



Rochester Beacon Academy

#4238

Annual Report

2015-2016

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Introduction

Purpose of Annual Report

The purpose of this annual report is to meet the Charter School reporting requirements as set by the Minnesota Department of Education according to MN statute section 124D.10, subdivision 4,11 and 14. All ten required elements are listed in the Table of Contents along with other elements felt to be an essential part of Rochester Beacon Academy.

Rochester Beacon Academy Statutory Purpose

Rochester Beacon Academy (RBA), District #4238, has successfully completed its first year of operation with students. RBA combines a middle school of grades 6-8 with a high school in the same building. In its first year RBA decided that the high school would begin with only grades 9 and 10, knowing few students would change schools for the last two years. The 11th and 12th grades will be added in the subsequent years.

Mission: The Mission of Rochester Beacon Academy is to provide a safe learning environment in a secondary (6-12 grades) setting; respecting the individual and differentiated needs of learners, allowing them to reach their full potential and join their community with success.

Vision: RBA's vision, as a secondary public charter school, is to provide academic learning in a general education format, furnishing the supports needed to make a successful transition into young adulthood for students; including those with Executive Function difficulties such as problems with organization, socialization and sensory differences. Planning encompasses the needs of individual students using highly structured techniques, social skills training and accommodations embedded in the curriculum. The program provides training for all staff to ensure student progress, independence and comfort, working in cooperation with parents and students.

RBA's purpose is to provide an option for students who have difficulty in the larger public school settings which are unable to accommodate the various needs of these students. RBA is able to accomplish this purpose with a smaller class size of 12-20 students and more adult support within each class. Since 75% of the student population has been identified as students with special needs, the school staff determined that each core class needed to be staffed with a general education teacher and special education teacher. This allowed students to be fully included and still have appropriate accommodations within the general education classroom. A team teaching approach was trialed in the high school for two of the core classes, science and math, by the general and special education teachers. This was determined to be quite effective and will be the model for all core classes for the 2016-2017 school year.

Another essential part of RBA's success is a focus of a social skills curriculum which is implemented throughout the school day, providing a safe and welcoming environment for all students. Many of the students came from school environments where they experienced many instances of bullying and exclusion. In addition, many students have a diagnosis of anxiety disorder that affected their ability to attend a typical public school. As a result a number of parents had chosen to home school or students had not been attending school. Parents reported after the first week, that their child was excited to go to school and felt they had found a place of acceptance.

RBA emphasized organizational skills as essential for workforce and career readiness. As a part of that process, it was determined that longer class periods every other day would facilitate the teaching, practice and organization of assignments. In that vein, RBA's class periods were broken into 90 minute periods held every other day in an A/B schedule. This greatly enhanced the ability of teachers to teach, for students practice, and then reteach material. The study skills period every other day allowed students to get extra help as these periods were always staffed by teachers.

One change that was made at the semester period was with the sixth grade. It was felt that the transition from one classroom in fifth grade to four classes in a day and 7 different teachers was extremely disorganizing for this age group. Research (Gootman, 2007) indicates that this grade level is developmentally more associated with the elementary style than the middle school style of classroom transition and performs better when kept in self-contained classes. Staff decided a contained sixth grade with the exception of special areas, would allow that teacher to organize those students and prepare them better for the transition to several classes. It has also been decided that this format would better meet the needs of the 7th graders for the 2016-

2017 school year, using two teachers for transitions and gradually acclimating students to switching classes.

School Enrollment and Attrition

This table identifies students enrolled, based on October 1 average Daily Membership (ADM).

	Grade						Total	Growth rate
School Year	6	7	8	9	10	11		
2015-16	25	13	14	15	7	0	74	
2016-17 projected	22	31	19	13	13	8	115	+55%

During the 2015-2016 school year, RBA drew from 5 school districts.

Student Demographics:

81% White

7% Black

3% Asian

5%Hispanic

75% Special Education

36% FRP

Admissions and Enrollment

Rochester Beacon Academy (RBA) capped enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year at 20 students per grade level. However, due to the high interest at the sixth grade level, 25 students were allowed and extra staff were placed to allow small grouping. A lottery system is used for

the initial selection process. (See Appendix A) Any student applying after enrollment is full, is placed on a waiting list on a first come, first served basis.

Interest in RBA has increased to the point of a much-needed building expansion, which has been discussed with the current proprietor of the building. So the cap for the 2016-17 is extended to 130 students.

GOVERNANCE and MANGAEMENT AND DIRECTOR'S PDP

Governance

2015-2016 School Year RBA Charter School Board

Election Date: May, 2016

Attendance is from July, 2015 to June 2016.

RBA School Board 2015-2016						
Name	Board Position, Group Affiliation	Date Elected	Date Seated	Term Expiration	Phone, email	Meeting Attendance rate
Melanie Flaherty	Chair, Parent		November, 2012	September, 2015	507-269-1941	4 of 4
Colette Sweeney	Chair (September), Parent		January 2013		507-990-1614	12 of 14
Laurie Windish	Secretary, Community		February 2014		(507)990-2715	14 of 14
Denise Songstad	Vice Chair, Parent		November, 2014		(507) 990-0907	13 of 14
Vesna Sloan	Community	May, 2016	December, 2014	June, 2019	(507) 289-1882	13 of 14
Dan Stevens	Teacher, (#452891)		September, 2015	September, 2016	507-258-5351	7 of 10
Dave Marris	Treasurer, Community		September, 2015	July, 2016	(507)288-1111	7 of 14

Elsa Lantz	Teacher, (#475069)		September , 2015	May, 2016	507-258- 5351	7 of 10
Sue Palmer	Community		March, 2015	December, 2015	507-254- 8034	1 of 7
Tom Olson	Community		Jan, 2016		(507) 328-6232	6 of 6
Steve Fenske	Teacher, (#395579)	June, 2016	June, 2016	June, 2019	507-258- 5351	2 of 2

The board, as a start-up board, has been appointed rather than elected until May of this past year. Elections are completed for one third of the board to stagger terms over the three year term periods. The Board has been a working board and made the transition to a governing board over the past year. Terms are for three years once elected.

Turnover of the board this past year was due to the hiring of board members to the RBA staff or for contracting purposes.

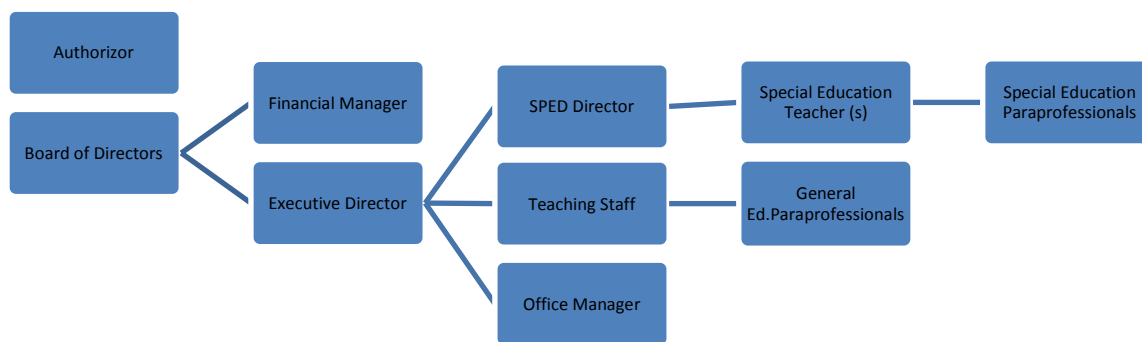
The full Board had the first of the three required topics of board role and responsibilities in May of 2015, provided by the MN Association of Charter Schools (MAC). In addition, each member of the board enrolled in the online financial management topic over the summer and has scheduled the third topic of employment policies and practices for September 19, 2016; all with MAC.

Management and Professional Development

RBA is led by its Executive Director, Kari Weiss, following a short 6-week period of an interim director, Colette Sweeney, when the acting director resigned in May of 2015. Kari transferred from Madison, Wi where she was most recently teaching High School Social Studies with the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District. While there, Kari began an Educational Leadership program at Edgewood College. She interned with her district creating an individualized, RTI model for their summer school program, sat on the board's Handbook and Compensation Committees, served on the district's Curriculum Development Committee, her department's pilot of a Legislative Semester Government, as well a 'paperless' course (all technology based) and finally as a union representative. Kari sat on Accreditation Review boards for local schools seeking accreditation but also coached both volleyball and La Crosse. She worked toward and

became a Cognitive Coach and an Adaptive Schools facilitator. Previously, Kari served an eight-year career in the United States Army Reserves including a 13-month mobilization after 9/11. As a result of her veteran status, Kari has been able to utilize her GI benefits to gain her Master's in History and is completing her doctoral research regarding Democratic Education's impact on student engagement. She currently holds Wisconsin license as a Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Director and Principal.

It is evident that Kari is able to have a full picture view while also realizing the details that make up that picture. Kari relies on staff for input in both curriculum development and school structures. She created a leadership team comprised of a middle school, a high school and a special education teacher. The staff have appreciated her willingness to problem solve, be an integral part of solutions and to allow others to step up to decision-making.



Authorizer Information

Rochester Beacon Academy is authorized by Minnesota Guild of Charter Schools, working directly with Dr. Brad Blue. The Guild provides programmatic oversight, reviews monthly financial statements and participates in the annual audit with the accounting firm of Clifton Larson Allen LLP. Contact information: Dr. Brad Blue, bradblue@gmail.com

Professional Development

The Executive Director attended the National Charter School Conference that covered such topics as governance, finance, inventory, curriculum development, program evaluation and teacher evaluation. She also attended various systems training (finance, retirement, licensing, etc.) at MDE, a QComp grant writing training also at MDE, and School Law presented by Booth Law.

The Board Chair, Colette Sweeney; Executive Director, Kari Weiss; and Teacher, Thea Nixon developed a three week professional development schedule for staff before RBA opened to ensure all staff had the proper training and perspective prior to receiving students. The training was as follows:

Training Topic	Audience
Understanding ASD, Anxiety, ADHD, introversion Executive Functions,(definition, intervention, supports, etc.) Social Cognition, Policies on Accommodations	All
Instruction: UDL Strategies Differentiated Teaching/Learning Backward Design PLPs, Accommodations	All teachers
Curriculum Unit Planning	All Gen Ed and SPED Teachers
SpEd forms	SpEd teachers
Classroom set-up and curriculum planning	All Gen Ed Teachers
Restrictive Procedures	SpEd teachers & Kari
Classroom set-up and curriculum development	All Teachers
JMC (student information system)	All Teachers
rschool (website)	All Teachers
Goal Setting Staff Evaluations Professionalism	All teachers

Behavior Management Restorative Justice Circles Youth Adult Partnerships	All
CPI	All

Follow-up Professional Development throughout the year focused on crisis management, behavior management, team teaching, differentiated instruction, assessment and data-driven instruction, accommodations and collaboration.

Staffing

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Not Returning 2016-17
Kari Weiss	# 374930	Executive Director	
Vicki Bruske	NA	Office Manager	
Elizabeth Hauser	# 489661	Math	
Dan Bergen	# 472434	Special Education	
Gabriella Hale	# 492986	6 th grade Teacher	
Jessie Mason	# 478534	Science	
Elsa Lantz	# 475069	Social Studies	X
Mary Thea Nixon	# 364822	Language Arts	
Dan Stevens	# 452891	Special Education	
Steve Fenske	# 395579	Special Education	
Dean Frank	# 468538	Special Education	
Brenda Steig	# 473306	Speech/Language	X

		Pathologist	
Melanie Flaherty	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Wanda Bucher	NA	School Nurse/Social Worker	
Mary Odegaard	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Elisa Voeltz	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Elizabeth Michelson	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Nahla Bakry	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Ann Marie Baker	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Daved Drsicoll		Fine Arts	
Marvin Myers	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Heidi Sabbann	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	
Catherine Smith	NA	Special Education Paraprofessional	

In addition, RBA contracted with Exercisibility for Physical Education services, Indigo for a Special Education Director, and Stanley-Jones and Associates for Occupational Therapy services.

Finance

Rochester Beacon Academy uses The Anton Group (TAG) for financial management and business service assistance. Mike Pocrnich from TAG meets with the Finance Committee every month prior to the School Board meetings. The Finance Committee monitors the budget and to ensures responsible fiscal management. RBA maintains internal controls to meet the standards set forth by the auditors.

Fiscal year ending June 30, 2016

Revenue

State Aids	
General	499,503
Special Ed	295,851
Lease Aid	36,595
State Aid to receive	258,804
Total State	1,090,753
Federal Aid	
Special Ed	7,000
CSP	173,911
Total Federal	180,911
Total Revenue:	1,271,664

Expenses

Salaries	701,549
Benefits	182,657
Purchases Services	250,008
Supplies/Materials	86,751
Capital Expenditures	56,653
Other Expenses	8,834
Total Expenses	1,186,452

Fund Balance **7%**

Academic Program

Program Summary

Rochester Beacon Academy views students as having diverse minds with unique needs. Every student is met at their level and programming focuses not only on academic achievement, but on the social development to create successful and independent citizens in the post-secondary world, whether that is college or the workplace.

Innovative Practices and Implementation

To meet this goal RBA has these primary organizational cores:

- Small class size of 12-20 students
- Extra adult support keeping the ratio from 1:8 to 1:6
- Differentiated instruction
- Blocked class periods to allow more in class assistance for assignments and times for re-teaching
- Advisory periods at the beginning and end of each day to assist with organization and social/life skill development, check on progress of each student and make adjustments as necessary
- Compass Learning for dual purposes of remediation and enrichment
- Homework Club, an after school program staffed by paraprofessionals to give additional assistance for assignments. There are no fees associated with the homework club.
- Restorative Justice. Staff has received training in the principles of restorative justice including circles for community building and problem solving.
- Structured teaching that instructs students how to break down assignments to increase independent initiation of work, accomplishing assignments in smaller parts and showing when work is complete.
- Full-inclusion model with team-teaching of a content and special educator
- Embedded services and IEP goals within a curriculum
- Social Emotional Curriculum
- Mental Health and a variety of other related services to assist in students' gap areas

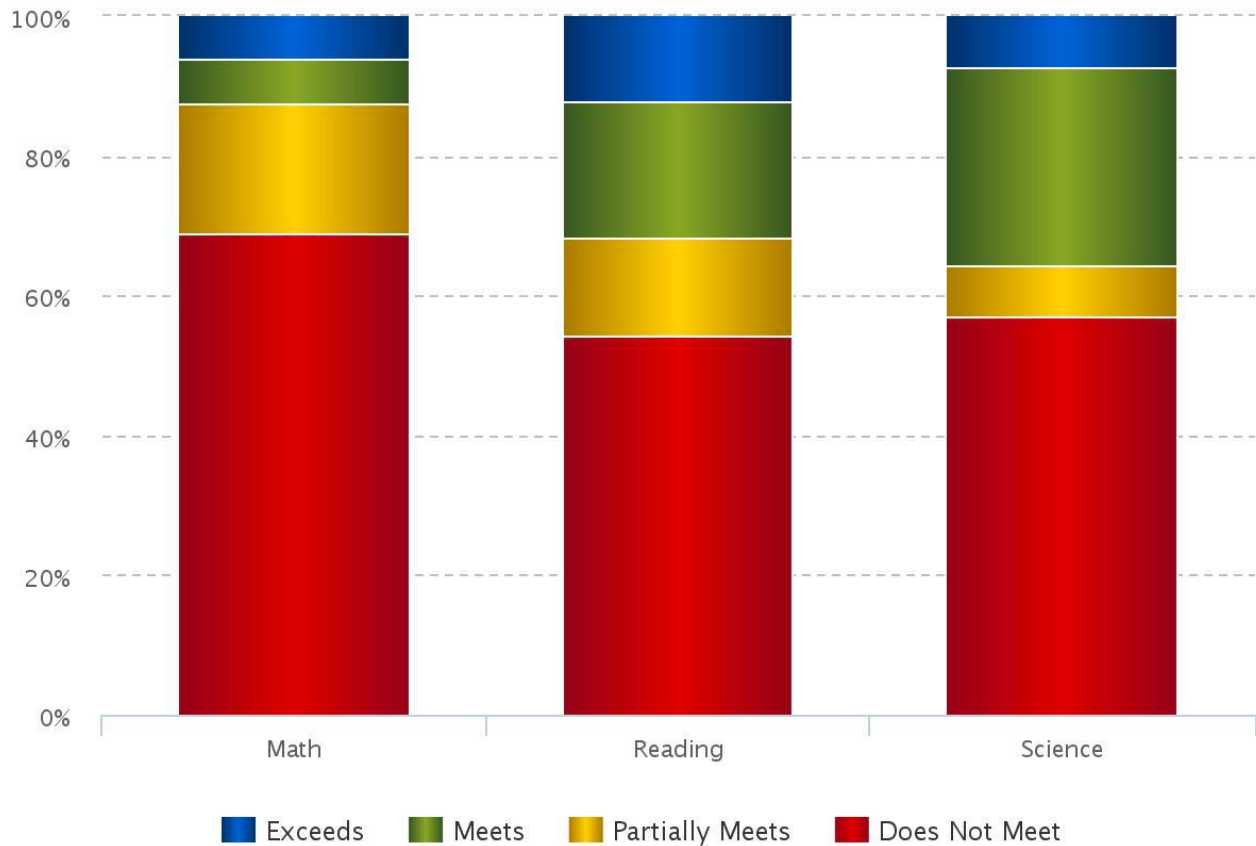
RBA staff met together weekly daily for team collaboration to discuss student needs and strategize instruction. These meetings included the general and special education staff, along with paraprofessionals. Personal Learning Plans were developed for all students to determine the level of instruction and the optimal means of instruction. Continual informal professional development was given to staff concerning behavioral management due to the high mental

health needs of the students. In addition, a parent support group was offered mid-year to assist parents with these same needs.

School Performance

RBA uses a variety of assessment tools to drive to instructional process, including curriculum-based assessments (CBA), NWEA MAP, online personal learning curriculums (Compass Learning), teacher observations and standardized state testing (MCA). Due to initial technology difficulties, RBA was not able to participate in the NWEAs in the Fall but did so in the early spring along and so was not able to look at growth from Fall to Spring.

MCA Data



RBA's initial Accountability Goals 1-3 related to percentages of students meeting or exceeding proficiency on the MCAs in reading, math and science. MCA data indicates areas of improvement RBA will address in programming and planning for the next year. The plan will include more individualized instruction and practice and a restructuring of classes to allow more collaboration between the general and special education teacher to better track student progress. Data will be broken down to assess progress of special area groups; i.e. special education students, to more accurately assess progress, make comparisons and look at previous year's performance. Using the NWEA data, RBA can use predictive measures for MCAs and determine if the instruction is meeting its goals. Many of the students demonstrate a history of high anxiety for test taking and this will be another area for focus.

Special Education

Due to the high number of students identified as requiring special education services (75% of students), the programming is central to RBA's continuum of these services, including EBD, ASD, LD, OHD and TBI. The direct instruction is provided both within the general education classroom and special education classroom environments. A Level 3 classroom was provided for students who were not able to remain in a general education classroom for core subject area classes. RBA employs 4 full-time special education teachers, one full-time SLP, and 9 special education paraprofessionals. A .25 social worker was hired at the beginning of the school year and expanded to .5 by the end of the year. In addition, RBA contracts for a school psychologist and special education director.

School Climate

Parent Involvement

RBA's parents have demonstrated great involvement in the school start-up and events and activities throughout the year. These events included:

Furniture moving	Classroom Painting	Electrical installation
Smart Board installation	Summer hang out days	School tours
Locker installation	Daily lunchroom helpers	Playground clean up
Fall Dance	5K Race Fundraiser	Herberger Fundraisers
Spring Formal	Library set-up	Office helpers

Classroom helpers

Picture Day

Quarterly art event

Last day celebration

Track and field day

Science Museum chaperones

In addition, there has been a PTSO helping to coordinate these events and raising money to support the events and finance field trips.

Parent Satisfaction Survey

Accountability Goal 6 looked at Parent Satisfaction using a survey format with a target of 90% satisfied or very satisfied. A survey was sent out to parents in May of 2016 and resent during the summer. The survey contained questions concerning the school environment, school staff, school climate and parent involvement marking statements as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The return on the Parent satisfaction survey was small (14%) but in the range of expectations for external surveys. The results were as follows:

School Environment: 85% strongly agreed or agreed with 8% neutral for total of 93%

School Staff: 71% strongly agreed or agreed with 23% neutral for a total of 94%

School Climate: 81% strongly agreed or agreed with 9% neutral for a total of 90%

Parent Involvement: 71% strongly agreed or agreed with 12% neutral for a total of 83%

The area of parent involvement demonstrated concerns primarily in parent communication. This is an area RBA will address for the next year.

Many parents expressed gratitude for the choice of RBA making such statement as, "This is the first time he has been excited to go to school." "I don't have to pull him out of bed in the morning." "This is the first time he has had friends." "She would never have been able to go to a school dance." "He has never been invited to a friend's house before now."

Community Involvement

Rochester Beacon Academy has established relationships with many agencies in the community including the following:

Rochester Center for Children: offers programming for students after school and summer and is looking to partner with RBA for work experience

Exercisability: providing physical education programming for the school and outside therapy for students

Achievement Therapy Services: provides outside speech therapy services for students

Fernbrook: provides mental health services for students and families

Bluestem: provides mental health services for students and families

Dreaming Tree: provided Professional Development for Behavior Management and provides mental health services for families

Mayo Clinic Dana Center: has referred students to the school and provides medical services for students

Stanley Jones and Associates: provides occupational and speech therapy for students

Congregational Church: congregation has promoted the school and provides our building space

Minnesota Association of Charter School: provides training and support for administration and school board

Booth Law Office: supplies policy support and legal support

Olmsted Public Health: provided audiometer for student hearing assessments and assistance for health services

Southeast Service Cooperative: provides professional development opportunities for staff

Future Plans

Structure

In anticipation of increasing numbers of students in middle school and the different needs these students demonstrate from high school, RBA will divide the school physically between the two. In addition, the sixth and seventh grades will have contained classrooms with minimal transitions throughout the day. Grade 8 will be included in the high school part of the building since they will participate in traditional transitions, however, the whole class will travel together as electives will be minimal. The 9-12 grades will have electives and so classes may be more mixed. The science, math and social studies/geography classes may have mixed grading to maximize staff.

In 2015-2016, RBA had special education teachers and paraprofessionals assigned per grade. It was felt that collaboration was difficult for the subject area teachers to try to accomplish collaboration with 4 different special education staff in addition to 6 paraprofessionals. The staff will be paired by core subject areas and will therefore allow for team teaching with the general and special education staff. Accommodations will be easier to implement and be more consistent for the subject areas.

RBA is exploring the use of a standardized grading scale to ensure a more informed assessment for students, staff and families alike. Standards based grading will align with either Minnesota state standards or Common Core Standards. Staff will assess students' understanding of the standards and provide a numerical value to correspond that understanding. Staff generated a school-wide scale in an effort to create a common assessment language between disciplines for student and family ease and comfort.

Coursework

Further expansion of elective choices will also be paired with coursework and programming for test taking and career and college readiness skills. In addition, RBA is already planning to increase enrichment choices including technology, languages, and increased online learning options.

To ensure students can live independently once they have graduated from RBA, we would also like to expand the curriculum choices for independent living to include financial management, cooking and home skills.

Communication

RBA plans to increase communication with parents with increased use of technology, parent portals and teacher sharing of information. This will also help with transparency and allow parents to support students in their schoolwork. RBA will be working on other ways to involve parents in the school and increase parent input.

Looking Forward

As word of the success for students at RBA spreads, we anticipate further growth of our student body, and therefore may require more space. RBA has already increased its use of space in the present building and is exploring other building possibilities as we add on two more grades and possibly a transition program for graduates who qualify.

As we continue to grow, our programming will also allow growth. RBA has been partnering with various groups in the community and differing ways of partnering are in the discussion stage. Fernbrook Mental Health Services is offering training opportunities for the staff and want to provide some services within the school to allow more continuity of student services and allow students to have more success in school. RBA looks to increase the vision of looking at the health and wellness of all the students, as well as their academic success.

Appendix A
ROCHESTER BEACON ACADEMY- RBA
POLICY No. 500
ADMISSIONS AND LOTTTERY POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain the application and enrollment process at RBA.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy establishes guidelines for admission into RBA that are consistent with the admission requirements of Minnesota Statutes §124E.11.

III. GENERAL ENROLLMENT PROVISIONS

- A. RBA is a public school and pursuant to state law, must enroll an eligible student who submits a timely application, unless the number of applications exceeds the capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building. When that occurs, students will be accepted by lot and admitted as further described in this Policy.
- B. Before admitting a student by the lottery, RBA shall give preference for enrollment to siblings of an enrolled student and to a foster child of an enrolled student's parents. This preference does not apply until one of the siblings is actually enrolled.
- C. Before accepting students by the lottery, may give preference to enrolling children of the school's staff before accepting other pupils by lot. Termination of employment prior to enrollment, however, will cause the loss of this preference
- D. RBA shall not discriminate against any student based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, age, national origin, religion or creed, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, disability, intellectual ability, prior measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, or for any other basis that would be unlawful for a public or charter school, nor shall RBA select students based on religious preference.
- E. RBA shall not seek any information about any applicant that may be used to discriminate against the applicant in either school's policies or governing laws This does not preclude the school from seeking such information for a lawful purpose

about a student after the student has been enrolled.

- F. RBA will not distribute any services or goods of value to students, parents or guardians as an inducement, term or condition of enrolling a student.

V. ENROLLMENT APPLICATION PROCEDURES & LOTTERY PROCESS

- A. Interested families must submit fully completed applications to be considered for enrollment. The enrollment period is from January 1 to January 31, 11:59 PM. An application must be received by RBA no later than the end of the enrollment period (if this date falls on a weekend or holiday, the next business day will be the deadline date). The Board of Directors may change or adjust the deadline for applications for the next school year by resolution without changing this Policy.
- B. Once the application period is closed, if there are more applicants than spots available, all timely applicants will be placed on one of two lists by grade: (a) a preference list of students given preference by state law which notes the type of preference being given (“Preferential waiting list”), and (b) all other applicants (“General waiting list”). Both lists will be independently shuffled and offers of enrollment will be made to students in the order in which they are listed for each grade until classes are full, first exhausting the preference list (“Preferential waiting list”), and then proceeding to the non-preference (“General waiting list”) applicants according to the following procedures:
 1. Siblings of currently enrolled students on the Preferential waiting list will be given first priority. If there are more sibling applicants than spots for a particular grade, the sibling applicants will be shuffled by lot each year and then offers of enrollment will be made in the order drawn.
 2. Second priority will be given to children of school staff on the Preferential waiting list. If there are more applicants than spots for a particular grade, the applicants will be shuffled by lot each year and then offers of enrollment will be made in the order drawn. If a staff member's employment is ended for any reason, the applicant moves to the end of the General waiting list.
 3. Once all sibling applicants and children of school staff have been placed, other

applicants will be offered enrollment in the order they were placed on the General waiting list as determined by the lottery.

- C. This lottery will be held no later than the first Monday after the student application deadline, sufficiently prior to the annual March 1 deadline for notifying the students' district of residence for transportation services.
- D. If any application is received after the end of the open enrollment period, but before the next open enrollment period, and the maximum capacity of the program, class, grade level , or building is reached, the applicant will be placed at the end of the number General waiting list based on the date when the application was received by RBA.
- E. If any student, whether enrolled or on the waiting list, cancels their application or withdraws from RBA, they shall lose their place. If they later re-apply, they shall be treated as a new applicant.
- F. All applicants still on a waiting list at the beginning of the next enrollment period must submit a new application for enrollment and will be subject to the enrollment process described above. The waiting lists do not carry over from year to year.
- G. Publication of the lottery policy, at a minimum, will be made public via the school's website.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124E.11 (Charter Schools – Admission Requirements & Enrollment)
Minn. Stat. §§ 123B.36-.37 (Authorized Fees; Prohibited Fees)