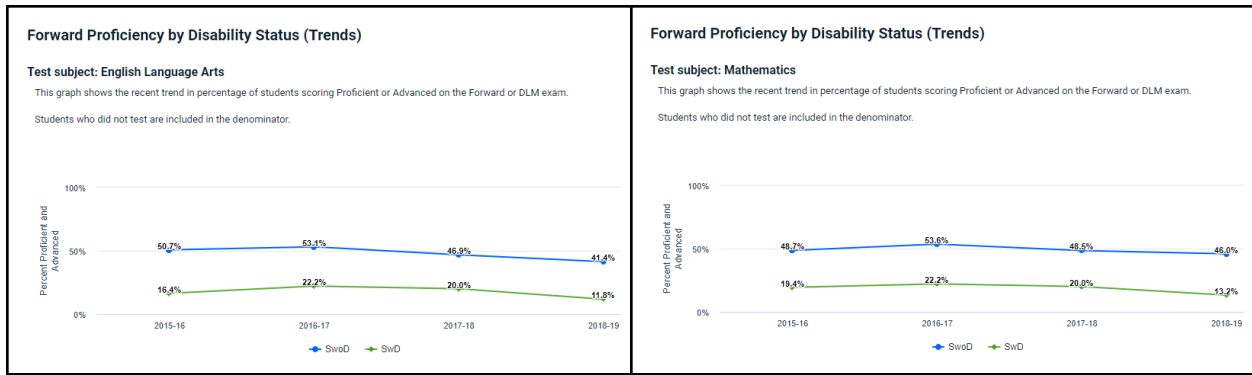
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Click on link to go directly to bookmarked subtopic:

[Special Education](#), [Title I](#), [Gifted & Talented](#), [English Learners](#)

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Disaggregated data indicates that students with disabilities greatly underperform their peers on state assessments in grades 3-8 and 11 in both reading and mathematics.



In addition, the district has been identified as “LEA Needs Improvement (Year 2+)” under federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) accountability measures. The report identifies a list of both results and compliance criteria that earn a district from 0-2 points each; the expectation is an overall score of 80%. River Valley scored a 72%, earning eight out of 16 points under “results.” The areas not receiving full points include:

- Graduation
- ELA and Math Assessment Participation
- Math Proficiency
- Education Environment (6-21)
- Education Environment (3-5)

Half of the lost points occurred in the two categories of Education Environment, which examines the amount of time special education students spend learning with their peers in the general education classroom instead of being pulled out to an alternate learning setting. Specifically, points are lost when more students do not spend at least 80% of their time with peers. The table below indicates a historical view of both age groups, and as the key denotes, increasing “A” for students ages 6-21 and “R1” for students ages 3-5 indicates

## School Age Education Environment

Beginning in 2020-21, this category includes children age 5 enrolled in kindergarten.

ED ENV	YEAR	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
A		83	47.7%	84	45.7%	95	52.5%	104	58.1%	104	60.1%
B		67	38.5%	74	40.2%	59	32.6%	48	26.8%	40	23.1%
C		13	7.5%	10	5.4%	8	4.4%	5	2.8%	8	4.6%
D				1	0.5%	1	0.6%	1	0.6%		
E		1	0.6%	1	0.5%	2	1.1%	4	2.2%	3	1.7%
F				1	0.5%						
J				1	0.5%	1	0.6%	2	1.1%	1	0.6%
I		10	5.7%	12	6.5%	15	8.3%	15	8.4%	17	9.8%
Totals		174	100.0%	184	99.8%	181	100.1%	179	100.0%	173	99.9%

## Preschool Education Environment by Age

Beginning in 2020-21, this category includes children age 5 only if not enrolled in kindergarten.

ED ENV	YEAR	2016-17						2017-18						2018-19						2019-20						2020-21							
		3		4		5		3		4		5		3		4		5		3		4		5		3		4		5			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
R5		1	33.3%	1	10.0%									1	20.0%	2	20.0%					3	33.3%										
R1		1	33.3%	1	10.0%	1	7.7%	1	16.7%	2	20.0%											1	11.1%	4	26.7%					5	50.0%		
R2				6	60.0%	12	92.3%	4	66.7%	8	80.0%	11	84.6%	1	20.0%	3	50.0%	10	100.0%			2	22.2%	7	46.7%			2	25.0%	2	20.0%		
R3				1	10.0%			1	16.7%					1	20.0%	3	30.0%			4	100.0%	3	33.3%	4	26.7%	1	33.3%	4	50.0%	2	20.0%		
R4		1	33.3%	1	10.0%							2	15.4%	2	40.0%													2	66.7%	2	25.0%	1	10.0%
Totals		3	99.9%	10	100.0%	13	100.0%	6	100.1%	10	100.0%	13	100.0%	5	100.0%	10	100.0%	10	100.0%	4	100.0%	9	99.9%	15	100.1%	3	100.0%	8	100.0%	10	100.0%		

## Key for Understanding Education Environments

Ages 3-5--Goal is to increase R1 and R3

Ages 6-21--Goal is to increase A

R1	Regular Class At Least 10 Hours Majority Sp Ed in Regular Class
R2	Regular Class At Least 10 Hours Majority Sp Ed in Other Location
R3	Regular Class Less Than 10 Hours Majority Sp Ed in Regular Class
R4	Regular Class Less Than 10 Hours Majority Sp Ed in Other Location



ED ENV	DESCRIPTION
A	Regular Class at Least 80%
B	Regular Class 40-79%
C	Regular Class Less Than 40%

Over the past five years, an improvement of nearly 15% indicates that more students with IEPs are being taught with their peers in the general education classroom. Even more improvement is visible with children ages 3-5. It is clear that special ed leadership has worked diligently to improve inclusive practices in recent years with notable outcomes. However, there is more work to do, and a unified effort is necessary for systemic change throughout the entire district. Special ed teachers in some buildings find that “no one holds teachers accountable for inclusion at all.” Teachers report that they would like inclusion training to be mandatory for all staff, including specific training on the language, law and best practices in special education. Also, teachers felt as though directives and messaging on practices supporting students with IEPs should be delivered by administration rather than teachers themselves sometimes having “to have hard conversations with [other] teachers.”

There were mixed feelings regarding their involvement in curriculum work. Some special ed teachers who have been part of grade-level discussions on power standards found it a “waste of time.” Others said, “I think it would be nice, even if they make the decision on what they feel their power standards are, just to know what they are would be really helpful. Just to know what we could really focus on for our teaching or for IEP, would be really helpful.” Another teacher said, we had “no part of curricular development or lesson plans. I am told [by the classroom teacher], “this is what we’re going to talk about today. We have a test on Thursday, you do the modifications.” Special education teachers often describe working with teachers who have “No learning targets or aligning assessments w/ targets and a lack of essential standards.” One said it would be most helpful for a classroom teacher to simply say, “this is what I most need you to know at the end of the course, end of the hour, etc.”

In-classroom support looks differently across the district. As one teacher said, "Special ed teachers are in the classroom to support our students as needed. We'll modify, maybe we'll modify, but mainly just assisting. To help behaviors, motivation, or take students outside for work time after the lesson, or maybe reteaching." When asked about co-teaching, another teacher said, "Co-teaching--that doesn't happen. That's a huge undertaking." However, when asked about co-teaching at the high school, special education teachers stated they were "given a book-- no consistency or common definition." One teacher said, "It didn't feel comfortable. I'm just showing up to be another person in the room. No hi, good morning. I wasn't utilized for what I could bring to the table."

A common topic in every focus group was the lack of time to collaborate with general education teachers. All teachers believe this is one area that must be established to make them more effective educators. Ideally, this would be "weekly early release to create consistent time for collaboration. We need ongoing conversations with tangible goals/outcomes. Meaningful work that ends in a product." Differences in practices, leadership, and culture across buildings became evident, as teachers from another building said, the "culture here does not support collaboration, sharing great practices, sharing ideas, etc. That's really sad." Additionally, some identified in their general ed colleagues a "lack of willingness to collaborate and willingness to change." Still others said, "Team meetings would be invaluable. To collaborate about students and ways to support them. These should be mandatory, and yet only one or two people show up." Regardless of collaboration time or meetings, special education teachers mostly felt that "if we need something, we just ask the teacher, and we'll usually get it."

Teachers also indicate a need for timely lesson plans from general ed teachers. According to one, "A week or Tuesday or Wednesday of the week would give me time to at least process what needs to happen." Currently, "It depends on the teacher. Some give us plans pretty far in advance, some not at all" Another said, "We're going in blind. We modify on the fly. Either they plan Sunday night or they run with what they've got and nothing gets modified for anyone." Some special educators mitigate the lack of lesson plans by filling binders of materials and use them year after year. It should be noted that once learning targets are developed, it would be most important to share those with or without actual lesson plans.

Finally, teachers report that there is "Not a system in place to look at the data and study trends. That would be helpful for us and for classroom teachers. Everyone gives the Star, but no one knows how to use it to get to the data--to even look at the scores." Another teacher said, "Star--it doesn't feel as meaningful as some of the other assessments we have. Because it's computerized, kids shut down or guess. It's not authentic--doing math on a computer. I'm not a fan. It's not a measure if kids refuse to do it. It's not valuable info." The district pays for Educlimber to store and organize data, but according to teachers, "no one knows how to use it and it's not updated. I can't even get logged in. My account is current so it just wastes time."

Recommended points for discussion include:

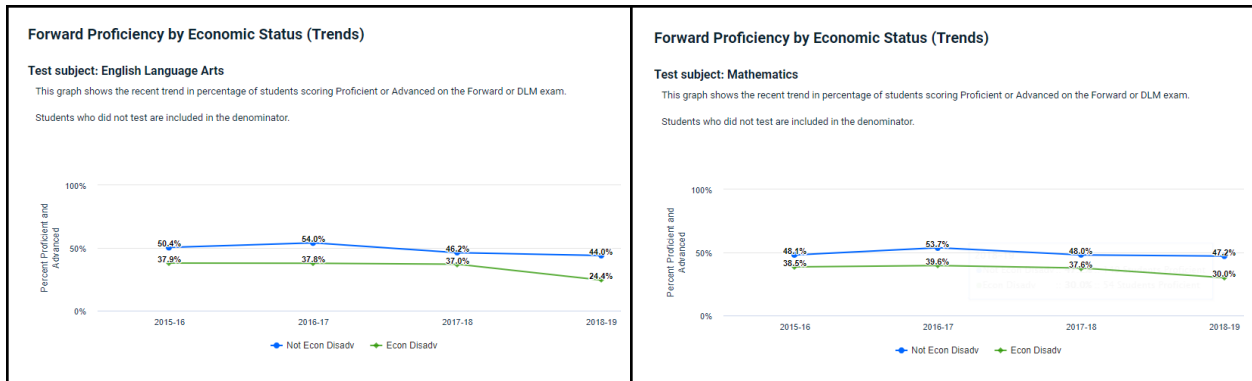
- Reexamining existing inclusive practices and dedicating time and training to ensure classroom teachers are well-equipped to strengthen support for students with disabilities. This includes:
  - Scheduling regular collaboration time between special ed and general ed teachers to co-plan and problem solve together
  - Establishing systemic communication methods to consistently share information between special education and classroom teachers. Examples might include:
    - Special educators to provide resources for classroom teachers, such as [IEP's at a Glance](#), to ensure students' accommodations and modifications are known and met
    - General educators to share daily learning targets (may include lesson plans, or not) with special education teachers in a timely manner so they can develop plans to assist students in meeting grade-level learning targets
    - Set expectations for general education teachers to attend IEPs through a rotation or some other means so that all teachers share the responsibility
    - Google forms are used as a means to gather teacher input in lieu of meeting attendance
  - Implementing a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework “to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn as a foundation for teaching and learning” ([CAST: The UDL Guidelines](#))
- Providing a data warehouse and training for all staff in its use so that student data measures are easily accessible for study.

## TITLE I

Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA/ESEA) is a federal funding program designed to close achievement gaps and ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. The largest part of the Title I program, Part A allocates funding to districts and other local educational agencies (LEAs) according to a formula based on numbers/percentages of children from low-income families. ([WI DPI, Title I, Part A page](#))

According to WISEdash Public, the district has an overall poverty rate of 36.2%, with breakdowns per building as follows:

- Early Learning Center 40.5%
- RV Elementary 41.4%
- Middle School 37%
- High School 31%



(WISEdash Public, accessed Jun 29, 2021 )

Five year trends from state assessment data from the Forward Exam in grades 3-8 indicate that students from poverty do not perform as well as their non-improverished peers in River Valley. It would be important to examine local data to verify this trend. Given that at least one-third of the student enrollment is eligible for free or reduced lunch, a closer look into why this student group is falling behind is in order.

ESSA Accountability Report

Student_Group	Achievement		Growth		Graduation		ELP Progress		Absenteeism	
	Points-based Proficiency Rate		Average SGP (ELA and Math)		Average Graduation Rate		Average ACCESS SGP		Chronic Absenteeism Rate	
	Outcome	IP	Outcome	IP	Outcome	IP	Outcome	IP	Outcome	IP
All-Students	63.0	39	46.9	28	NA	NA	NA	NA	6.6	45
Asian	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Black	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hispanic/Latino	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Amer Indian	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pacific Isle	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Two or More Races	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White	63.3	51	46.9	31	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.7	60
Econ Disadv	54.1	70	45.2	36	NA	NA	NA	NA	11.8	44
EL	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SWD	36.5	35	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	13.3	36

(Wisconsin DPI ESSA Accountability Reports, accessed Jun 29, 2021 )

In addition, federal indicators from the 2018-19 ESSA Accountability Report for River Valley Elementary suggest that chronic absenteeism is a measure that should be further examined for economically disadvantaged students, since they are absent from school nearly twice as often as “all-students.” This prompts the question: To what extent are students from poverty less engaged in school and why? *\*It should be noted that students with disabilities have even more concerning outcomes regarding attendance, warranting additional investigation there.*

With Title I dollars, districts typically serve the schools with the highest need(s) based on a comprehensive needs assessment. In River Valley, Title I support is available for kindergarten students at the Early Learning Center only, although additional time has been added to support 1st

grade this year. The district has a targeted assistance program, which limits service to certain students who meet qualifying criteria. It is rare for Title I programming to focus on one grade level, as student needs are generally more widespread, and many districts have moved to a schoolwide model. While the Early Learning Center is small it has giant possibilities, and the Title I and Special education teachers could take the lead on co-teaching and collaboration in their building and beyond. There exists many possibilities for the Title I teacher to build connections across grade levels by working with students and teachers across the grade levels.

Students are pulled out for one-on-one or small group support with the Title I teacher, who states, "Sometimes, there needs to be the opportunity [for students] to leave the classroom with a smaller group. There's just too much going on in the classroom and they focus better in my room." The teacher also states how they have "loved being more of a Title I teacher than interventionist," suggesting a need for clarity in these roles throughout the district.

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and full program review to determine if Title I programming is meeting the needs of the students who need it most as well as meeting compliance with state and federal guidelines. There may be benefits to moving to a schoolwide program, which would allow more students to be served and flexibility in funding use.
- Developing a Family Resource space at the Early Learning Center to connect families with resources, both within the district and outside agencies/organizations. This would be particularly helpful for parents sending students to school for the first time.

## **GIFTED & TALENTED**

In Wisconsin, "Gifted and talented pupils" means pupils enrolled in public schools who give evidence of high performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop such capabilities. ([Wisconsin Statutes § 118.35](#))

Districts have "a legal obligation to develop an identification process to determine needs of students with gifts and talents and to then provide programming to match these needs. This process must be systematic and continuous from kindergarten through twelfth grade and must consider all students in each of the five areas:

- General intellectual
- Specific academic
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Visual and performing arts (WI DPI)

According to statute, identifying student needs must include both qualitative and quantitative measures, be responsive to all students, and match the purpose for which it is being used.

Gifted and talented programming in the River Valley School District consists of taking certain students to competitive events designed for gifted and talented students in the CESA 3 region. Identification is based on state and local assessment scores and teacher recommendation.

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Establishing a program for gifted and talented students that meets state statutes and is part of a broader multi-level system of support, including a consistent identification process (See [list of targeted screeners](#)), service and support in all five areas of giftedness, as well as layers of support starting with the universal curriculum.
- Dedicating resources (time, training, and staff) to meet the needs of gifted and talented students
- Ensuring classroom teachers have training in meeting the needs of gifted and talented students

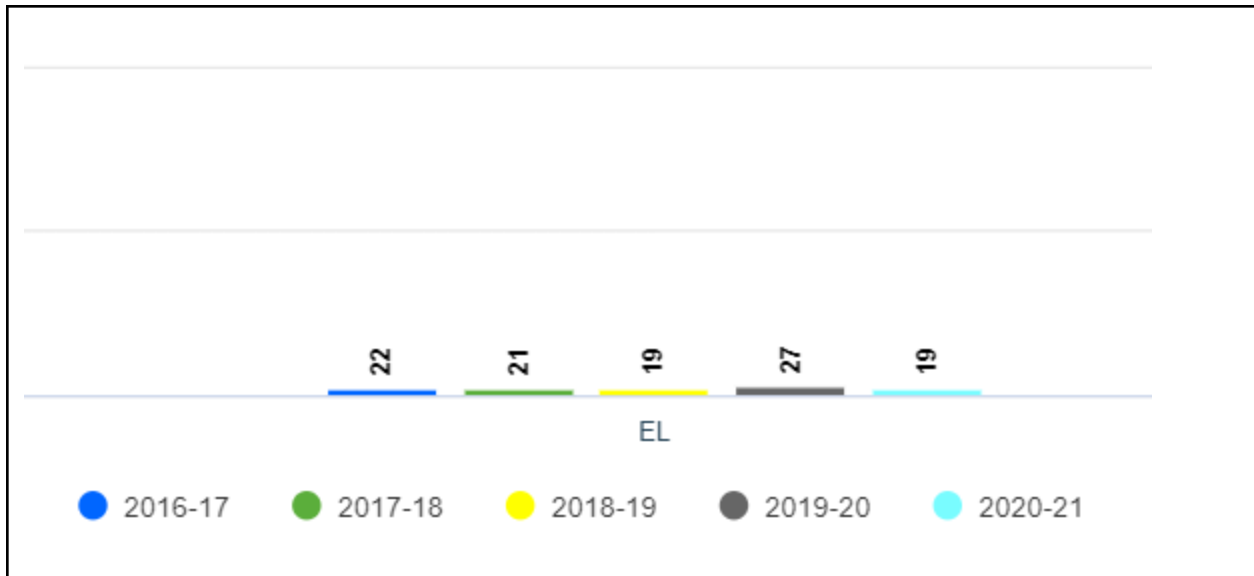
## **ENGLISH LEARNERS**

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, and as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) and Wisconsin state statutes, school districts throughout the state are required to identify in a uniform manner and provide services to English learners (ELs). This includes immigrant and migrant students, and students with disabilities. (WI DPI) It should be noted that funding EL programming is a district responsibility and any federal funding (from Title III) can only be used to supplement existing services.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) holds schools and districts accountable for student growth towards English language proficiency (ELP). [ACCESS for ELLs®](#) is designed to measure English language proficiency. It is a large-scale assessment that is based on the [WIDA Consortium's ELD Standards](#) that form the core of Wisconsin's approach to instructing and testing ELs.

The River Valley School District has had an average of 21 English Learners (ELs) over the past five years (see chart below). One teacher provides EL programming for all students, and that person serves students in three of the four buildings in the district. No English language support is given at the River Valley Early Learning Center due to its off-campus location and the rationale from the teacher that the "very youngest need the least support from me because they are getting that support in the classroom."

## **Enrollment by Year/EL Status**

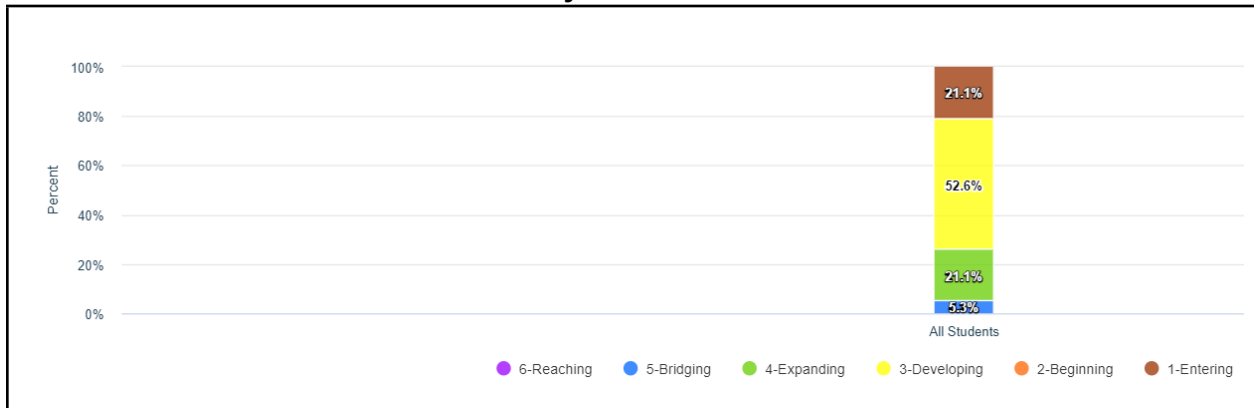


(WISEdash for Districts, accessed 6/1/21)

Support for ELs is provided based on need. Data from the ACCESS state assessment, as well as the [WIDA screener](#) is used to prioritize support. The teacher states that newcomers are the “number one priority, especially older students.” Support is differentiated based on time and frequency; students having the highest need meet with the teacher 2-3 times per week, while others requiring less support receive instruction two times per week, and those with fewer needs get support once per week. Students are dismissed from EL supports once scoring either a 6 on the ACCESS exam or with teacher recommendation with a cumulative ACCESS score of 5, plus earning a 5 on two or more individual areas. Once dismissed, students no longer receive formal support, but the teacher monitors and stays connected for two years.

The data cata chart below shows the most recent (pre-pandemic) ACCESS overall performance for River Valley English learners. Note student placement on the six proficiency levels, with six indicating those reaching proficiency.

**2019-20 ACCESS Overall Performance by All Students**



EL support is entirely pull-out, which requires the teacher to schedule and work with individual students during “down time--study hall, Rtl time, etc” so that minimal classroom instruction is missed. The teacher pointed out that only providing pull-out support to individual students is not best practice, and they would like to include more groups. The teacher develops the support schedule, and reports “hopping between buildings all day long,” making multiple trips to and from the elementary, middle and high school buildings every day in order to work with students. The “most frustrating part of my job is trying to coordinate that. Every school is on a different schedule.”

The teacher reports many instances where they are pulled from instruction in order to do administrative or other tasks. They are currently assigned lunch duty, which includes lunch room and recess supervision every day. The teacher is also occasionally pulled to chaperone different grade levels for general education students for outdoor days or the school fair. In addition, this educator spends an “enormous amount of time on administration and Spanish translation, like communicating bus routes, absences, translating documents, and messages,” which takes time away from working with students.

The teacher indicates a desire to regularly attend conferences and other professional learning opportunities in order to stay current with both the mandatory requirements of EL programming, as well as best practices in the field. In addition, professional learning for the general education classroom teachers would arm them with strategies to support English learners in their classrooms and build self efficacy. Training on WIDA resources has not been provided in recent years, leaving teachers to either take initiative on their own or seek case-by-case support from the ESL teacher.

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Establishing a program for English learners that is part of a broader multi-level system of support, including such things as bilingual signage in buildings, routine family outreach and communication, consistent entry and exit procedures, and layers of support starting with the universal curriculum. There is risk in having one person “be” a program, as the institutional knowledge accrued is dependent on them, and that knowledge leaves when they do.
- Finding ways to alleviate tasks that pull the ESL teacher from direct contact with EL students
  - Utilizing paraprofessionals to fulfill supervisory responsibilities
  - Hiring/appointing a bilingual resource specialist (BRS) to assume translation and communication duties, as well as to liaise with EL families and provide additional administrative support
- Providing training opportunities for all teachers on supporting English learners to build shared responsibility and more equitable outcomes for this student group



- River Valley is part of the CESA 3 Title III Consortium, which provides many resources for English Learners and those who teach them
- [WIDA](#) offers many resources, including [Can Do Descriptors](#) to help teachers meet students where they are in language development
- Ensuring the district is compliant with state and federal guidelines for EL programming. For example, the district is required to have a written Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP), which has not been done. Wisconsin's DPI has created an [EL Policy Handbook](#), which documents Wisconsin's collective best practices to serve and support ELs and their families.

## Career and Technical Education (CTE)

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According to a [2019 report](#) from the US Department of Education,

A critical workforce challenge in the United States is the skills gap, particularly among jobs that require either a high school diploma, postsecondary certificate, or associate's degree. Jobs requiring these "middle skills" outnumber the adults in the workforce who possess them, and this gap presents a barrier to American economic competitiveness. There are 30 million jobs in the United States that do not require a bachelor's degree that pay median earnings of \$55,000 or more. CTE provides an important avenue for young adults to gain these skills beginning in high school.

The CTE programming in River Valley includes career pathways in

- Manufacturing
- Agriculture, food and natural resources
- Architecture and construction
- Arts, A/V technology and communications
- Finance
- Health science
- Manufacturing
- Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), and
- Transportation, distribution, and logistics

In the 2020-21 school year,

- 216 students in grades 9-12 took CTE courses, with demographics as follows:
  - 9th grade: 59
  - 10th grade: 68
  - 11th grade: 52
  - 12th grade: 37
  - Students with disabilities: 27
  - Female: 78

- Male: 138
- 53 students earned dual credits through a Wisconsin Technical College; of these, three were students with disabilities, 17 were females, and 36 were male.
- 52 students participated in Youth Apprenticeship; of these, 11 were students with disabilities, 28 were female, and 24 were male.

(Data from WISEdash for Districts, accessed July 2, 2021)

Due to statute, CTE student data will be reported on the Wisconsin State Report Cards for the first time in the fall of 2021 (assuming no waiver will be issued). Student participation will be disaggregated, like the bullets above, This may or may not prompt questions from the public or further study of data accuracy in reporting. It should be noted that CTE teachers are the best ones to validate course and program data each year prior to the DPI Snapshot in December.

Both the Technical Education, and Business Ed teams teach to Wisconsin Content Standards.

In Technical Education, most curriculums were inherited, but have been updated by teachers assigned to their respective courses. Welding classes follow curriculums provided through Madison College, and a Fabrications class might go that same route.

In Agriculture, there are a number of dual credit offerings through Southwest Tech, so Animal Health and Nutrition, Plant Science, Horticulture and Greenhouse Management, and Crop and Soil Science follow curriculums approved by the dual credit programs.

The curriculum of the Food Science classroom is driven by the FFA Advisory Board which looks at what is happening in industry and advises and recommends changes to what is being taught. State standards for Agriculture are met, as well as the CTE Standards on Leadership.

Business Ed coursework starts in Middle School with Keyboarding, followed by Computers, Business Skills, Programming and Publications, and Careers. The Wisconsin State Standards are the focus along with CTE Standards in Careers.

At the high school, Accounting 1-2-3 are dual credit options through Madison College. Employability Skills, when offered, follows a curriculum that meets State Standards. Personal Finance is aligned with Southwest Technical College.

The Technical Education and Business Ed teams, in particular, see a need for time to meet within their departments for curricular work. Currently, co-worker discussions are very limited. In Agriculture, the lone instructor would like time to meet and work with her Advisory Board. In all areas, with modernization, there is a need to update curriculums to give students the latest tools and expectations. Working together within the departments should increase the effectiveness and timing of these changes.

One suggestion for time was made regarding parent-teacher conferences and the possibility that a plan could be put in place to use some of that time for department meetings. Most teachers in CTE get very few parents at the conferences under the current format.

The high school CTE classes are in competition with all high school elective classes for enrollment, so not all courses are offered yearly. In an effort to keep the offerings diverse and to serve students best, the staff would like to see a lower enrollment requirement than the current minimum of fifteen students.

A discussion needs to be had regarding required prerequisites for Youth Apprenticeships, as well. Changes may need to be made to be sure students are eligible for those kinds of opportunities.

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Ensuring equitable access for all students to participate in CTE courses and work experiences (YA), with conversations about identifying and removing any barriers that may prevent some students from participating. For example, scheduling conflicts with core courses are barriers, and exploring ways to provide more students with CTE opportunities would be worthwhile.
- The robust programming offered in CTE should be celebrated and marketed as a potential draw for additional students to open-enroll into the district. In particular, dual credit opportunities, industry certifications, and work experience are valuable for all students, but even more so for students with disabilities and students living in poverty.

## Fine Arts

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The statutory requirements for both art and music are listed below:

- Art: Wisconsin Education Standards j, k, and l articulates that “art instruction shall be provided in accordance with a written comprehensive art curriculum which is based on concepts developed through sensory awareness, aesthetic discrimination and skill development in the creation of art, and the knowledge of human art heritage. Art instruction shall be provided for all pupils in grades kindergarten through 6 and shall be performed by or under the direction of a licensed art teacher. Art instruction shall be available to all pupils in grades 7 through 12 and shall be taught by a licensed art teacher.”
- Music: Wisconsin Education Standards j, k, and l articulates that “music instruction shall be provided in accordance with a written comprehensive music curriculum including developmental experiences involving singing, playing instruments, listening, movement, creative expression, and music reading. Music instruction shall be provided for all pupils in grades kindergarten through 6 and shall be performed by or under the direction of a licensed music teacher. Music instruction including general music, vocal music, and

instrumental music shall be available to all pupils in grades 7-12 and shall be taught by a licensed music teacher.”

Due to Wisconsin statute, fine arts participation will now be reported on school report cards in fall, 2021. This data should be examined and validated to ensure accuracy. Roster data from WISEdash for Districts, shown below, indicates fewer students with IEPs take visual or performing arts courses than their peers without IEPs. This should be further examined to find out why, and whether or not equitable access is a concern. Elective courses are important to provide all students with opportunities to explore their interests and develop their talents. Examining disaggregated data by student groups (race/ethnicity, gender, poverty, etc) will allow staff a broader understanding of barriers that may impede these amazing opportunities.

COURSE NAME ⇅	GRADE ⇅		5		6		7		8		9		10		11		12		Totals
	SPED ⇅		SwoD		SwoD		SwoD		SwoD		SwoD		SwoD		SwoD		SwoD		
Art (grade 5)	55	11																	66
Art Portfolio																	1		1
Ceramics/Pottery										2	5	15	1	6		15	2	46	
Chorus			14	4	24	2	16	2	22	3	14	2	5	2	4	1		115	
Concert Band					32	2	26	2	26	1	18	2	5		5			119	
Creative Art-Comprehensive			75	13	74	13	88	12	6	3	10	2	5	1	16	1		319	
General Band			12	5														17	
Individual Technique-Instrumental Music					77	12	87	12						11		22		221	
Individual Technique-Vocal Music														11		16		27	
Multimedia Art																1		1	
Music (grade 5)	57	11																68	
Music-Other			74	13														87	
Visual Art-Independent Study											2		3		7	2		14	
Visual Arts-Painting									2	5	5	2	12	3	8			37	
Visual Communications Design											7		8	1	9	1		26	
Totals	112	22	175	35	207	29	217	28	58	17	71	9	66	7	104	7		1,164	

(WISEdash for Districts/Topics/Rosters, accessed July 5, 2021)

In Music, at the elementary school, the curriculum is geared toward the Wisconsin State Music standards. The focus is on introducing and developing musical skill and knowledge. In the sixth grade curriculum has been long-standing with small changes yearly. During the pandemic, that curriculum is more piano-driven with music theory and appreciation taking a larger role, too. Seventh and eighth grade music’s curriculum focuses on the “doing”. Taking what they’ve learned in years of music class and applying it.

In Middle School Band, the curriculum moves from instrument skills to ensemble skills. The learning goals change based on the make-up of the band each year.

High School Band meets the state standards, but is more performance-driven. The curriculum moves toward a concert series and follows a traditional format of individual and group lessons, solo-ensemble, and concert literature.

Vocal Music follows a similar approach. The Middle School Choir is ensemble-based. How to sing in an ensemble, how to read music, how to make a sound with your voice - basic skills. In the High School Choir, students can respond to music using vocabulary, critique their performance and the performance of others, as well as perform vocally.

AP Music Theory is an every other year course at the high school that follows the College Board curriculum.

The Art department reviewed their curriculum in the last few years, driven by the retirement of a middle school teacher. There was a desire to leave a clear and coherent plan for her replacement. Specifically, they looked at the transitions from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school. Time was also spent on the 4K curriculum, a recent addition to the offerings in the department. All curriculum follows the Wisconsin State Standards for Art.

In the elementary school, there is an emphasis on vocabulary and products, middle level is more idea generation, and at the high school, different art mediums are the general organizational framework - 2D Art, Ceramics, Photography, etc.

As part of the curriculum building process this suggestion was made: "It would be good once the curriculum is done, that once a year, we look at it - officially, so it's not like 'oh, it's been six years?'. Like that's our February inservice: to see how we're doing and make changes."

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Examining equity and access to explore whether or not there are barriers for students who wish to participate in the arts. Disaggregating roster data can be a good first start. This is always a concern with elective courses, which are so important for students' growth and development.
- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.

# Physical Education

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The physical education department is a cohesive 4K-12 team. They share a vision of lifetime wellness and personal fitness.

All of the classes are organized around the Wisconsin State Standards.

Starting in 4K and elementary, the curriculum is skills-based, but fitness-based better describes all levels of phy ed in the River Valley Schools. While the pandemic has stymied some of the “heart health” work (heart rate monitors were not accessible). The staff sees that as transformative for their work and for student learning.

Middle School Health classes are making a move toward skills-based learning, too (goal setting and analyzing influences, decision-making). The health topics and units are filtered through those skills. The same approach is used in the high school Health classes (ex: refusal of drugs and alcohol, healthy decision-making in relationships, etc.)

At all levels, there’s a feeling that revising curriculum is a day to day process. As students progress, the phy ed teachers see most students year to year, so are able to make changes based on the results they are getting from individuals and grade levels.

The phy ed department would love some focused professional development. Much of what has been provided to them is geared toward an academic audience, often math and reading directed, so content that is more applicable to fitness and health would be greatly appreciated.

Also, an investment in technology for the department 4K-12 would be helpful. Access to Smartboards and iPads would help integrate instruction and evaluation more comprehensively in Phy Ed (even in the gyms). Administration should talk to the phy ed staff about how this would work.

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Identifying standards-based learning targets for all courses and collaborating on student learning outcomes. While unit plans may look different across departments, all curriculum should be mapped with common elements and digital platform/warehouse, and time should be established for regular review and revision.
- Acquiring digital devices to enhance instruction and assessment within the phy ed curriculum. Funding and training are among the considerations for this addition, which would ensure students have authentic experiences in preparation for life after high school.

# Library Media

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There is a commitment in the River Valley Schools to the school libraries. Each school has a Library Media Specialist, and there is a system in place to purchase resources and keep the libraries up-to-date.

In regards to curriculum, time needs to be set aside to determine which standards need to be met. The state has some, the Wisconsin Information and Technology Standards, ISTE has some, but because of new staff members and other staffing changes, this first step has not been taken. That's not to say that the staff is not teaching to standards, they are; but there isn't currently a shared view and/or goal when it comes to standards.

All staff are interested in providing more co-teaching with classroom teachers, particularly in the areas of digital citizenship and research. Wisconsin School Librarians are expected to establish Future Ready Libraries and are trying to meet goals and achievements in eight areas, as shown in the graphic wheel above.



More than anything, the LMC department would like regular and frequent time to communicate with each other about their work. Integrating their work at each building and with the teaching staff at large is an important goal, particularly in areas of literacy and developing lifelong readers.

To meet the standards, the department would like to know the scope and sequence at the other buildings and how the work they are doing fits in the K-12 plan. Meeting occasionally with classroom teachers, particularly ELA teachers, would allow LMC directors to know more about what is happening in English classes and how they may augment those lessons.

As with many educators, time is a limited resource. The additional demands on LMC directors - chromebooks, study halls, etc. should always be balanced with the need for the directors' regular meetings and the work they do as instructors.

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Finding collaboration time with each other and with classroom teachers to co-plan instruction so that they have opportunities to share their expertise. LMC standards have a place within most curriculum areas.
- Consider [establishing a system](#) to ensure all library resources are culturally responsive and authentically representative of diversity in the student population and the global community beyond, looking specifically for stereotypes and bias. Often, myriad stakeholders are brought together to form a committee charged with this work.

## Culture and Equity

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Deficit-based thinking is present throughout the district. Blame for academic outcomes is often assigned to parents, home-life, or the students themselves, and it was difficult for many teachers to consider that adult practices in the building may be leading those outcomes. Examples of this mindset include:

- “What my kids in the past have been able to do, these kids can’t handle.”
- “I don’t think that classroom teachers have high expectations for all students. I see teachers teaching to the middle, without enough differentiation.
- “Classroom teachers don’t necessarily believe that all kids can do it. They think that, “I’m not qualified to work with this kid so they need to leave my room and work with someone that is more qualified. It’s not my kid--it’s your kid.”
- “Do we disaggregate data? As a district, no. I’ve never looked at different groups compared to each other.”
- “This is a really low class, whereas last year, I had a high group.”
- “Special ed kids have always scored lower. That’s why they’re in special ed.”

Recommended points for discussion include:

- Establishing a culture of high expectations for all students will greatly enhance student outcomes. River Valley teachers are impressive, as most work very hard (long hours and weekends) and want the very best for their students. However, in some cases, assumptions about what students can/can’t do are driving important decisions that have long-term impact on the lives of students. (Related resources: [Opportunity Myth](#), [SREB article](#), [Research into Practice brief](#), [Teaching to Strengths](#) book)
- Shifting the paradigm to a strength-based/asset-based approach would support the district’s pursuit of more equitable outcomes for all students. Shifting away from the focus on what students can’t do and instead honoring what individual students can already do, can do with educational support, and will one day be able to is a game-changer. Training, coaching and critical conversations are needed to uncover and confront these mindsets,



and help teachers learn how to build resilience and self-efficacy within their students.  
(Related resources: [Victoria EC article](#), [Dweck video](#), [Cramer video](#)--use for activities)

- Addressing topics related to equity and race is of interest to many staff who want to feel more in tune with talking about controversial topics with students and among their peers. Training in anti-racism would be a good starting point.