



Ridge and Valley Charter School

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Student Enrollment Application 2018-2019

A Different Kind of Public School

Ridge and Valley Charter School is based on several assumptions, and it is important that all applicants understand its unique focus.

1) Human beings are merely a thread in the miraculous web of life supported by this living universe. We have a profound responsibility to respect the Earth. Hence, the school's primary focus is on ecological literacy and sustainability; in other words, children will learn to construct lives that promote the long-term health of the planet.

2) The curriculum will use the universe as a context for learning. The program will be highly experiential, allowing children to learn by doing, often out-of-doors, and in multi-aged groups. They will be encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, to challenge traditional assumptions about consumer culture and to derive new models for honoring the world around them.

3) Using this experiential approach, the school will meet the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards set by the state Department of Education. Beyond all mandated state tests, learner assessment will primarily consist of projects, work portfolios and rubrics, rather than traditional letter grades.

4) Each and every child will be cherished and respected, and his or her creativity and potential nurtured and supported. Children will be encouraged to cherish each other as well, and to respect and honor differences and boundaries. Conflict resolution will be an integral part of the program.

The school will encourage active participation of all students and parents in shaping the educational experience and will strive to build a stronger community both inside the school and beyond school walls.

Application Process

Ridge and Valley Charter School opened in September 2004 with learners in grades K-8. As a public school, the charter school must accept every New Jersey resident who applies, as long as there is space. Preference is given, however, to those from the region of residence: the school districts of Blairstown, Frelinghuysen, Hardwick, Knowlton and North Warren Regional Middle School. If more applications are received than there are places available, a lottery is held after each application deadline. Once a student has been accepted, the student remains enrolled for subsequent school years. Siblings of enrolled students receive preferential placement in the student enrollment process.

The first application period is October 1st through the 31st and the deadline for grades K-8 (2018-2019 school year) is November 1, 2017, with subsequent deadlines on the first day of every month thereafter. Please provide a self-addressed envelope with your application. You will be notified by letter within three weeks of the applicable deadline regarding the status of your application.

Charter schools are free, open-enrollment public schools that are required by law to serve all students. Charter schools shall be open to all students on a space available basis and shall not discriminate in their admission policies or practices on the basis of intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement, special needs, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis that would be illegal if used by a school district.

Ridge and Valley Charter School Mission

Ridge and Valley Charter School will use the environment as the context for learning. At Ridge and Valley Charter School, environment is defined as the world around us—our home, our classroom, our town, our bio-region, our country, our world, our universe. Subjects will be experienced, and will not be segmented as separate, unrelated areas of study. Children will learn that mathematics is an integral part of science, that history is the basis for social studies, and that reading, writing and research skills unlock knowledge of all kinds. Using the environment as a context for learning, children will learn to really see the world around them. They will learn to question, to wonder, to think creatively. They will learn to be citizens of the world, and to honor the responsibility that comes with that charge. They will learn respect for the earth and for all living things. They will learn and practice everyday habits of living that reflect sustainable lifestyles. They will learn to resolve differences, dissolve boundaries and share common goals in a real-world setting. Our children will learn how to think. The result of a Ridge and Valley Charter School education will be children who grow into adults who love the earth and who are passionate about its ability not only to survive, but to thrive. They will provide leadership that has a clear vision of the world and how to make it better.

Foundation Principles

RVCS was founded in response to a collective desire to enliven the instinctive human heart and consciousness connection to the planet. We ground our work in basic foundational principles that promote this end. These principles value the natural world, honor the interdependence of individuals and the creatures and systems that sustain them, strengthen our bonds of compassion and empathy, and consciously connect individuals with the natural world, one another, and with their own unique dignity.

We assert:

Earth is the primary teacher. Therefore,

- All subjects are experienced with Earth Literacy as the primary focus.
- Students spend at least 25% of their learning time outdoors.
- Students are encouraged to use sustainable lifestyle practices at school and at home.

The deepest and most meaningful learning occurs through personal experiences that incorporate individuals' interests, talents and passions. Therefore,

- Teachers identify learning styles and specific interests of their students and guide learning accordingly.
- Students participate with teachers in designing and adapting academic activities. This reflects their personal goals and develops their multifaceted talents.
- Subjects are experienced, not taught, and are not segmented as separate, unrelated areas of study.
- Teaching methods are modeled primarily on experiential education methods. Experiential education values the interests, attractions and natural abilities of individuals as the basis for their learning.
- Students develop problem-solving skills through their participation in community real-world projects individually and with classroom groups.
- Teacher-directed learning encompasses no more than 25% of the school day.
- Students ask more questions than teachers.

Each child's learning and development unfolds and blossoms in its own time when provided with opportunities, support, and loving encouragement. Therefore,

- A balanced literacy approach is implemented and includes effective practices for reading (independent reading, guided reading, shared reading, read aloud and interactive read aloud) and effective practices for writing (independent writing, guided writing, shared writing, interactive writing and modeled writing).
- Grammar and spelling are integrated into the process of reading and writing, not taught as separate subjects.
- Students are encouraged to read every day.

Children naturally aspire to fairness and justice. Therefore,

- Students learn conflict resolution techniques as part of their ongoing personal development. Discipline issues that are not in the category of causing physical harm or property damage are handled through a mediation process.
- Students participate in establishing the rules of their classroom.

Community and collaboration are critical in the educational experience. Therefore,

- Students have access to all of the teachers on the staff as resources and advisors.
- Students work with younger and older schoolmates in multiple and flexible group arrangements to develop interpersonal skills appropriate to the various roles of team member, mentor, guide, teacher and learner.
- Students have opportunities to spend a large portion of their day working collaboratively with other students.

Self-reflection, authentic assessment, and clear, specific feedback provide the greatest potential for continual growth and learning. Therefore,

- Assessment is ongoing through exhibitions, portfolios, and project-based rubrics rather than through conventional grades. Ongoing assessment includes evaluation and self-evaluation, based on criteria and standards developed collaboratively by teachers and students.

Mission- and age-appropriate knowledge and skills support ongoing educational excellence and lifelong learning. Therefore,

- Outcome-based assessments identify and focus on excellence in mastery of academic and non-academic knowledge and skills.
- Regular communication among the students, families, and guides supports individual development.
- Students receive ongoing preparation to succeed on all state-mandated standardized tests reflecting mastery of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content.

RVCS Student Application 2018 - 2019

Student Information (please return pages 3 and 4 only)

Name _____ Sex _____

Date of Birth _____ (must be 5 before October 1, 2018 for kindergarten)

Postal Address _____

Street Address _____

City _____ County _____ ZIP _____

Previous Schooling

Grade student will be in for the 2018-2019 school year:

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Type of school

Public school Homeschool Private school (please complete school information)

School District of residence

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blairstown Elementary | <input type="checkbox"/> North Warren Regional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frelinghuysen Elementary | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please complete school information below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hardwick School District | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowlton Elementary | |

School district of residence _____

School name _____

Address _____

Phone (_____) _____

Please note: if the student homeschools or attends private school, it is still required to indicate the district of residence above (funding follows the child from the school district of residence).

Parent Information

Parent name _____

Relationship to student _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone _____ Work phone _____

Email _____

Parent name _____

Relationship to student _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone _____ Work phone _____

Email _____

Student lives with ___ Both parents _____ Mother _____ Father _____ Guardian ___ Other _____

How did you learn about Ridge and Valley Charter School? _____

Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope so we can acknowledge receipt of this application. Send completed applications to:

Ridge and Valley Charter School
1234 State Route 94
Blairstown, NJ 07825

I have read the mission and the foundation principles of the Ridge and Valley Charter School.

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

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