



Rochester Beacon Academy

#4238

Annual Report

2020-2021

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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 Minnesota Statute 124E.16 subd. 2. All required elements are listed in the Table of Contents along with other essential information regarding Rochester Beacon Academy.

Rochester Beacon Academy Statutory Purpose

Rochester Beacon Academy (RBA), District #4238-07, has successfully completed its sixth year of operation with students. RBA serves students in grades six through twelve in the same building. Sixth grade is self-contained with seventh through twelfth graders floating on a high school schedule.

In its first year, RBA decided that the school would begin with grades six through ten, knowing few students would change schools for the last two years of high school. Year two, the 10th graders moved up a grade and so grades 6-11 were offered. Year three, 12th grade was added and RBA graduated its first class of nine students on June 1, 2018. At the end of the 18-19 school year, RBA graduated its second class. At this time, RBA gave serious consideration to adding a Transition Program, but decided to wait one more year. The end of 2019-2020 brought a global pandemic known as COVID-19. With that, we had students full time distance learn the entire fourth quarter and held graduation in our parking lot in August with everyone wearing a face covering, while practicing social distancing. While the graduation ceremony was delayed, it was a success. The 2020-2021 school year saw continued management of the COVID-19 pandemic. We began the year in-person on a hybrid schedule, had to switch to distance learning when an outbreak occurred in November, but were able to end the year with everybody back full-time in person beginning in April. Graduation was held on-time, but we liked having it outside so much the year before that we kept that tradition. At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, the board approved the opening of a Transition Program known as SOAR (Students Obtaining Advocacy & Responsibility), which is slated to open for the 2021-2022 school year.

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

Vision: RBA's vision, as the premiere educator in southeast Minnesota for all students, utilizes highly structured techniques to assist students who have difficulties with organization, socialization and sensory differences while supporting students to make a successful transition into young adulthood, to live independently and maintain engagement in the community.

Purpose: RBA's continued purpose is to provide an option for students who have difficulty in the larger public school settings. RBA is able to accomplish this purpose with smaller class sizes and more adult support within each class. Since 74.1% of the student population has been identified as students with special needs, many of our core classes continue to be staffed with a general education teacher, special education teacher and paraeducator. This allows a focus on inclusion with appropriate accommodations within the general education classroom. In these unique classrooms, a team teaching approach is used allowing the content and special education teacher to instruct based on their strengths thus increasing student achievement.

Another essential part of RBA's success is a focus on a social skills curriculum which is implemented throughout the school day, providing a safe and welcoming environment for all students. Many of the students come from school environments where they experienced difficulties such as bullying and exclusion, which impacted their ability and willingness to learn. In addition, many students have diagnoses such as anxiety and depression that affect their ability to successfully attend a typical public school. As a result, students have not been attending school or a number of parents have chosen to homeschool. To meet a growing need for social skills, RBA employs two School Counselors, one Master Social Worker and one Behavior Strategist. Parents and students continue to report that RBA feels like a safe place and students feel they have found a 'place' where they belong.

RBA emphasizes the importances of organizational skills, which are essential for workforce and career readiness. Students are vital members of our school community and help around campus. Students assist in ensuring our building is clean and orderly. We feel it is important for students to learn to take pride in their community and we seek to teach this each and every day.

RBA continually seeks to expand our diverse programming. At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, the board approved the addition of a 18-21 Transition Program, known as SOAR, to begin in the 2021-2022 school year. Our community is in need of this service and we plan to answer this need with a robust program that can service students on their quest to join their community with success.

School Enrollment, Attrition and Admissions

Table identifies students enrolled on October 1; Average Daily Membership Count

| Grades/Year | 15-16 | 16-17 | 17-18 | 18-19 | 19-20 | 20-21 |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 6 | 22 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 15 | 12 |
| 7 | 12 | 29 (+32%) | 17 (+13%) | 17 (+70%) | 22 (+69%) | 23 (+53%) |
| 8 | 12 | 19 (+58%) | 35 (+21%) | 24 (+41%) | 16 | 22 |
| 9 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 40 (+14%) | 14 | 15 |
| 10 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 19 (+27%) | 20 | 15 (+7%) |
| 11 | 0 | 6 (+20%) | 10 (+25%) | 9(+13%) | 7 | 17 |
| 12 | 0 | 0 | 10 (+67%) | 12 (+20%) | 7 | 11 (+57%) |
| Total Enrollment | 62 | 88 | 105 | 134 | 101 | 115 |
| PSEO | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Attrition | NA | Positive 30% | Positive 16% | Positive 22% | Loss 25% | Positive 14% |

Rochester Beacon Academy (RBA) did cap total enrollment for the 2020-2021 school at 160 students. A lottery system is used for the initial selection process. (See Appendix A) Any student applying after enrollment is full will be placed on a waiting list on a first come, first served basis. Monthly tours for possible enrollment historically are a huge success with people attending each month. However, mass tours were suspended once COVID-19 began and schools were required to distance learn. RBA then shifted to individual tours that were customized based on the families needs. Tours did decline during the pandemic.

Student Demographics:

During the 2020-2021 school year, RBA drew students from 12 surrounding school districts.

| Category | Percentage |
|----------------------|------------|
| African-American | 4% |
| American Indian | 0% |
| Asian | 4% |
| Free & Reduced Lunch | 39% |
| Hispanic | 0% |
| Multi-Racial | 18% |
| Special Education | 74.1% |
| White | 74% |

Governance & Management and Professional Development

July 2020-June 2021 School Year RBA Charter School Board (Election Date: June 2021)

| RBA School Board 2020-21 | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Name | Board Position, Affiliation | Date Seated | Term Expiration | Phone | Meeting Attendance Rate |
| Dr. Bobbi Kostinec | Community Member | December 2018 | May 2022 | 507-358-8451 | 12/12 |
| Kate Dullard | Secretary; Teacher : 467478 | September 2019 | May 2023 | 847-226-2124 | 12/12 |
| Pam Johnson | Chair; Community Member | March 2018 | June 2024 | 507-358-6125 | 12/12 |
| Brenna Salfi | Teacher: 454588 | February 2020 | June 2023 | 716-461-5428 | 8/12 |
| Dr. Nandita Chawla | Community Member | December 2020 | June 2023 | 507-589-5280 | 11/12 |
| Evin Lantz | Treasure; Community Member | May 2017 | May 2023 | 507-361-3999 | 11/12 |
| Deanne Breitenbach | Vice-Chair: Parent Member | July 2017 | May 2023 | 507-951-2413 | 4/12 |
| Crystal Heim | Community Member | July 2019 | June 2022 | 507-993-8486 | 7/12 |
| Stacy Aoudia | Parent Member | March 2021 | June 2022 | 507-246-6560 | 3/4 |

RBA's Board continues to evolve. It is noted as challenging for staff to serve on the board. This dual position of being a staff member and then also a board member can at times put people in uncomfortable situations. Together, we have worked hard to find balance for staff members who elect to serve on the

board. We are finding that with engaging and motivated staff on the board, we can move the school forward with teacher voices being heard at all levels.

RBA's Board has five committees: finance, policy, strategy, continuous improvement and community & grant outreach. Each board member serves on a minimum of one committee. The Finance Committee meets each month one hour prior to the monthly scheduled board meeting. The Policy Committee meets primarily in the fall of each year, ensuring annual compliance of policies and meeting as needed if new policies arise. The Strategy Committee meets in the fall of each year to ensure the strategic plan is being followed. The Continuous Improvement Committee meets in the spring to review school data. The Grant and Community Outreach Committee meets throughout the year in order to raise additional funds for RBA.

Board Training

| Board Members 2019-2020 | New Member Training 1 | New Member Training 2 | New Member Training 3 | Annual Training; Strategic Plan | Annual Training: Board Roles |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bobbi Kostinec | | | | 10-26-2019 | 1/28/21 |
| Kate Dullard | 12-19-2019 | 3-13-2020 | 11-18-2020 | 10-26-2019 | 1/28/21 |
| Pam Johnson | | | | 10-26-2019 | 1/28/21 |
| Brenna Salfi | 11-18-2020 | 11-24-2020 | 12-17-2020 | Not Seated Yet | 1/28/21 |
| Nandita Chawla | 12-19-2019 | 1-28-2020 | 1-27-2021 | Not Seated Yet | 1/28/21 |
| Evin Lantz | 11-2-2017 | | 11-2-2017 | 10-26-2019 | 1/28/21 |
| Deanne Breitenbach | 11-2-2017 | | 11-2-2017 | 10-26-2019 | 1/28/21 |
| Crystal Heim | 12-19-2019 | 1-23-2020 | 11-18-2020 | 10-26-2019 | 1/28/21 |
| Stacy Aoudia | 10-12-2021 | 9/20/21 | 10/26/21 | Not Seated Yet | Not Seated Yet |

* Highlighted are new members who must complete the new training that is required.

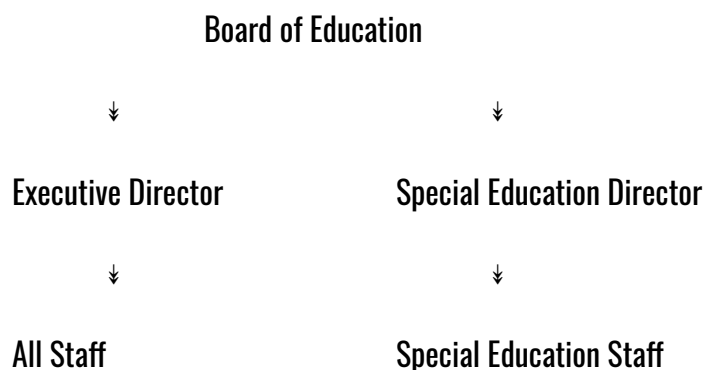
Management

Years one through three, RBA was led by Executive Director, Kari Weiss. As part of the restructuring in the second year, Ms. Weiss began to spread leadership to other staff. A Dean of Students .5 FTE position was created and filled by a former Executive Director of another charter school. This allowed the Executive Director to keep to more administrative tasks and for staff to have more time with leadership. The Board also decided that financial management was to be more “in house” to maintain knowledge of budgets. In year three, a new administrative structure was put in place. The team included the Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, SPED Coordinator, Business Manager, Office Manager and Receptionist.

Year four saw more administrative restructuring. Kari Weiss resigned from RBA and Nicole Musolf was announced as the new Executive Director. As such, the administrative team for year four included the Executive Director, Special Education Director and internal Business Manager. The Special Education Director was promoted from the coordinator role from year three. The financial management continued to be contracted with Aaron Leisen from Charter School Accounting through December. Beginning in January 2019, Traci LaFerriere took over as the new accountant and the in-house business management position was eliminated. This same structure has been in place since January of 2019.

RBA continues using Kids on the Go transportation in conjunction with Rochester Public Schools, the resident district. As such, the students are transported via transit vans with no more than 10 people. This is beneficial for several reasons, including but not limited to, less stimulation and quicker routes.

The structure of management and governance looks like:



Authorizer Information

Rochester Beacon Academy is authorized by the Minnesota Guild of Charter Schools, working directly with Ms. Cindy Murphy and Ms. Glory Kibbel. The Guild provides programmatic oversight, reviews monthly financial statements and participates in the annual audit with the accounting firm of Clifton Larson Allen LLP. In the spring of 2020, RBA was awarded another three year contract with the Guild with the option to extend to five years with specific conditions needing to be met. These conditions are tied to finances and academic growth. RBA strives to meet those obligations so a five year contract can be extended. Contact information: Cindy Murphy, execdirectormnguild@gmail.com or Glory Kibbel, gkibbel@gmail.com.

Professional Development

RBA believes in professional development training and works diligently to provide meaningful experiences to all staff. Below is a list of the trainings offered prior to the start of the school year.

| Training Topic | Audience |
|--|----------------------|
| Handbook/Policies/RBA Structure | All Staff |
| Technology Training: JMC | New Staff; Voluntary |
| Mandated Training (Reporting, BBP & ERK) | All Staff |
| SPED Training (Procedures/Policies) | SPED Staff |
| Team Building (Create Team Flag) | All Staff |
| Mental Health Training | All Staff |
| Seizure Training | All Staff |
| Rochester Police Department Training (Under the Influence) | All Staff |
| Diversity Training | All Staff |

Staffing

| Name | File Folder Number | Assignment | Not Returning 2021-2022 |
|-----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Nicole Musolf | #416461 | Executive Director | |
| Melissa Walsh | #497099 | Special Education Director | |
| Vicki Bruske | NA | Office Manager | |
| Elisa Voeltz | NA | Receptionist | |
| Gabriella Hale | # 492986 | Art Teacher | |
| Hamid Atchan | #1003005 | Science Teacher | |
| Kate Dullard | #467478 | LA Teacher | |
| Sarah Owens | #507726 | LA Teacher | X |
| Nick Bortnem | #510598 | Math Teacher | X |
| Dean Frank | #468538 | Social Studies | X |
| Deidra Richards | #1005917 | 6th Grade Teacher | X |
| Darcy Bock | #367152 | Special Education | |
| Brenna Salfi | #454588 | Special Education | |
| Erin Volkart | #517643 | Special Education | |
| Jessica Laber | #1005947 | Special Education | |
| Toni Mundy | #512072 | Special Education | X |

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Tanner Johnson | #511661 | Special Education | X |
| Will Miller | #509459 | Special Education | X |
| Krista Affeldt-Bacon | #333875 | Special Education | X |
| Jackie Buringa | #199810 | Special Education | X |
| Julie Halferty | NA | Behavioral Strategist | |
| Zack Langreck | #1001955 | School Counselor | |
| Pati Hruby | #518067 | Masters of Social Work | X |
| Dustin Johnson | #1004042 | School Counselor | X |
| Denisse Vargas | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Janet Fleming | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Dianna Oleson | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Tatum Blume | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Chelsey Back | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Miles Margiellous | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Katrina Kruger | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |

| | | | |
|-------------------|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| Lori Becker | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Michelle Pederson | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | |
| Elise Clark | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Florielle Dungog | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Jennifer Pollay | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Julie Popham | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Marie Sexton | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Natalie Quandt | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Rachel Berven | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Kim Mills | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Allison Miller | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Emily Willette | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Kendra Johnson | NA | Special Education Paraprofessional | X |
| Jordann Crowley | #1002610 | Public Health Nurse | |

Finance

Rochester Beacon Academy used Aaron Leisen from Charter School Accounting for financial management services through December 2018. In January of 2019, Traci LaFerriere began working with RBA as Business Manager. Traci meets with the Finance Committee every month prior to the School Board meetings. The Finance Committee monitors the budget and ensures responsible fiscal management. RBA maintains internal controls to meet the standards set forth by the auditors. The Executive Director and Director of Special Education work bi-weekly with Traci on monitoring the budget including receivables and payables. RBA contracts with the CMERDC for payroll processing, which is overseen by the Executive Director in conjunction with Traci to ensure proper UFARS coding.

RBA continues to strive to be fiscally stable and sound, although FY19 was very challenging. RBA was placed in Statutory Operating Debt (SOD) at the end of FY18. As such, the Minnesota Department of Education required a comprehensive financial plan to be developed and executed to ensure RBA began operating in the positive as soon as possible. This process required very detailed monitoring and quarterly financial updates to MDE to ensure RBA was on-track. At the close of FY19, finances were significantly improved, but another fiscal year was required to completely climb out of SOD.

RBA was removed from SOD status in FY20. Intense monitoring and robust budgeting ensured that RBA ended the year with a positive fund balance. The 2020 audit confirmed this and showed a positive 2% fund balance. Throughout the year, continual monitoring by MDE was required and RBA met those stipulations each time.

During FY21, RBA began preparation to open an 18-21 Transition Program called SOAR. All financial data was examined and the board approved its opening for six students.

A complete copy of our audit is on file with the Executive Director and is available for review.

Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2020 (according to our Audit)

Revenue **\$2,945,226**

Expenses **\$2,346,796**

Fund Balance **\$643,514**

Operational Goal 8: Fund Balance

The fund balance will be 0% beginning in FY20, then RBA will increase its fund balance by 3% each fiscal year as measured by the annual financial audit. RBA will not be in SOD.

| | FY2020 | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|--------------|---|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Fund Balance | 0% is goal, actual is 45,086 (FY20 audit) or 2% | 3% is goal, Actual is 27.4% | 6% | 9% |

Academic Program

Academic Performance

RBA uses a variety of assessment tools to drive instructional processes, including but not limited to, curriculum-based assessments (CBA), NWEA MAP testing, ACT testing, teacher observations, IRLA Reading Assessments, Individual Education Plan progress and standardized state testing (MCA Testing).

RBA participated in the Winter NWEAs. Results are below. MCAs were not completed in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. Therefore, no results will be reported for Spring of 2020. MCAs were administered in 2021; however, due to COVID-19 still being in full force, results were not reported as they historically have been. As such, you will see COVID written in for a data point.

It is very important to note that formal academic testing should not be used in isolation to evaluate our students. We work with a special population of learners whose value cannot be solely captured with a standardized test.

Achievement Goal 1: MCA Progress

Reading Proficiency

Students in the Achievement Level “Decreased/ Does Not Meet Standard” Category (MDE Academic Progress) will decrease by 3 percent each year during the contract period starting in FY21.

| | Baseline | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|--------------|----------|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| All Students | 69.77% | 67.68 (goal) COVID, NA | | |

Mathematics Proficiency

Students in the Achievement Level “Decreased/ Does Not Meet Standard” Category (MDE Academic Progress) will decrease by 5 percent each year during the contract period starting in FY21.

| | Baseline | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|--------------|----------|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| All Students | 77.27% | 73.4% (goal) COVID, NA | | |

Academic Achievement Goal 2: NWEA Progress on Reading and Math

Annually, the percent of students who meet their expected growth projection for Reading on the NWEA test from Winter to Winter will go from 50% in the baseline year to 62% by the end of FY23.

| Reading | FY2020 | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|--------------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| All Students | 50% | 54% 46% actual | | |

Annually, the percent of students who meet their expected growth projection for Math on the NWEA test from Winter to Winter will go from 50% in the baseline year to 62% by the end of FY23.

| Math | FY2020 | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|--------------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|
| All Students | 50% | 54% 49% actual | | |

Achievement Goal 3: Closing the Achievement Gap

From a baseline of 8.7%, the gap between the “all students” group and the “Free and Reduced Lunch” (FRL) group in the Achievement Level “Decreased/ Does Not Meet Standard” Category (MDE Academic Progress) in MCA math will be reduced by 10% each year during the contract period, starting in FY 21. This goal is aligned to World’s Best Workforce Goal, “All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.”

| Grades | Baseline | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| 6, 7, 8 & 11 th | 8.7% | 7.83% COVID, NA | 7.05% | 6.34% |

Closing the Reading Achievement Gap

Annually, students taking the MCAs (MDE Academic Achievement Rate) will maintain a 3 point margin between all students and those students identified as special education.

| | Baseline | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11th Graders | 25.35 | Covid | | |
| SPED, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11th Graders | 20.00 | Covid | | |

Closing the Math Achievement Gap

Annually, students taking the MCAs (MDE Academic Achievement Rate) will keep the margin under 3 points between all students and those students identified as special education.

| | Baseline | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11th Graders | 9.37 | Covid | | |
| SPED, 6, 7, 8, 10 & 11th Graders | 9.30 | Covid | | |

Achievement Goal 4: High School Graduation

90% of students, enrolled at RBA for at least two consecutive years, will graduate high school in four years, not including students on Individual Education Plans who are eligible to stay in school from ages 18-21 and enter a transition program.

| | FY2019 | FY2020 | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|
| Graduation | 100% 25% (18-21) | 100% 38% (18-21) | 82% 10% (18-21) | | |

Primary Purpose Goal 5: Family Satisfaction with RBA's Service

Each year via a fall survey, families will respond with “agree” or “strongly agree” to each of the following two questions:

- My child is welcomed at RBA
- My child has found a “place” at RBA

From a baseline of 69% “agree/strongly agree”, each year’s survey results will show a 5% increase:

| Fall | Baseline | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|--|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| Families who “agree/strongly agree” with “My child is welcomed at RBA” | 69% | 72.45% | 96.5% | 80% |
| Families who “agree/strongly agree” with “My child has found a ‘place’ at RBA” | 69% | 72.45% | 78.6% | 80% |

Primary Purpose Goal 6: Special Education Individual Education Plan Progress

Special education students, who have been at RBA for at least one year, will improve the number of goals a year students meet or maintain adequate progress from 89% to 93% beginning with FY19 as our baseline with 89%.

| Quarter 1 | FY2019 | FY2020 | FY2021 | FY2022 | FY2023 |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Goals Met | 89% | 95% | 95% | 92% | 93% |

College and Career Readiness Goal 8: Post-Graduation Plans

ALL students enrolled at RBA in grades 9-12 will develop a post-high school (college and career readiness) plan with the support and guidance of the school counselor during the first semester of 9th grade, or as soon as possible when enrolling after semester 1, 9th grade. A plan template will be formulated to be used for each student’s plan. With the school counselor, each student will complete the following:

- Using the prescribed template, develop a career and college readiness plan including goals
- Annually discuss progress towards meeting the goals in their college and career readiness plan, and

update the plan as needed

- As graduation approaches, determine if they have met their college and career readiness goals

Percentage of students who have an annually-reviewed post-high school plan in place with the school counselor:

| FY21 | FY22 | FY23 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| 100% goal 29% (COVID) actual | 100% goal 100% actual | 100% |

Social-Emotional Learning

A top focus of RBA is social-emotional learning. We firmly believe that students cannot access their education if their mental health is not in a stable place. As such, we employ two school counselors, one social worker (Masters level) and one behavior strategist to help our students work through their anxieties and other mental health concerns that can impede academic progress. In addition, we contract with Comp Health for our Speech-Language services, as well as Occupational Therapy Services. Our mission, which drives all our work, is for students to join the community in which they live once they graduate. As such, we continuously work on social skills and use content as our vehicle in which to do this.

Special Education

Our population consists of 74.1% of students identified as requiring an Individual Education Plan. Special education programming is central to RBA's mission and focus. We readily serve students qualifying for all special education disability categories; some examples are as follows: EBD, ASD, SLD, OHD, DCD-MM, SLP, and SMI. We follow an inclusive model at RBA as often as possible. Direct instruction is provided to most students in a general education classroom with a special education teacher team teaching. The exception to this in our school is our four Setting 3 classrooms which support students who receive special education services for 60% or more of their day as identified in their Individual Education Program. RBA employed eight full-time special education teachers during the 2020-21 school year. Our team also included 16 Special Education Paraprofessionals. On-site we had a DAPE Teacher and Special Education Director. RBA contracted an Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, School Psychologist, Nurse and Speech-Language Pathologists. RBA is a charter school whose primary focus is serving students with special needs.

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 social development. The ultimate goal is for students to join their community after graduation, whether that is college or the workforce. We offer specific elective courses so students can hone their life skill development such as filling out an application, calling for a doctor's appointment or buying a car.

Innovative Practice and Implementation

RBA's primary organizational values are listed below:

- Team teaching model for multiple classes with a general education and special education teacher
- Small class size of no more than 24 students
- Extra adult support (Paraeducators) keeping the ratio at or below 1:8
- Differentiated instruction based on needs
- 45 minute class periods that allow for students to work on transitions with the support of multiple staff members. It also makes classes more manageable if they only have to be present for 45 minutes a day.
- Teaching of life skills such as organization, time management and character development
- Study skills that assist students in organizational strategies, how to attack assignments, and prepare for testing.
- Social skills curriculum that is taught to all staff and encompassed in all curriculums
- Transition classes whose focus is on life after graduation from high school

RBA staff are given multiple days per week to collaborate and participate in Professional Learning Communities. The purpose of those meetings are to discuss lesson plans, modifications/accommodations and to talk about how to best serve students. For many of our students, their needs require us to problem-solve for and with them on a daily basis. As a result, regular Problem-Solving Team meetings were held, as well as Child Find meetings. We are constantly working as a team to meet the needs of all of our students.

RBA's purpose is to "increase learning opportunities for all pupils." We diligently work on this through hands-on experiences. Our science teacher has incorporated weekly labs for our students so they can get hands-on experiences with science, which was challenging during distance learning. These labs include going outside and using our green space as part of science experiments. Our students work extensively

with social-emotional curriculum and life skill learning. Students get weeks and months of experience writing resumes, job interview skills and learn how to be team players. Our main goal is for students to join their communities with success. Therefore, we focus on soft skills and communication skills to ensure our students have the best opportunities for success.

School Climate

Parent Involvement

RBA exists today because of parents and their desire to offer more to students with special needs. Our parents are involved in several ways, some of which are listed below. It is worth noting that due to COVID, visitors were not allowed in our building this year. Therefore, volunteerism was down too. While we appreciate parent help, we are protective of our students so volunteering is limited for privacy reasons.

Student Fundraisers

Conference Meals

Ray of Hope Fundraiser

Community Involvement

Rochester Beacon Academy has established relationships with many agencies in the community including, but not limited to, the following (listed alphabetically):

Bluestem: provides mental health services for students and families

Byron Public Schools: provides food services and mentorship regarding Special Education Services

Comp Health: provides speech and OT services

Encourage Health: provides PT services

Exercisability: provided outside therapy for students

Fernbrook: provides mental health services for students and families

Kids on the Go: provides transportation

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

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

Minnesota Guild: provides us our charter

Minnesota School of Business: leases their building to RBA

Olmsted Human Services: provides social workers to assist with our students

Olmsted Public Health: provides audiometer for student's hearing assessments and assistance for health services

Prairie Care Treatment Center: provides residential and outpatient mental health services

Presence Learning: provides speech and psychology testing services

Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney: supplies policy and legal support

Rochester Police Department: provides support to our students who participate in the ankle bracelet tracker program, as well as students who are in crisis

Rochester Public Library: sends us the Bookmobile so our students can read more

Southeast Service Cooperative: provides professional development opportunities for staff

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC): parents creating fun opportunities for RBA students

Future Plans

Programming and Structures

During the 2020-2021 school year, the school board approved the opening of the transition program called SOAR for six students. We stand ready to serve any students who wish to enroll for the 21-22 school year.

In addition, we will be implementing Learning Labs. These are blocks of time built into the day where students are invited to class to work on incomplete work so they pass all their classes. Students can also come to the Lab to work on work they find challenging or difficult to understand. There are three of these blocks built into the day; two are called Learning Labs and one is called GAP. GAP is our Graduate Assistance Program for our 11-12 graders that everyone must take so they are given the most optimal chance of ensuring graduation on-time.

As part of our strategic plan, RBA is looking into the development of a gym space. When we complete a feasibility study, we will then develop next steps based on the findings.

Coursework

Students want more options in terms of elective course offerings. These electives will include options to further develop life skills such as independent living or work skills. Our focus continues to remain on social-emotional learning so our students can join their community with success.

Communication with Parents and Community

The JMC parent portal has been very helpful in keeping parents informed about their student's attendance and grades, thus increasing transparency. We also use DoJo to communicate with families about their student's daily behavior. Being marketable via the Web is a 21st century skill and one that we continue to develop and put resources towards. As such, our RBA's website continues to undergo changes keeping it visually appealing, user friendly and informative. Weekly email updates from the district office keep parents informed of events and highlights successes of our school. We believe in multiple communication tools so families know of the happenings at RBA.

Looking Forward

Word of mouth has been the primary means of student growth for the school and has resulted in a steady expansion. Continued partnerships and communication with community agencies will aid in the building of community relationships and understanding of RBA's existence and need in the Rochester area. To that end, RBA wishes to continue serving students with special needs in a fiscally sound and responsible manner.

Appendix A
ROCHESTER BEACON ACADEMY- RBA
POLICY No. 500
ADMISSIONS AND LOTTERY 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 lottery 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, RBA may give preference to enrolling children of the school's staff before accepting other pupils by lottery. 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. 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 ends for any reason, the applicant moves to the end

of the General waiting list.

2. 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)