



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Helping students reach their full potential since 2006

Our Mission: Realizing Children's Strengths (RCS) Learning Center is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide the highest quality of individualized behavioral and educational services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental disabilities. We believe that every child has unique skills and we are dedicated to helping each child develop these skills and reach their full potential.

Dear Friend,

As we reflect on the past year of change, growth, and learning for our students and staff we are deeply grateful for the support of our community. Community members like you who are invested in our work help us continue to build our programs and impact. 2023 was a year of both challenges and opportunities for our school. We are excited to share with you some of the highlights of our work in this year's Annual Report and we know you share our determination to face the challenges ahead to make this next year a year of accelerated impact for our students.

In Gratitude,

Denise Rizzo-Ranieri
President and Co-Founder

Eileen Y. Lee Breger
RCS Board Member

OUR WORK IN 2023



5 students graduated from RCS



Our innovative Wellness & Nutrition Program turned one year old



Continued to partner with 9 vocational sites



Provided 32 professional development trainings for our staff



We achieved our most successful fundraising year to date



Student Highlight:

Joanna's journey at RCS Learning Center is truly inspiring. As an elementary school student, she struggled to communicate vocally and progress in public school until she found support at RCS. With a tailored program, Joanna has made remarkable progress, now speaking fluently, enjoying school, and participating confidently in activities.

**All parent quotes and student highlights are unsolicited from clients and informed consent was given*

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

One of our most exciting milestones is our new partnership with the Special Olympics Massachusetts! We hosted our first Special Olympics event at RCS Learning Center in 2023 and invited families and Board Members to join the fun. We look forward to future events with the incredible team at Special Olympics Massachusetts.



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PARTNERING WITH OUR FAMILIES: A FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT

As we continue to engage students, alumni, families, and community, there were a number of opportunities for us to have fun and connect. We celebrated at our Spring Picnic and held Community Nights as chances for people in our community to connect. Because our students come from many different school districts these events are a critical part of staying connected. The RCS Learning Center Parent Advisory Task Force (PATF) works in partnership with the Head of Admissions and Family Engagement to help identify engagement and participation opportunities for our families. We are so grateful for each member of the RCS family!

THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD MEMBERS, LOCAL PARTNERS, AND FUNDERS:

Funders

Cummings Foundation
Middlesex Savings
Charitable Fund
Avidia Bank Charitable Fund
Ed Walsh Foundation
Math Works

RCS Board Members

Eileen Y. Lee Breger
John Snyder
Kenya Rutland
Eric Lousarian
Alvin LaVoie
Jennifer Rutland
Greg Boyle

Vocational Partner Sites

Uno Pizzeria & Grill
Unity Farm Sanctuary
Putts & More
Meals on Wheels
Stearns Farm
Exponent
Mini-Miracles Childcare
RCS Consulting:
Woburn, Framingham

STAFF APPRECIATION AND DEVELOPMENT

We have continued to prioritize staff engagement and appreciation. Our Clinical Fellowship Institute provides a path for career development and mentorship. Our PATF helped organize staff appreciation events and our families also contributed to a staff appreciation holiday fund.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING COMMITTEE

In 2022 RCS formed our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee comprised with staff from all levels of the organization. We believe DEIB is fundamental to how we operate and educate, and we know communities thrive when diversity is welcome. In 2023 the DEIB Committee provided feedback on policies and engaged staff.

OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 43% of schools in the region report staffing has been a challenge and RCS is among those facing a challenge in recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified staff. **In 2024 we will focus on professional development for our staff and recruiting committed educators.**
- Children with ASD are 400% more likely to develop unmet health care needs when compared to children without disability. **Our Wellness and Nutrition Program will head into its second year with a focus on supporting both students and staff.**
- 85% of adults with autism are unemployed. **Our vocational program will grow in 2024 by building partnerships with local organizations to better support transitions to career and life after RCS.**