



theriveredgeschool.org
Saukville, Wisconsin

FAQ from Governance Council to the larger ROLES Community (1-30-2023)

Q: Why does the Riveredge Outdoor Learning Elementary School (ROLES) have to find a new home?

A: Our facilities use agreement with Riveredge Nature Center (RNC) was crafted at the same time as all our other founding partner agreements and our school implementation grant. The 5yr long facilities use agreement went into effect the year our school opened its doors and has always had an end date of June 30, 2024. Every year, the Riveredge Outdoor Learning Elementary School (ROLES) Governance Council (GC) and Riveredge Nature Center (RNC) board meet to discuss the facilities use contract to evaluate what's working for each organization, identify areas for improvement and to discuss wish list items for the future.

For the first time since the inception of this partnership, we've identified a few areas of concern for our organizations regarding the cohabitation part of our partnership. Over the last four years we've both grown considerably, undergone leadership changes, weathered a pandemic, and are both facing the realities of being nonprofits maneuvering through a tough economy. Additionally, RNC and ROLES have aspirational goals for the future that are difficult to align as we both strive to meet our individual organizational missions. While the areas of concern are by no means catastrophic in nature, over time they will hinder both organizations' long-term growth. It is with this in mind, that a mutual decision has been made to relocate our public, tuition-free outdoor learning charter school to a new location and not extend the Facilities Use portion of our partnership allowing the contract to sunset effective June 30, 2024. This is not a decision that the ROLES Governance Council or RNC Board of Directors made lightly. There were several conversations between our organizations, and the GC also engaged our partners NOSD, CESA6 and WRCCS in the process. While this was not something our founders anticipated happening just five years after our launch, one could argue that they also would not have anticipated how successful the school would be in such a short amount of time.

[Read Open letter to the Community \(Jan 24th, 2023\)](#)

Q: What does this mean for my current ROLES student?

A: When it comes to the day to day school experience, nothing is changing. The core tenants of our tuition free outdoor learning charter school are; inquire-based, nature-based and community-based. Those pillars will continue to guide our Governance Council as we begin to connect with the community stakeholders and start searching for our next home. Our students (your children) will be able to participate in a variety of activities associated with the transition.

Q: What is the desired area for the new home?

A: The GC is eager to hear from our school community about what features a new location should have. Ideally, a new site would offer a diverse environment that will enhance our outdoor learning laboratory, allow for flexibility in uses, and allow for any potential expansion.

Q: Are there any leads for new locations? Are there plans to stay in the Northern Ozaukee School District (NOSD)?

A: ROLES is a public elementary charter school authorized by the Northern Ozaukee School District who has been an exceptional partner. Therefore, the GC is working to identify potential sites within the NOSD boundaries, and more information will be provided as that effort moves forward. If you have feedback or suggestions of potential sites, please email them to bfortney@nosd.edu.

Q: Is there going to be a lapse in education for our kids, due to this transition?

A: No, we do not anticipate any lapse in education for our students.

Q: Will the school allow new enrollments for next school year, specifically, kindergarten?

A: Absolutely! The 2023-2024 school year will include all the amazing deliverables just like every other year. Open enrollment for the 2023-2024 school year begins Feb 6, 2023 and we're hosting 4 virtual information sessions (2/13, 3/9, 3/22 & 4/11) for prospective students and their families. To be included in the enrollment lottery this May, applications need to be submitted no later than April 28th at 4pm CT. Learn more about enrolling at ROLES here <https://theriveredgeschool.org/enroll/>

Q: Will school fees be increased to cover the cost of a new lease/building loan?

A: We cannot use school fees for capital expenses under Wisconsin statute. The GC intends to maintain our public tuition free school status.

Q: With a new location, will there be a discussion for eliminating virtual Friday's in favor of a 5-day school week?

A: Virtual Fridays provide our teachers with prep time that is comparable to teachers in traditional schools. In those schools, teacher prep time is during non-student contact time that is usually delivered during specials (i.e. Art, Music, P.E., Library). Eliminating preparation time for teachers would impact educational deliverables and increase staff turnover.

Q: What partnerships does ROLES have, and will any of them be ending due to the move?

A: As we work on finding a new location, we anticipate growing existing partnerships while fostering new ones. Currently we have been partnering with the [Northern Ozaukee School District](#), [CESA 6](#) and [WRCCS](#), those relationships are strong, and we expect to continue all of them. We appreciate the strong partnership we have shared with the Riveredge Nature Center, as our neighbor for the last four years. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the Riveredge Board of Directors and their staff, as our school continues to grow and evolve in the future.

Q: Does this mean this is our last year at RNC?

A: No. ROLES will continue to reside at RNC for the remainder of this year (2023), and for the entirety of the 2023-2024 school year. Relocation will take place after June 30, 2024.

Q: Does the news dropped today (i.e. relocation after June 30, 2024) impact this school year?

A: The relocation of our school should not impact our delivery model whatsoever during the remaining portion of the 2022-2023 or the coming 2023-2024 academic year. We will continue to strive towards our mission to leverage outdoor learning to amplify the outcomes of public education, serve learners of all abilities and needs, foster a deep connection to the environment, and prepare students for success in school and life.

Q: Do you know if this also affects the West Bend School District's nature based 4k program?

A: We are aware that the 4K program is seeking another contract extension, but do not have a finalized contract at this time. Any questions regarding the 4K program should be directed to Matt Durant, Early Learning Administrator at WBSD at [@mdurant@wbsd-schools.org](mailto:mdurant@wbsd-schools.org).

Q: Will ROLES still keep its school name now that it will no longer be associated with RNC after June 2024?

A: We will remove the Riveredge part of the name under our current agreement with Riveredge.

Q: Will ROLES still partner with RNC on projects?

A: Our Governance Council appreciates the strong partnership we have shared with the Riveredge Nature Center, as our neighbor for the last four years. We look forward to continuing our relationship with the Riveredge Board of Directors and their staff, as our school continues to grow and evolve in the future.

Q: Will there be a committee formed with the task of searching for the new property? How will committee members be chosen?

A: We are gathering a list of new locations. Happy to hear inputs from our community through bfortney@nosd.edu. The point of the parent forum is to try to engage the community in developing resources. We will be looking to have parents and staff members participate in the vision and the work moving forward.

Q: Will the governance counsel reconsider their position being a self appointed and self governed council to show some accountability to the community?

A: We have no plans to change our bylaws at this time.

Q: How can the community help? How can we be involved in this process?

A: Keep positive and trust that the Council is truly working in the best interest of the kids we serve. Help us by being positive and sharing the positive impact our school has on the community.

Q: Can you assure us moving forward that we will be sticking with the 3 pillars philosophy of inquiry-based, nature-based & community-based?

A: We do not intend to change our pillars. As attested to by Ted Neitzke, those are the pillars that the school was founded on.

Q: Are there actual intentions and plans to expand to 4K and a middle school?

A: In the near term, we cannot develop such plans. Our focus is on maintaining our existing grade levels and then identifying a new location. That is actually one of the silver linings of relocating is that we may be able to find space for such expansion.

Q: How will ROLES ensure the continuation of the nature-based programs and learning opportunities we've been able to participate in partnership with RNC?

A: Our nature-based pillars have not changed. Our vision and mission have not changed. We do not need the RNC to deliver that same outcome.

Q: Is ROLES looking to buy an existing building(s) or will there be construction of a new building?

A: This depends on our new location. All options are on the table at this point.

Q: How you can get involved now:

A: We encourage you to submit your questions, and insights via email to our Governance Council Secretary, Brian Fortney at bfortney@nosd.edu. It is important that parents and community members direct all feedback to the Governance Council and not ROLES staff. Our Governance Council is reviewing and compiling all submitted feedback to help inform our future school re-location.

Sign up for our newsletter: To stay informed about all things ROLES and our future site location, [please sign up for our new community newsletter](#). We will use this electronic newsletter to share relevant happenings, decisions and opportunities for you to be involved.

Q: How can someone get involved with the Governance Council?

A: For parties interested in more information about the structure of the Governance Council, and how to become involved please refer to Article III within the [BYLAWS OF RIVEREDGE OUTDOOR LEARNING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, INC.](#)