



# *Impact Report*

**2022-2023**

# Volunteers

Members of our community who give their time, energy and enthusiasm are the heart of River. We would not be able to accomplish all that we do without the dedication of so many helping hands.

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# Welcome



Dear River Community,

**AM HONORED AND EXCITED** to present The River School 2022-23 *Impact Report*. This report provides an opportunity to share how each gift touches the lives of our students, faculty and staff. In the nearly 25 years I have been fortunate enough to be a part of this community, I have watched our students learn to master new academic skills, trust themselves, discover new perspectives, lean into inquiry, reach remarkable milestones and become their own best advocates. In essence: evolve.

Defined, evolve means “to develop gradually, especially from a simple to a more complex form”. In our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, our tenets are: Innovate, Enhance, Grow, Evolve and Sustain. When I think back on our progress over this last year, I believe we have embodied them all. But “*evolve*” stands out. From the more noticeable accomplishments like establishing our inaugural fourth grade class, launching the meaningful *Children Are Citizens* curriculum, and obtaining a generous grant from the Green Family Foundation to initiate the Community Outreach Fund, to the more discrete – shifting of our administrative staff to satellite office space, negotiating our lease space (directly across from the school on V St, NW) for the expanding Upper Elementary and the progressing of our new campus plans, River is developing gradually into its most complex (and best!) form.

I cannot think of a better way to highlight our continued commitment to children, families and our greater community than with the publication of the research paper, *Language and academic outcomes of children with cochlear implants in an inclusive setting: Evidence from 18 years of data*. Being able to definitively prove that River’s inclusive model has an over 90% success rate isn’t surprising, but it certainly is gratifying. Never ones to spend too much time basking in our triumphs, we are looking forward to our future and what we have planned. We’re just beginning.

It’s difficult to come up with new words for *thank you*. The gratitude I have for this community, parents, volunteers, faculty, staff and the Board of Trustees is endless. Thank you for continuing on this journey with us and being part of our evolution.



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## MISSION

The River School's inclusive program challenges each child to work collaboratively, to think critically, and to develop the confidence to take risks, embrace their curiosity, and find their voice.



Dear River Community,

**THOUGH THIS IS MY FIRST STANDALONE LETTER,** I have been active on the Board of Trustees since 2015, am an alumni parent, and am in my second year as President. All that to say, I have been invested in this community for a long time and I am always inspired by the abundance that is River – from the generosity of our community to the creativity and warmth of our educators, faculty and staff.

When I review our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, I am deeply proud of our progress. We took significant steps to grow in the areas we mapped out as essential. We increased our enrollment, established our Upper Elementary Program, have solid finances thanks to a successful auction and annual fund contributions, took meaningful action to further our new campus plan, added dedicated staff, and are serving more students of diverse backgrounds. We are solidly positioned to build on our current momentum and reach all of the sizable goals we set forth three years ago.

Over the summer we received our updated accreditation from the Association of Independent Maryland and DC Schools (AIMS) through 2032, “affirming our school strengths, providing institutional reflection and long-term, ongoing school health.” Accreditation is an endorsement of River’s program and is a requirement for the School’s membership in local, regional and national associations of independent schools. The accreditation process includes input from our community– faculty, staff, board, and current and past parents– and reaffirms the work we are doing towards our current and long-term goals.

It takes substantial effort, time and dedication to make all of this happen. Thank you to Nancy and the Board for their tireless commitment to River, their motivating vision, and outstanding work over the past year. This, accompanied by other meaningful gifts from our many contributors and supporters makes me proud of our community and very optimistic for what lies ahead.

Thank you,

*Casey Seidenberg*

Casey Seidenberg  
President, Board of Trustees





# The Year in Review

**IN THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR**, we loved welcoming families and friends back for in-person celebrations of learning, field trips, and Arts & Sciences activities and performances. **Hundreds of books were read, thousands of numbers counted, added, subtracted, multiplied and divided, and countless lessons applied to real-world scenarios.** Through thematic student-centered units, our teaching teams steered classes through a developmentally appropriate scaffolded curriculum. Our students learned, practiced and achieved core academic skills, concepts and knowledge through integrated, inquiry-based approaches to foster their critical thinking. What a year!



# Going Fourth!

## River's Inaugural Year of Upper Elementary

In June, the rising fourth graders met for a brainstorming session (complete with pizza!) and used their innate curiosity, initiative, and sense of discovery to craft their vision of River's Upper Elementary Program.



Fast forward to the start of the year when students bonded on an overnight camping trip at Bretton Woods, then hosted a Playwright and Theatre Educator to create an original play, and held an Inventor's Fair in partnership with the KID Museum showcasing their applied knowledge of electricity and circuits. The lively Fourth Graders did not stop there! They won a Roots & Shoots mini-grant from the Jane Goodall Institute as part of their *Community Initiatives* program to support the native bee populations around River's campus, spent Fridays off-campus engaged in learning with field studies including National Portrait Gallery, American History Museum, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Upcycle, and Rock Creek Conservancy. Factor in project-based, immersive learning in subjects like Math, Writing, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Spanish, and Physical Education and after school clubs for more exploring, innovating, collaborating and making – and our fourth graders had an incredible (and exhausting!) year.







# Children Are Citizens

## Year One

Our Children *Are* Citizens Celebration of Learning was a highlight of the school year! The **Children *Are* Citizens** program, created by Harvard's Project Zero, stems from the premise that all children are current citizens—not future or hypothetical ones—with ideas, opinions and the capacity to participate in the civic and cultural life of their city. Because Children *Are* Citizens is grounded in progressive education principles, this program felt like a natural extension of our River ideals. For the eight classes — Preschool-Grade 1 — that participated in this pilot, teachers guided creative responses to the question, “What does being a good citizen and community member mean to you?”



At the conclusion of this year-long journey, River Curriculum Director, Christiane Connors, presented to a standing-room-only-crowd of parents, and the teaching teams who participated shared with faculty and staff their concepts and work, including a root cause analysis of kindness, accessible playground designs and an exploration of what makes a community healthy. Each classroom wrote and illustrated a book documenting their learning journey with each student receiving their own copy that they shared with their families.





# School Life

## Art and Music at River

We kicked off the school year with our very first schoolwide self-portrait art project. Each classroom, from our youngest to oldest learners, explored the same concept—self-identity—through age-appropriate lenses, mediums and processes. The project entitled, *Know thyself!* was a fun way to deepen self-concept and express creativity.

And of course, we sang and danced this year with our in-person performances! Every class was in on the act from the Kindergarten and Grade 1 performance of *Bugz* and the Grade 2 and 3 performance of *Pirates! The Musical*, to the Grade 4 original production of *Wonderland: Madly Ever After*. The fourth graders helped write the script, build the sets and design their costumes all while learning their lines for this show. We are so grateful for the guidance of Mr. James and our family volunteers who worked behind the scenes on costumes and set design.



## International & Multicultural Night

We celebrated our wonderful diverse and united community with our Fourth Annual International & Multicultural Night. In addition to a delicious array of food, families enjoyed a variety of activities including origami making, Brazilian dancing, the Mancala game and a fun photo booth!



### Book Fair Week

Each year, River holds a Book Fair to encourage a love of reading and to celebrate our amazing educators and speech-language pathologists who each day develop capable and enthusiastic readers through a variety of instructional techniques, formats and assessments. This year, we kicked off our springtime event by inviting students and teachers to dress as a favorite book character!



### Grandparents and Special Friends Day

One of our most notable events is Grandparents and Special Friends Day. Held in the spring, this day celebrates those extraordinary people who support River and our students in all manner of ways. Guests enjoyed lunch in the Gym, and spent time in the classrooms, met our educators and enjoyed time with their favorite student(s).

### Field Day

We had phenomenal weather and a record crowd for Field Day this year which was held at Palisades Park! Mr. Harris and team could not have pulled this off without our family volunteers to help set-up, clean-up, cheer and coach activities! From popsicles and ring toss to spinning on the dizzy bat and running with parachutes, a lot of fun was had by all!



### Falcon Graduation 2023

It is always a wonderful celebration when our Grade 3

Falcons graduate — and this year did not disappoint! The students, along with their families, participated in our traditional graduation ceremony and enjoyed a delicious luncheon, with photo opps and plenty of time for reminiscing and discussing plans for the summer. We're so proud of these young learners and look forward to seeing what they do next—whether at River or a new school!





# DELIB

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Belonging at River

River embodies an inclusive educational model where we strive to constantly examine our practices with the overarching goal to be a school that is openly anti-bias and anti-racist (ABAR). Since 2020, we have worked with experts in the field to:

- Develop Social Justice lessons based on the goals of identity, justice, equity and action
- Initiate our first cycle of Children Are Citizens to foster a civic identity starting with our youngest learners
- Create an ABAR Playbook, a practice guide to help faculty and staff impart a comprehensive understanding of the school's commitment to ABAR work in the classroom, in professional relationships and as a whole school community.

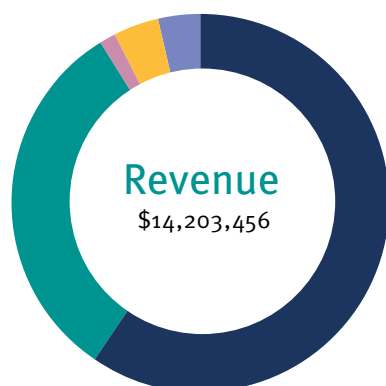


This year, we hosted a full day of learning and professional development in the form of a “book tasting” for faculty to explore diverse, identity and culturally affirming literature across all ages to help us further create ABAR classrooms. Beforehand, faculty and staff were served leading research on the significant impact of culturally responsive classroom resources. Then, they reviewed, browsed, read, discussed, questioned and analyzed over one hundred books, always through the frame of young learners’ developmental understandings of race and difference. Afterwards, teaching teams and faculty members inventoried their classroom libraries using a culturally responsive lens. We look forward to this ongoing process that will lead us to be more responsive to the needs of our entire community.

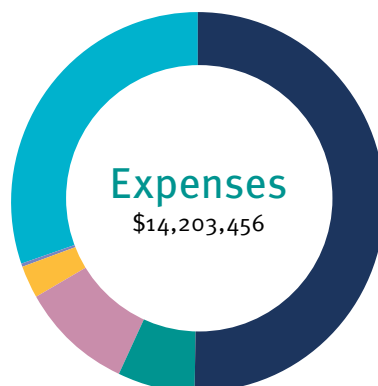
# Financials

## 2022-2023

River's financial position remains strong and the commitment and generosity of our community is laying the groundwork for future expansion. These graphs show The River School's revenue and expenses over the fiscal year, September 1, 2022–August 31, 2023.



• Tuition & Fees	\$8,462,380
• Contributions	\$4,512,033
• Clinical Services	\$164,158
• Investment Income	\$558,837
• Other	\$506,048



• Salaries & Benefits	\$7,143,977
• Financial Aid	\$980,238
• Program Expenses	\$1,369,644
• Facilities	\$372,606
• Interest	\$67,769
• Reserve	\$4,269,222

### Endowed Funds

\$3,618,901

John K. Niparko Endowment Fund	\$3,211,002
Jill Bailey Chenet Scholarship Fund	\$407,899

### Contributions

\$4,512,033

• Scholarship Auction	\$405,519
• Annual Giving	\$491,530
• Future Fund	\$1,000,053
• New Campus	\$1,088,720
• Grants	\$1,480,625
• Other	\$18,741
• RiverWalk/Jill Bailey Chenet Scholarship Fund	\$20,845
• Endowment	\$6,000



#### Update on River's New Campus

We continued our work to establish a new campus at 4220 Nebraska Avenue, NW that fully supports our growing student body. As expected, a small number of neighbors appealed the Board of Zoning Adjustment's unanimous approval of our plans. We filed our briefing materials and awaited a date for oral arguments. We are confident in a positive outcome given the thoroughness of the BZA review of our traffic management and operational plans, and the in-depth, 30-page opinion that responded to each of the neighbors' concerns. A final ruling on the appeal will likely come mid-2024. During this time, we will continue to finalize architectural drawings and site plans.

We remain excited about this opportunity to strengthen The River School for the future and to fulfill our mission by providing greater access to our services for more children in our area.



# Recognition OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS

## Centennial Donors

The Centennial Club recognizes donors whose cumulative contributions to The River School over the years exceed \$100,000. These generous supporters, who represent every part of our community, have provided a strong foundation upon which River has been built and will continue to grow into the future.

Ellen & Ware Adams	Katharine Pollard Maddux
Mary & Alexander Barth	Memorial Mental Health Foundation
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Katherine & David Bradley	Patricia & John Klick
Aimee & William Burck	Kathryne Love & Jason Licht
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Dawn Halfaker	Prentis Tomlinson
Heisley Family Foundation	Julie Bedford
Nancy Herman	& Douglas Vanderbilt
	Rachel Moore Weller



## Annual Fund

We are grateful to the many members of our community who contributed to the Annual Fund. Every gift enables River to provide an exceptional educational program, enrich our community with financial assistance, attract and retain talented faculty and grow our Upper Elementary. The collective generosity of trustees, parents, alumni parents, grandparents, and faculty and staff totaled \$491,530 in 2022-2023.

### Leadership Circles

#### VISIONARY

\$100,000+

Dawn Halfaker  
Nancy Herman  
Rachel Moore Weller

#### FOUNDER

\$35,000 - 99,999

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Cedar Hill Foundation

#### GREAT FALLS

\$10,000 - 34,999

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Marcy Oppenheimer  
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Liz & Dave Roberts  
Hania Qutub & Iyad Saidi  
Cameo & Andy Salembier  
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Casey & Nicholas Seidenberg  
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*In honor of Marie Wright*

Liz & Tom Thompson

*In honor of Ryan Thompson*

Beth Siegel & Scott Weiner

*In honor of our grandson Wes Weiner*





# Special Gifts

We are grateful for gifts dedicated to specific purposes that support the mission of The River School.



## COMMUNITY OUTREACH FUND

In April, The River School received a grant from The Green Family Foundation to ensure equity and access for children with hearing loss from marginalized communities. The \$250,000 grant helped establish the Community Outreach Fund to provide intervention and support for children from underserved communities. The Fund will be used to build capacity and expand the reach of The River School and Potomac River Clinic's services in the region, including increased clinical staff and equipment, and providing access to specialized services to children in areas of the city that have historically been in need.

## Early Intervention and Outreach

The Cedar Hill Foundation awarded a \$35,000 grant to fund early intervention for children with hearing loss, as well as to support our efforts to reach children in marginalized and underserved areas of the region.

## John K. Niparko Endowment

The John K. Niparko Endowment was named in memory of founding board member and world-class surgeon, researcher and scientist, John K. Niparko, MD, who died in 2016. It was through his leadership and generosity in 2011 that our Endowment Fund was established to strengthen our ability to ensure extraordinary teaching and learning, and the capacity to pursue the school's strategic goals. As of August 31, 2023, the Niparko Endowment totaled \$3,211,002.

Andre & Priscilla Cheng

Angela Niparko

## Jill Bailey Chenet Scholarship Fund

Named in memory of our beloved teacher and friend, Jill Bailey Chenet, who passed away in 2012, this fund recognizes the dedication Jill had to her students, instilling them with a sense of joy and wonder that was palpable in her classroom. The fund total as of August 31, 2023 was \$407,899.

## River's Future

In 2016, River parent and Board Trustee Rachel Moore Weller established the Future Fund in remembrance of Harry R. Weller. Thanks to generous donations of more than \$2 million to this fund, River is pursuing a new campus at 4220 Nebraska Avenue, NW, known as "Under Oak". Since 2022, other donors have joined the effort to secure River's future.



# Disco Ball for Scholarship

On February 11, 2023 The River School held Disco Ball for Scholarship. Families came together, led by Co-chairs Ashely Bronczek, Shannon Green and Shannon Taylor, to celebrate our community and raise \$346,744 for the Scholarship Fund. Being able to assist families so that their children can benefit from our innovative, research-based curriculum, adds depth and diversity to our community, enriching the experience of every child. Heartfelt gratitude goes to the Co-chairs, parents, alumni parents, grandparents, faculty and staff, and area businesses for their contributions to this immensely successful fundraising event.



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Caroline & Dejan Zdravkov





# Jill Bailey Chenet's RiverWalk

Jill Bailey Chenet's RiverWalk raised \$20,695 in support of The Jill Bailey Chenet Scholarship Fund. This fund was established in 2012 in memory of beloved second grade teacher and friend Jill Bailey Chenet. Jill, known to her friends and family as "Tootie," spent many hours tutoring children in reading after school.

Her passion was to work with young children, teaching them to be strong readers. RiverWalk proceeds are dedicated to Tootie Time Tutoring for River Schoolers and the Jill Bailey Chenet Endowed Scholarship Fund.

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Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of The River School's 2022-2023 *Impact Report* for gifts received September 1, 2022-August 31, 2023. Contact the Development Office at 202-337-3554 or [development@riverschool.net](mailto:development@riverschool.net) with any questions about this report or for information about giving to The River School.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:** The River School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious affiliation, gender, ethnic or national origin in the administration of its admission, financial aid and other school-administered programs.





# Connecting

Strong connections with our alumni are a core value of our community. By maintaining engagement with them, we can celebrate their adventures and accomplishments, provide opportunities as interns and summer camp counselors, and offer guidance when needed. Listening to their experiences and perspectives on the world is enlightening and reinforces the importance of our mission.



## RiverWalk

This year's turnout for the Alumni Reunion Breakfast was great. Teachers and administrators enjoyed the chance to catch up with former River students and learn about their adventures and achievements.



## Alumni Reunion: Bowling at Pinstripes

After a hiatus, we resumed hosting an alumni reunion bowling party at Pinstripes in Georgetown. Attendance was higher than ever, with former students and their parents representing many years at River dating back to 2007!



## Falcon 2014 Reunion Dinner

Each year River hosts a dinner for our former Falcon class who are graduating from high school. To recognize this milestone we invited the Class of 2014 back to River to share their plans and hopes for the future and to reminisce.



## A SENIOR CLASS PROJECT

In spring 2023, River alumnus and Maret School graduating senior, Lilou Culhane (Falcon class 2014), contacted River regarding an idea for her senior class project. Her goal was to create a short film about River that answered the question: What makes The River School such a unique educational experience? Her proposal stated, "the film will present the revolutionary ideas and experiences that River provides to its students and why it is truly an exceptional place for early education. We want to highlight the connectedness and bonds formed between students with and without hearing loss, and how the diverse community is a point of pride for River." Armed with a list of questions and a small video camera, Lilou spent an entire week interviewing faculty and staff, and immersing herself in each classroom – including Art, Science, Gym, and Yoga classes – taking photos and capturing footage which resulted in a three minute video showcasing the joyfulness of River. (Oh, and we're pretty sure she got an A!).



