



VOICE OF THE VALLEY

THE RIVER VALLEY LOCAL SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER - 2026 END OF YEAR / SUMMER ISSUE

RV Community,

As we celebrate the end of the 2025-26 school year, I am reminded of just how blessed we are in our community to have great families, hard-working students, and supportive community members. That was especially evident on May 22nd as the Class of 2026 celebrated their Graduation from River Valley High School at the Marion County Fairgrounds Veterans Coliseum.

Graduation is not just a celebration for our Seniors, it is an opportunity for our parents to witness the culmination of their child's hard work and a launching off point into adulthood. This ceremony is also a celebration for our entire community, as every stakeholder in the River Valley district has invested in our community's future by providing 13 years of educational and extracurricular opportunities for our students. Providing a free, quality public education would not be possible without the support of our community. I hope you will celebrate this investment in our young people and, most especially, the accomplishment of our Class of 2026 Graduates and enjoy the pictures included in this edition of the Voice of the Valley (VOTV)!

In this edition of the VOTV, you will also see articles highlighting the following:

- "RV for the Future" Recipients
- Our first group of students to earn their STNA as part of our River Valley Health Care Academy
- A farewell to our Treasurer, Brittany Keller (also see the Annual Financial Report)
- Overview of the four major Bond Projects that have been completed

Finally, as we celebrate America's 250th Birthday and our nation's founding on July 4, 1776, may we remember these words penned by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

God bless America, and have a great summer!

Adam Wickham
Superintendent



RV Class of 2026 Valedictorians



Liberty Elementary News

Preschool Prom

Liberty Elementary recently held its annual Preschool Prom, creating a joyful and memorable evening for its youngest students and their families. The event brought together preschoolers dressed in their finest attire, filling the space with smiles, laughter, and excitement.

The event provided students with a special opportunity to celebrate alongside their peers in a fun and welcoming environment. From the moment they arrived, students enjoyed the festivities, creating lasting memories through music, movement, and shared experiences. The success of the Preschool Prom was made possible through the dedication and hard work of the Liberty Elementary preschool team, who carefully planned and organized the event to ensure it was both meaningful and enjoyable for all who attended.

Families also played an important role in making the event special. Their support and presence added to the sense of community and celebration, creating a truly memorable experience for the students. Events like the Preschool Prom highlight Liberty Elementary's commitment to building strong connections between school and home while providing students with opportunities to celebrate and grow together.



LOVE
YOUR
SCHOOL!
RIVER VALLEY SCHOOLS



Fun in First Grade

March was an exciting and engaging month for first-grade students at Liberty Elementary, highlighted by hands-on learning and meaningful milestones. The month began with a celebration of the 120th day of school, an important marker in students' academic journey and a chance to recognize how far they have come this year.

Building on that momentum, first-grade classrooms transitioned into an interactive economics unit that allowed students to experience real-world concepts in a fun and memorable way. Throughout the month, students earned and saved pretend money by demonstrating positive behavior and making strong choices in the classroom.

As their savings grew, students took on the role of young entrepreneurs by creating their own classroom stores. They then had the opportunity to spend their earnings, applying what they had learned about earning and spending, as well as goods and services. The experience also introduced foundational ideas such as supply and demand in a way that was both accessible and engaging.



See Upcoming Events at:
rvk12.org/calendar



Specials Night

Liberty Elementary welcomed families for its annual Specials Night, drawing a strong turnout and showcasing the many talents and accomplishments of its students. The event provided an opportunity for families to experience firsthand the learning taking place in the school's special classes.

Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed student musical performances, explored a wide display of student artwork, and participated in a variety of literacy and technology activities set up around the building. Students took pride in sharing their work and demonstrating the skills they have been developing, creating an engaging and interactive experience for all who attended.



Heritage Elementary News

2nd Grade Field Trip - Ohio Health

The 2nd graders at Heritage Elementary visited OhioHealth for a career exploration field trip. They went around the hospital learning about lots of career opportunities by participating in hands-on activities with hospital workers. The kids were able to tour the emergency room, see how X-rays were taken, fill orders in the supply room, practice stretching with a physical therapist, practice manipulating surgical tools, and learn about dietary needs. It was a wonderful field trip full of learning!



5th Grade - Camp Week at Hopewood Pines

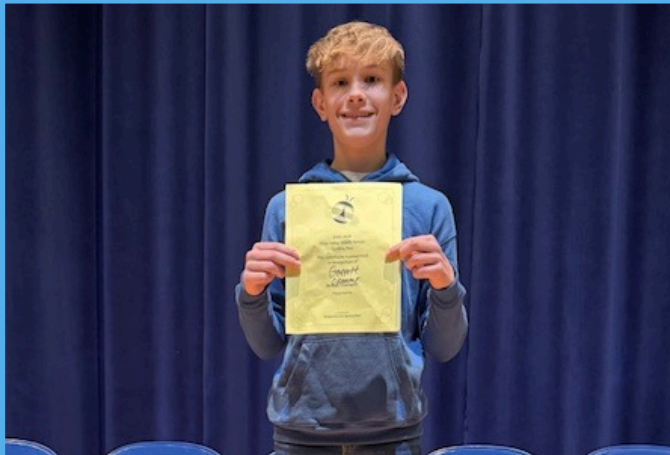
Our 5th grade students had an amazing camp experience as they took a 3-day overnight trip to Hopewood Pines Camp in Fulton, OH. There were a variety of hiking, wilderness, and cooperative challenges that students participated in and championed along the way. On Wednesday, we were joined by our Liberty friends for some games and activities as they were beginning their Camp Week. We are grateful to the parent chaperones and teachers who donated their time (and sleepless nights) to provide this opportunity.



1st Grade - Camp Week (The Great Indoors)

What an unforgettable week! First grade transformed into a campground as we pitched tents right inside our classrooms for a week of adventure. We kicked things off with a very special visit from James Anderson from the Marion County Parks District, who shared his expert knowledge of nature with us. Our amazing fifth-grade buddies stopped by to teach us classic camp songs, and we kept the outdoor theme going with an incredible field trip to the Eco Center. Throughout the week, students rotated through camp-themed learning centers, whipped up delicious camp snacks, and got creative making beautiful camp crafts. To top off an already magical week, our classroom chicks officially hatched! Ask your little camper about their favorite memory from our wild week!

Students in the News!



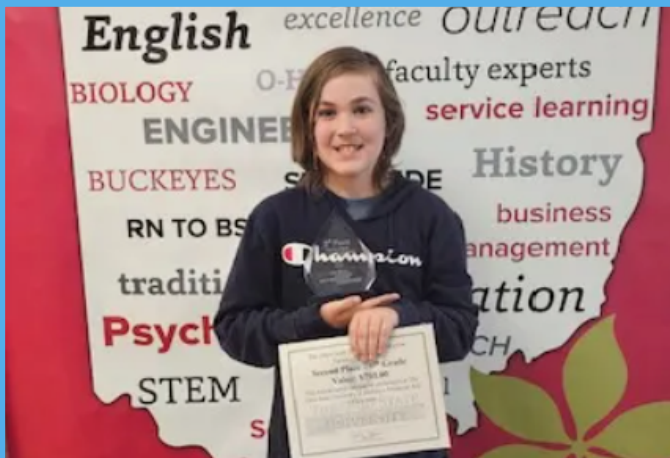
Spelling Success

Garrett Obenour successfully defended his title as the River Valley Middle School Spelling Bee champion for the third straight year. He was followed by runners-up Carter Kloha (2nd), Nora Dean (3rd), Mason Ring (4th), and Axel Bass (5th). Obenour continued his success by winning the Marion County Spelling Bee at Tri-Rivers in February, which earned him a spot in the State Spelling Bee at Nationwide Arena.



Rotary Club Award Recipients

Congratulations to 5th Graders Madilynn Chapman and Lillyrose Campbell as they were honored for their dedication and citizenship at the Rotary Club luncheon at Tri-Rivers. We are super proud of all the hard work you have put into a successful year!



Math for the Win!

A group of 24 students represented the school at the Ohio State University - Marion Mathematics Challenge, where Gage Oyster achieved second place in the 6th-grade individual division.



Art Award

Our students also excelled in other regional challenges. Eighth-grade student Madolynn Strzelecki earned first place for her graphic design entry in the 2026 Youth Art Month Flag/Graphic Design Exhibition, sponsored by the Ohio Art Education Association.

Middle School News

River Valley Middle School recently concluded a highly productive year, marked by numerous achievements for both students and staff, both within the classroom and beyond.

Community Engagement and Career Exploration

RVMS welcomed the community into our halls through several special events. We hosted a Veteran's Day luncheon to honor the service of our students' relatives. Additionally, more than 50 entrepreneurs and business leaders visited for Career Exploration Day, providing students with valuable insights into various professional trades.



Quizbowl Team at Tiffin University

Arts and Athletics

Our performing arts programs experienced a year of significant growth. The Band, Choir, and Orchestra delivered impressive performances throughout the year, while the show choir, "Revolution," competed successfully at regional events. The department also staged a spectacular production of Roald Dahl's "Willy Wonka Jr.," highlighting our students' theatrical talents.

On the athletic front, our Vikings celebrated championship seasons. The 8th-grade girls' volleyball and basketball teams both won their respective tournament championships. The track teams also saw consistent success at meets and invitationals, highlighted by Eden Schertzer setting a new school record in the shot put with a distance of 36' 10-1/2" and the 4 X 200 Relay team of Jacob Poulos, Jackson Osborne, Cavyn Bell, and Slone Fetter set a new school record with a time of 1:39.87. Individually, Osborne, Schertzer, and Audrey Blevins qualified for the State meet.



8th Grade Girls Basketball Champions

RV Celebrates America

In preparation for the 250th anniversary of the United States, students participated in the "RV Celebrates America" initiative. This year-long program included monthly lessons and activities dedicated to our nation's history. Students and staff received commemorative t-shirts, which were partially funded by an "America 250: Marion Celebrations" grant from the Marion Community Foundation, in partnership with the Marion Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.



RVMS Celebrates America

River Valley High School: 2025-26 Year-End Rundown

What an incredible year it has been at River Valley High School! As we wrap up the 2025-26 school year, let's take a look back at the amazing achievements, milestones, and moments that made this year so special for our 550 students.

During the fall, we hosted a meaningful campus Veterans Day celebration. We also celebrated the official CTE ribbon cutting and the grand opening of our new expansion wing. As we progressed into the winter, the HS and MS successfully implemented OpenGate weapons detectors to keep our campus more secure.

From an educational perspective, our HS and MS counseling departments worked to implement a new SchoolLinks program that assists students with future planning. An impressive 921 unique students completed at least one career exploration activity this year using SchoolLinks. Our office staff also organized 15 campus and workplace visits, with 246 students participating in these real-world experiences.

Spring highlights include Viking Signing Day, with 112 seniors signing across 54 different entities and career fields. This includes five proud members of the class of 2026 entering the armed forces. Our Senior class was also able to participate in job interviews, with 46 students interviewed by 10 different employers. As a result, 21 of our students received job offers.

We celebrated our Graduation Ceremony, which featured three valedictorians and represented the crowning achievement of our 146 exceptional seniors.

With a new year comes exciting changes. We want to extend our deepest gratitude to our departing staff members and wish them the best in their next chapters:

Happy retirement: Jay Ulsh, Michelle Evans, Lisa Hollaway, and Randy Leach

Best wishes on new career paths: Brett Rinker, Karen Seckel, and Dave Silverstein

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to spotlight two brand-new programs designed to expand academic opportunities for our students. Mrs. Scheff will be leading the new Education and Training College Credit Plus (CCP) program & Career Tech Pathway, and Mr. Toska will be heading the Computer Science CCP program & Career Tech Pathway

Thank you to our amazing students, dedicated staff, and supportive families for making the 2025-26 school year an unforgettable success! Have a wonderful, safe summer, and Go Vikings!

River Valley Health Care Academy Students Make History

In the first year of the River Valley Health Care Academy's existence, 14 students earned their State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) certification, with a 100% passage rate for our seniors in the program. These seniors not only earned an industry-recognized credential but also now have the ability to enter the workforce in a healthcare-related field.



“RV for the Future” Grant Recipients

Starting in the 2025-26 School Year, staff at River Valley donated to provide \$7,000 in grants to students. The awards from this fund will help students and alumni of River Valley with higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, and military careers.

In the first year of awarding to this fund, 14 Seniors will receive \$500 each. The recipients will use the funds to assist with college expenses, uniforms or equipment needs, and other expenses related to the workforce or military service.

We want to take this time to thank the Marion Community Foundation for their assistance in setting up this designated fund. Anyone from our community can contribute to the “RV for the Future” fund.

You can donate to the RV For the Future Fund at the link below or by using the QR code ->
marioncommunityfoundation.org/fund/river-valley-for-the-future-fund



2026 RV for the Future Awards

College

Chesney Alexander
Julia Atwell
Caitlyn Barron
Camden Bradley
Carson Combs
Brooklynn deSouza

Anna LaBarge
Carter Logan
Erica Mason
Ava Mathys
Taylor Potts
Kennedy Rensch

Workforce

Logan Creps

Military

Susanna Turner

Congratulations to Our Retirees!

Thank you for your years of service and dedication to River Valley Local Schools.

Sandy Sharp: 19 years - District Substitute
Mark Mauldin: 16 years - Bus Driver
Jackie Blevins: 5 years - Cook
Denise Castle: 19 years - Heritage Teacher

Michelle Evans: 26 years - RVHS Intervention Teacher
Jay Ulsh: 27 Years - RVHS Custodian
Lisa Hollaway: 37 Years - RVHS English Teacher
Randy Leach: 37 Years - RVHS Government Teacher

A Farewell to Our Treasurer, Brittany Keller

After six years as the Treasurer at River Valley Local Schools, Mrs. Brittany Keller is returning to her alma mater, Perkins Local School District, as their School Treasurer, effective July 1, 2026. Mr. Ethan Enders will be succeeding Brittany as our Treasurer. Please join us in welcoming Ethan to RV and wishing the entire Keller family (Brittany, Michael, and their kids Emma and Ellie) the best as they move to the Sandusky area.



Brittany Keller

RV Schools Treasurer



Deputy Brett Rinker

SRO



A Farewell to Our SRO, Deputy Brett Rinker

We would like to take a moment to thank our School Resource Officer, Deputy Brett Rinker, for his eight years of service to the River Valley District. This summer, Deputy Rinker will be moving back to road duty for the Marion County Sheriff's Office. During his time at River Valley, Deputy Rinker was instrumental in establishing training protocols for our Armed Staff in each building and in implementing the OpenGate Weapons Detectors, used daily in all schools.

Class of 2026





CAR SHOW



ALL CARS, TRUCKS & MOTORCYCLES WELCOME!

SUNDAY, JULY 19TH

***ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE
RIVER VALLEY ATHLETIC BOOSTERS***

RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

REGISTRATION 10 AM TO 1 PM

\$10.00 DONATION

**75+ SPONSOR CHOICE AWARDS · DOOR PRIZES · 50/50
CONCESSION STAND**

GOODIE BAGS FOR THE FIRST 100 REGISTERED

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL JESSIE AT 740-225-4349
ON FACEBOOK @ RIVER VALLEY ATHLETIC BOOSTERS CAR SHOW**

NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCIDENTS, LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS

River Valley Local School District



Popular Annual Financial Report

PAFR

FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2025

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Letter to Readers

We are pleased to present the River Valley Local School District's (the "District") Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) for the year ending June 30, 2025, now that the Auditor of State's Office has released our audit respective to this fiscal year. This report makes our District's finances easier to understand and is intended to communicate our financial situation in an open and accountable manner. We are proud of this report and the support offered by the Board of Education in its creation.

The PAFR is prepared on cash-basis accounting, which is different from financial information prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAP). Annually, the District is audited by the Auditor of the State of Ohio or its designee. A copy of our financial audit reports can be found on the Auditor of State of Ohio's website at www.ohioauditor.gov.

The PAFR consists of the general funds of the District. The General Fund is the general operating fund of the District and is used to account for all financial resources, except those required to be accounted for in another fund. The most significant items not reported in the General Fund include debt issuance and retirement, permanent improvements, capital project funds, and food service.

The River Valley Local School District would like to thank our citizens for their encouragement in creating a report designed to more adequately address their needs as taxpayers, as well as for the opportunity to serve them. Questions, comments, and feedback regarding this report are encouraged, so please do not hesitate to contact the Treasurer's Office at (740) 725-5440 or at bkeller@rvk12.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Brittany Keller, Treasurer

General Fund Revenues & Resources Over Expenditures & Services

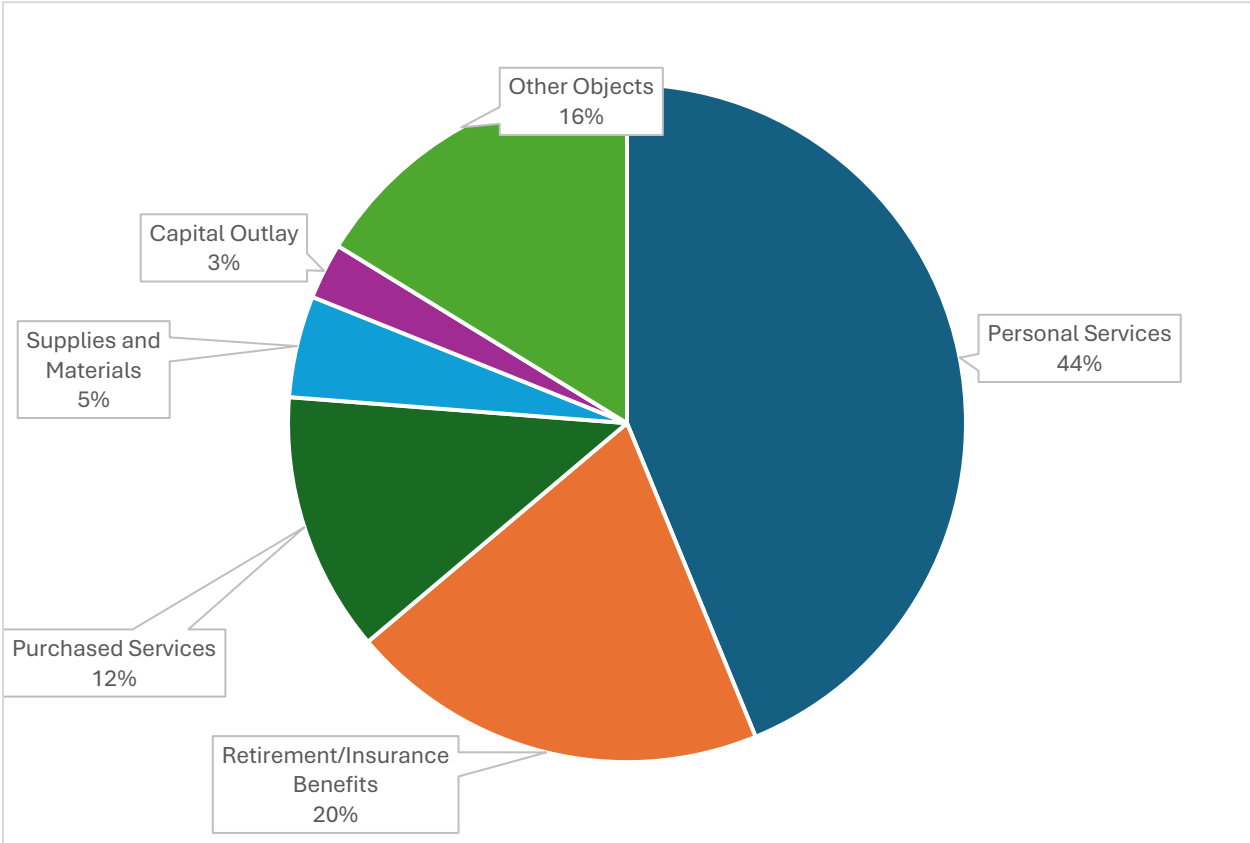
The Financial Activity Statement, also known as the income statement, below represents only the General Fund and is presented in a non-GAAP format. It provides a summary of the resources (revenues) and services (expenditures) of the District.

Receipts and Resources	FY25	FY24	FY23
Property Taxes	7,604,394	7,817,071	7,707,737
Income Tax	3,172,980	2,856,877	2,974,085
Unrestricted State Aid	9,413,376	9,283,919	8,497,990
Restricted State Aid	1,923,693	825,795	628,826
State Reimbursable Property Tax Credits	856,619	883,893	849.613
Casino Revenue	125,887	128,174	126,610
All Other Revenues	1,688,224	1,765,840	1,493,462
Total Receipts and Resources	24,785,173	23,561,569	22,278,323

Disbursements and Services Provided	FY25	FY24	FY23
Instruction	13,108,854.18	12,641,329.79	12,397,493.77
Pupil Support	1,019,259.88	920,356.07	971,234.55
Instructional Staff Support	835,265.30	371,970.46	435,718.52
Board/Administration/Fiscal	2,865,183.23	2,612,224.32	2,425,894.03
Plant Operation	2,291,873.68	1,762,271.15	1,691,662.05
Transportation	1,713,501.35	1,698,316.16	1,691,662.05
Central Support	680,414.43	403,040.01	530,232.69
Extracurricular	136,511.40	42,107.88	48,966.92
Non-Instructional Services	4,125,216.62	184,540.00	504,577.12
Bond Issuance Costs	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Disbursements and Services Provided	26,776,080.07	20,636,155.84	20,761,233.33

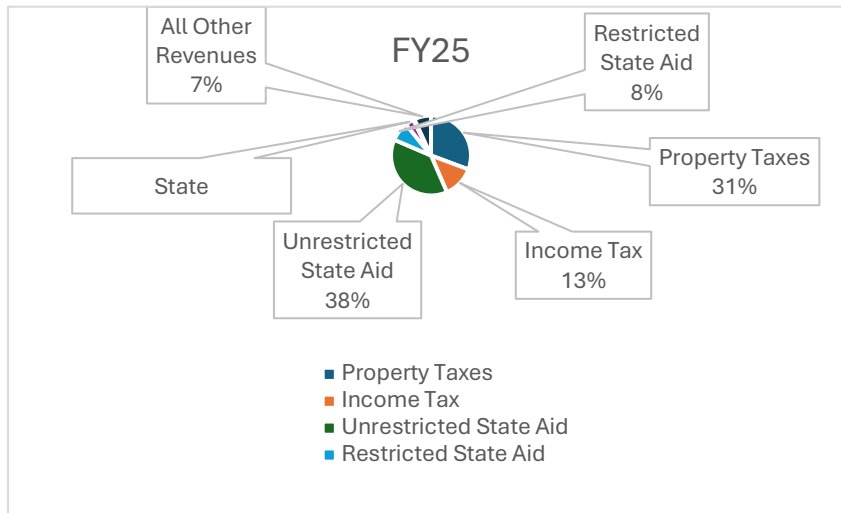
Expenditures & Services: Where does the money go?

The graph below displays the cash-basis expenditures for the General Fund for fiscal year 2025.

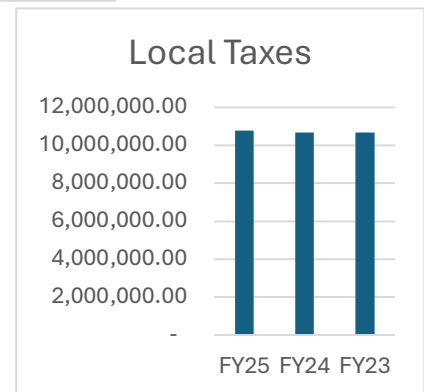


Revenues & Resources: Where does the money come from?

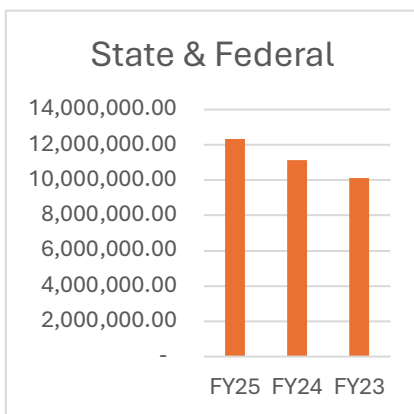
The graph below displays the cash-basis receipts and resources for the General Fund for fiscal year 2025.



The graph to the right depicts the amount of cash collections received by the District from real and personal property taxes, as well the District’s 1% Earned Income Tax Levy. Property taxes provide most of the local revenue to operate and maintain our schools.



The graph to the left depicts the cash receipts for the District’s General Fund from the State of Ohio. The Fair School Funding Plan was implemented in Ohio beginning July 1, 2022, which included a component called the local capacity to pay. As property valuations and disposable income increases in a local community the state determines that the community has a higher local capacity to pay, therefore forcing school districts to rely more on their local community for funding.



Unbundling the Tax Rate & Assessed Values of Real Property

All tax rates for the District, except inside millage, are reduced as valuations increase. In accordance with House Bill 920, as property valuations increase during a triennial update period (which Marion County experienced in 2022 and Morrow County is experiencing in 2023), the voted millage is reduced in order to generate the same amount of tax revenue for the District as was received when each levy was initially approved by the voters. The chart below shows the difference in the District’s “Gross” or voted tax rates, as compared to the “Effective” rates, which are what is being collected. The rates below are for the 2024 year collected in 2025.

Type	Gross Rate	Effective Rate (RES/AG)	Length Approved	Expires
Inside-Operating	4.2	4.2	Permanent	N/A- Does not expire
Voted-Operating	23.6	13.79241	Permanent	N/A- Does not expire
Voted-Operating	3.2	2.007609	Permanent	N/A- Does not expire
Permanent Improvement Fund	2.5	1.93	5 Years	2027
Bond Retirement Fund	1.93	2.45054	20 Years	2042

Assessed Values of Real Property

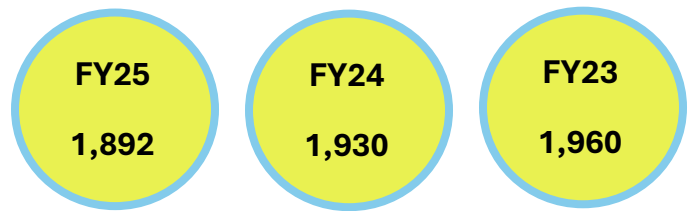
Collection Year	Agricultural/ Residential	Commercial/ Industrial	Other Real Estate	Public Utility Personal	Total
2025	303,955,430	74,187,690	536,390	22,528,100	401,207,610
2024	300,994,950	73,315,060	486,280	21,296,860	396,093,150
2023	292,361,750	72,587,230	442,580	20,682,470	386,074,030

Open Enrollment

Year	Student FTE* OE In	Student FTE* OE Out
2024-2025	455	239
2023-2024	500	223
2022-2023	516	233

*Based on feedback from our community and changes in how Ohio funds open enrollment, River Valley has intentionally reduced the number of open enrollment students accepted.

ENROLLMENT



Our Taxes Compared to Neighboring Districts

School	Equivalent Full Millage (Property + Income)
Elgin**	42.64
Marion City	35.88
Pleasant**	50.90
Ridgedale**	43.96
River Valley**	35.43

*Has an income tax in effect

**Has an income tax in effect that is earned income only

Our Mission

To provide a quality education in a safe learning environment for all students through a high performing organization committed to continuous improvement.

In order to be successful with our mission, we focus on the following goals:

- Safe Learning Environment
- High Student Achievement
- Effective and Efficient Operation
- High Performing Workforce



River Valley Local Schools Board of Education Members

PRESIDENT- DON RENGERT
VICE PRESIDENT- BEN ALBRIGHT
ROBERT STUMP
CHERYL BEINEKE
NATHAN SMITH

“The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change.”

– Carl Rogers