Lionsgate Academy

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

## Lionsgate Academy

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# MISSION, VISION, & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Mission

The mission of Lionsgate Academy is to foster self-determination by providing a transition-focused, personalized learning program for all students, specializing in educating students on the autism spectrum.

## Vision

Our vision is to create an academic community where students may safely experience the transition to young adulthood.  Here students are partners in learning; empowered to become confident and disciplined.  Students are challenged to grow through a balance of academic, social, and emotional experiences so they are adequately prepared for transition into their communities with the highest quality of life possible.  This transition focus is infused throughout the school's programming and activities.

## Executive Summary

Lionsgate Academy is a public charter school that opened in 2008. Lionsgate Academy completed its 11th year of operation on June 30, 2019.   Our program is inclusively designed to meet the needs of all students, especially those living with autism spectrum disorders and other learning differences.  These supports also benefit the needs of students without disabilities; and all students, regardless of their disability status are welcome at Lionsgate.

Lionsgate Academy operates three programs in three locations.   Our junior/senior high school program offers a standards-based curriculum in all core subjects and meets the Minnesota State Standards for graduation.  This program is offered at our Minnetonka and Shoreview Campuses. Through the Charter School Program (CSP) grant, Lionsgate had its first year of replication at our Shoreview Location.

Lionsgate offers two additional programs at our campus at 2344 Helen Street North in North St. Paul.   Our Achieving Independence and Maturity (AIM) Program is for students receiving transition-based services who are between the ages of 18 to 2.  This program is available to students who qualify based on a team decision through the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) process.  Our Lynx Program is for students in grades 7 through 12 who require a separate educational setting. The AIM and Lynx Programs are co-located at the North St. Paul Campus. The Lynx Program continued with the successful partnership with Headway Emotional Services to provide embedded mental health services throughout the school day.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Lionsgate Academy selected goals and initiatives from the Balanced Score Card ™ strategic plan.

# SCHOOL ENROLLMENT & STUDENT ATTRITION

During the academic year 2018-2019 Lionsgate Academy served 256 students. Reported ADM for Lionsgate was 251.72 due to students in PSEO and the 18 to 21 year old transition program.   Lionsgate served 143 students in grades 7 through 12 at our Minnetonka Campus (141.06 ADM), 71 students in grades 7 through 10 at our new Shoreview Campus (70.59 ADM), 11 students in our Lynx Program (9.12 ADM), and  31 students in Lionsgate's Achieving Independence and Maturity program (AIM) (30.95 ADM).   Students who withdraw from Lionsgate during the school year are usually replaced by students on the waiting list. The ADM numbers are lower due to PSEO students.

| Grades | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Year** | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 12 & 13 | PSEO | Total Average | Attrition Rate |
| 08-09 | 26.5 | 12.74 | 14.36 | 14 | | | | | 67.6 | 18% |
| 09-10 | 21.08 | 21.16 | 19.77 | 16.55 | 15.08 | | | | 93.64 | 21% |
| 10-11 | 28.78 | 28.28 | 25.82 | 22.02 | 25.52 | 12.87 | | | 133.29 | 19% |
| 11-12 | 20.40 | 28.12 | 25.17 | 24.73 | 17.95 | | 22.66 | | 139.22 | 3.5% |
| 12-13 | 21.32 | 21.95 | 25.33 | 24.0 | 22.58 | | 32.05 | | 147.86 | 9% |
| 13-14 | 22.94 | 22.08 | 23.70 | 25.87 | 22.26 | | 38.92 | | 155.77 | 6% |
| 14-15 | 21.15 | 23.81 | 23.78 | 22.00 | 24.78 | | 46.42 | .28 | 162.22 | 6% |
| 15-16 | 13.81 | 21.93 | 23.73 | 24.49 | 20.00 | 17.56 | 36.9 | 3.02 | 161.44 | 2% |
| 16-17 | 23.27 | 27.85 | 24.74 | 23.63 | 21.44 | 18.85 | 42.75 | 1.95 | 184.48 | 3% |
| 17-18 | 21.41 | 24.75 | 30.76 | 28.0 | 27.08 | 19 | 33.42 | 1.96 | 186.38 | 4% |
| 18-19 | 39.42 | 41.52 | 44.22 | 44.88 | 26.89 | 20.66 | 30.95 | 3.18 | 251.72 | 3% |

Table 1. Student Enrollment

Attrition for Lionsgate in the 2018- 2019 school year remained low with a 3% attrition rate.  The waiting list for the 2018-19 school year was as follows:

| Grades | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Year** | | | | | | | | | |
| | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 12 & 13 | Total |
| 12-13 | 56 | 57 | 51 | 4 | | | | | 168 |
| 13-14 | 32 | 39 | 29 | 30 | - | - | - | - | 130 |
| 14-15 | 65 | 39 | 45 | 15 | | | | | 164 |
| 15-16 | 52 | 48 | 38 | 17 | 11 | 4 | | 0 | 170 |
| 16-17 | 74 | 37 | 65 | 31 | 18 | 5 | | 0 | 230 |
| 17-18 | 62 | 71 | 60 | 38 | 22 | 5 | | 0 | 258 |
| 18-19 | 73 | 48 | 67 | 38 | 28 | 5 | | 0 | 259 |

Table 2. Waiting List

# GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

## Governance

Lionsgate Academy utilizes a balanced governing board that includes three parents, three licensed staff, and three community members.  Each May, an election for open board seats is held.  For the spring of 2019, one licensed staff position, two parent positions and one community member position was open for election. Due to a student graduating, one parent position will be appointed by the board for the 2019-2020 school year, serving a two year term.

Table 3 shows the individuals who served on the LGA Board and their terms of service.

# 2018-2019 Lionsgate School Board

| Name | Board Position | Member Affiliation | Election Date | Date Seated | Term Expiration | Postal Address | Phone Number | E-Mail Address |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thorstad, Alicen | Chair | Parent | 5-6-16 | 7-19-16 | 6-30-19 | 4506 63rd Ave. N Brooklyn Center, MN 55429 | 763-537-8556 | board.athorstad@lgamn.org |
| Bachman, Emy | Vice Chair | Community | 5-31-18 | 7-21-18 | 6-30-21 | 9017 Larkspur Lane Eden Prairie, MN 55347 | 952-200-5032 | board.ebachman@lgamn.org |
| Sawyer, Steve | Director | Community | 5-31-17 | 6-15-17 | 6-30-20 | US Bank One Meridian Crossing Richfield, MN 55423-3963 | 612-973-7811 | board.ssawyer@lgamn.org |
| Gran, Bradford | Director | Teacher 321517 | Appointed 11/17 | 11/17 | 6-30-20 | 50 7th Ave. S. Apt. 112 Hopkins, MN 55343 | 763-486-5359 | Board.bgran@lgamn.org |
| Nelsen, Hannah | Director | Teacher 496833 | 5-31-16 | 7-1-19 | 6-30-19 | 1117 Olive Street W. Stillwater, MN 55082 | 651-303-5800 | Board.hnelsen@lgamn.org |
| Cottington, Laura | Secretary | Parent | 5-31-17 | 6-15-17 | 6-30-20 | 6630 Empire Court Maple Grove, MN 55311 | 612-384-9842 | board.lcottington@lgamn.org |
| Kunkel, Amy | Director | Community | 5-31-17 | 6-15-17 | 6-30-19 | University of MN 56 E River Parkway Minneapolis, MN 55455 | 651-503-5849 | board.akunkel@lgamn.org |
| Beazer, Natalie | Director | Parent | 5-31-18 | 7-21-18 | 6-30-21 | 9307 Vincent Ave N Brooklyn Park, MN 55444 | 612-618-5088 | board.nbeazer@lgamn.org |
| Bell, Rachel | Secretary | Teacher 473687 | 5-31-18 | 7-21-18 | 6-30-21 | 4615 Trenton Cir N Plymouth, MN 55442 | 507-458-1751 | board.rbell@lgamn.org |

Table 3. 2018-19 Board of Directors

## Board Training

All newly seated board members for 2018 – 2019 attended the 3 required board trainings as documented below.  All board members received training on the Data Privacy in March.

| Name | Date Seated | Term Exp. | Training Attended | Date |
|------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|------|
| Thorstad, Alicen | 7/2016 | 7/2019 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>1/1/2014<br>2/1/2014<br>3/19/2019 |
| Cottington, Laura | 7//2016 | 7/2020 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Finances<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>1/8/2009<br>1/8/2009<br>1/8/2009<br>3/19/2019 |
| Beazer, Natalie | 6/2018 | 7/2021 | Charter School Finances<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 10/30/2018<br>2/9/2019<br>2/9/2019<br>3/19/2019 |
| Kunkel, Amy | 7/2017 | 7/2020 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Finances<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>9/26/2017<br>11/11/2017<br>11/11/2017<br>3/19/2019 |
| Bachman, Emy | 7/2015 | 7/2021 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Finances<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>12/5/2015<br>12/5/2015<br>12/5/2015<br>3/19/2019 |
| Nelsen, Hannah | 7/2017 | 7/2019 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Finances<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>11/20/2017<br>9/21/2017<br>10/3/2017<br>3/19/2019 |
| Gran, Bradford | 11/2017 | 7/2020 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Governance<br>Charter School Finance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>6/12/2018<br>5/30/2018<br>6/19/2018<br>3/19/2019 |
| Sawyer, Steve | 7/2017 | 7/2020 | Implications of Expansion to Charter School Boards<br>Charter School Finances<br>Data Privacy | 2/16/2018<br>9/26/2017<br>3/19/2019 |
| Bell, Rachel | 6/2018 | 7/2021 | Charter School Finances<br>Charter School Governance<br>Employment in Charter Schools<br>Data Privacy | 9/24/2018<br>9/12/2018<br>11/10/2018<br>3/19/2019 |

Table 4. School Board Training

## Board Committees

Every member of the board of directors must volunteer for one of three standing committees:  finance, executive director evaluation, and governance.  The chairs of the committees are as follows:

- Finance – Steve Sawyer (community member, treasurer)
- Governance – Emily Bachman (community member)
- Director Evaluation – Laura Cottington (parent)

The finance committee met monthly prior to the full board of director's meetings.  Governance met monthly on the second Tuesday of the month.

The director evaluation committee met monthly to ensure a fair, timely, and accurate evaluation of the performance of the executive director.  The committee developed a method for evaluation drawing heavily from the MASA, MESPA, MASSP, and BOSA guidelines for Minnesota School Principals. The director's evaluation was conducted in a closed meeting of the board in June of 2019.

# Authorizer

The authorizer for Lionsgate Academy is Novation Education Opportunities (NEO).  Novation Education Opportunities (NEO) Vision:  To be the leading Minnesota Authorizer of high quality charter schools.

Novation Education Opportunities (NEO) Mission:  To oversee innovative charter schools through consistent, ongoing and robust evaluation to achieve significant and measurable student growth for the benefit of our schools and community.

NEO seeks to enhance public education in Minnesota by supporting charter schools which validate quality performance. The sole purpose of Novation Education Opportunities (NEO) is to authorize public charter schools in accordance with Minnesota Statute 124E which governs the duties and responsibilities of charter school authorizers.

NEO is located at 3432 Denmark Ave., Suite 130; Eagan, Minnesota  55123.  Their contact information is as follows:  executive.director.neo@gmail.com; 612-889-2103.

## School Board Development Plan

The Lionsgate School board conducts a self-evaluation annually to determine areas of growth. Past evaluations indicate that Lionsgate's infrastructure and board operations are satisfactory to exemplary.  Each board member participates in the 3 required trainings within 6 months of being seated.  The board then selects a topic for the entire board that will meaningfully improve their knowledge and skills.  The 2018-19 topic was on data privacy.

# Management

```
Executive Director
Dr. Diane Restorff

Heather Adams

Student Services Director — Ryan Rehnstrandr
Human Resources Director — Amy Christensen-Bruce
Finance and Operations Director — Aaron Leisen
Technology Director — Andy Saunders
Building Leaders
    Mtka Principal — Rachel Boyack
    Shoreview Principal — Brandy Schwab
    Site Director AIM/Lynx — Dr. Jessica Bjorkman
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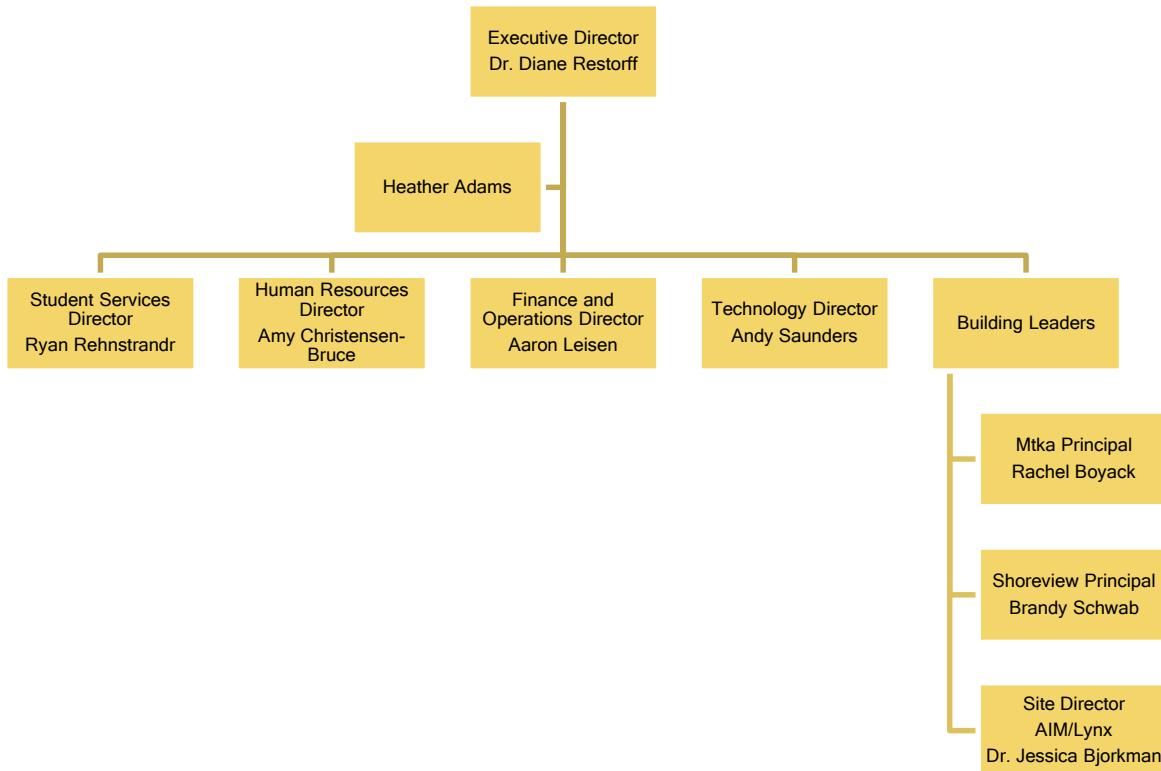
Figure 1. 201-19  Organizational Chart

Dr. Diane Restorff is the executive director of Lionsgate Academy.  She has led Lionsgate Academy since 2012. Dr. Restorff is assisted by an administrative team that serves to ensure Lionsgate is managed in a fiscally responsible, compliant, and legal manner.    Aaron Leisen replaced Ron Berger (retired) as Director of Finance and Operations.  This position was the only senior level director turnover.

## Executive Director Development Plan

The executive director evaluation committee establishes goals and objectives for the director for the following year.  Dr. Restorff's professional development plan consists of professional coaching by a licensed superintendent to improve communication and understanding of multi-campus environments.
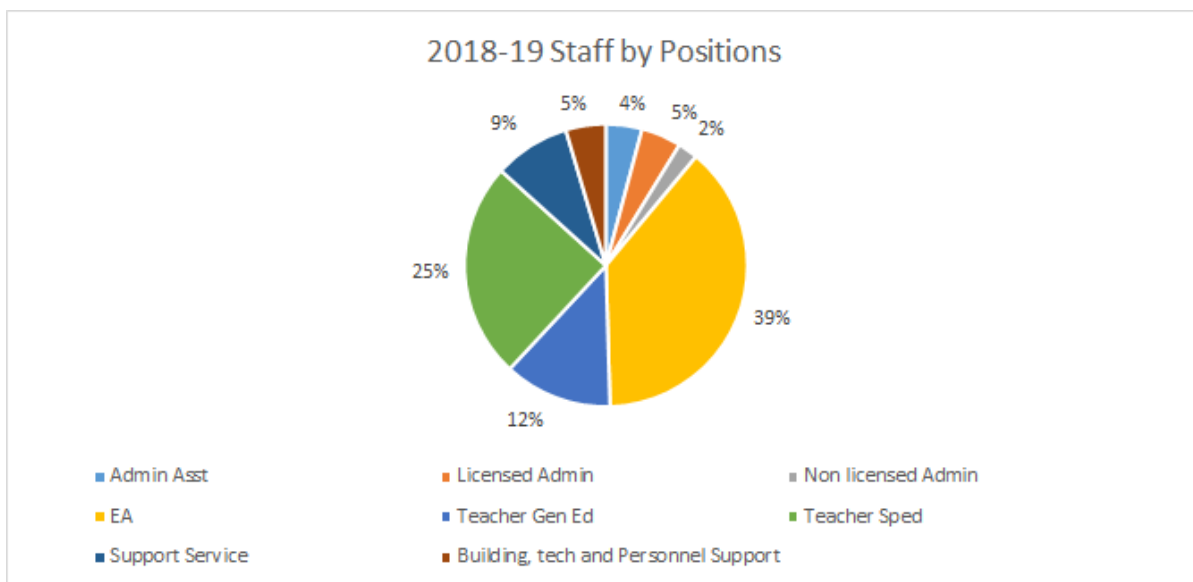
# STAFFING

Lionsgate Academy employed 218 regular employees during the 2018-19 school year (with replacement). The majority of resignations were at the end of the school year.

Thirty-nine percent of the staff are educational assistants who play important and varied roles at the school. All educational assistants are hired to support the needs of our special education students who have a documented need for paraprofessional support.

Support service providers at Lionsgate include social workers, speech and language pathologists, school psychologists, adaptive physical education teachers, and occupational therapists. Due to high medical needs of the student population, Lionsgate retains a licensed school nurse and two LPNs. These service providers meet identified needs from comprehensive evaluations and may include services around mental health, emotional regulation, social skills, skills of daily living, transition skills, speech & language needs, fine and gross motor needs and other health needs.

Administrative assistants provide support such as STAR and MARRSS reporting, special education reporting and accounting, attendance, substitutes, transportation, purchasing, communications, and other vital functions. Tech and operations are responsible for student and staff computing needs, building upkeep, network and testing support.

Licensed administrators include the Director of Student Services, Building Principals and Site Coordinators holding licensure in their field, and special education coordinators. Non-licensed administrators include directors of Human Resources, Finance and Operations, Technology, and the Executive Director.

## 2018-19 Staff by Positions

5%  4%  5% 2%
9%
25%
39%
12%

- Admin Asst
- Licensed Admin
- Non licensed Admin
- EA
- Teacher Gen Ed
- Teacher Sped
- Support Service
- Building, tech and Personnel Support

## Staff Retention and Attrition

Overall, the attrition rate of staff increased to 28%. Staff attrition is calculated by dividing the number of staff (with replacement) by the number who resigned during the 2018-2019 school year  Of this percentage, 6% were terminated involuntarily and another 6% resigned with less than 6 months on the job.

When considering the attrition rate of those who voluntarily left the job after 6 months of employment, the attrition rate is 17%.

The majority of staff turnover was in educational assistants with 17 educational assistants resigning in the 2018-2019 school year. The next highest group of exiting employees was among special education teachers (9). Three support service providers resigned and all other categories saw 1 or fewer resignations.

Voluntary turnover rates can be attributed to changes of career for educational assistants and better pay and benefits for licensed staff.



2018-2019 Staff Attrition
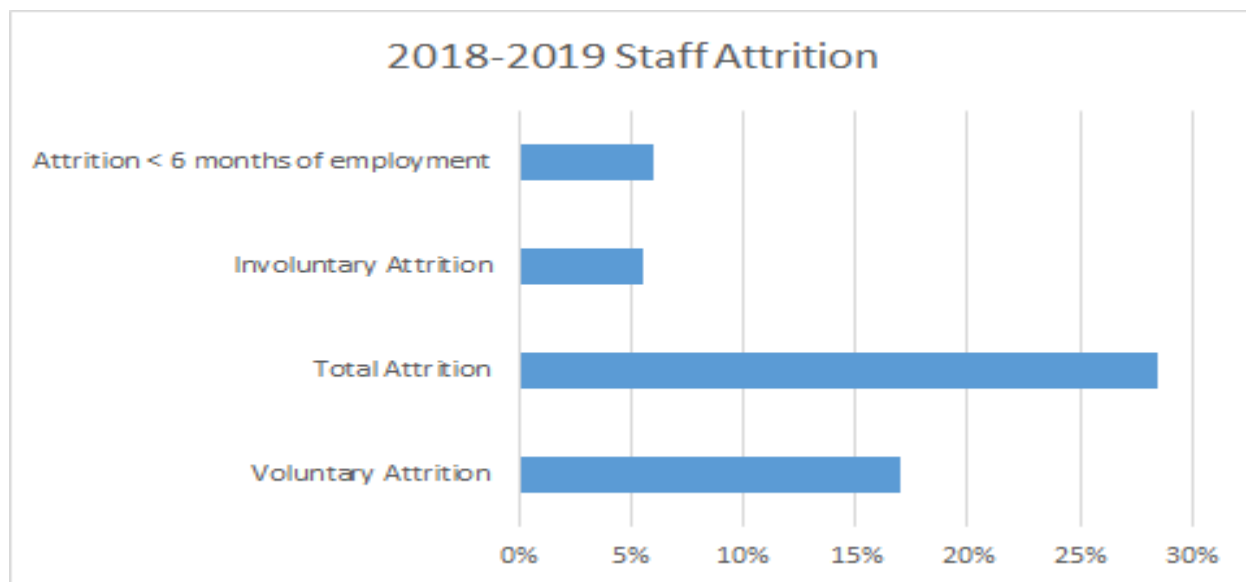
*We see our son growing every day and we know in large part it's because of your hard work, your patience, and your care. You're making a huge difference in our family life.*
*Shoreview Parent*

# FINANCES

Since almost all of Lionsgate Academy's students' education programming includes at least some special education components, the cost to educate our students is significantly greater than those for other schools. Lionsgate's revenue and cash flow is derived primarily from Special Education funds received from the State of Minnesota.

The Lionsgate Foundation, an unaffiliated non-profit foundation, provides the largest share of private contributions to the School.

The director of finance and operations for Lionsgate Academy is Mr. Aaron Leisen. Lionsgate uses Dieci LLC, an accounting services firm that specializes in charter schools, for accounting, financial statement preparation, and audit coordination. Lionsgate's audit firm is MMKR – Malloy, Montague, Karnowski, Radosevich & Co., PA. There were no material findings in the audit.

Total revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019 were approximately $16 million. This represents a 33% increase over 2018. All of the increase is related to the 35% increase in the number of students. In fact, Lionsgate was able to operationalize some efficiencies reducing the in the cost of educating our students by $1,528 per ADM. A breakdown of the components of revenues and expenditures is illustrated in the following table and graphs.

**Revenues and Expenditures**
**Combined General and Food Service Fund**
**Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2019**

| Revenues: | | Current Year | % Total | Increase (Decrease) | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Special Education | 13,400,125 | 81% | 3,251,543 | 26% |
| | General Education | 2,531,271 | 15% | 693,449 | 6% |
| | Federal | 341,063 | 2% | 48,823 | 0% |
| | Local Support | 345,908 | 2% | 171,934 | 1% |
| | Total Revenues | 16,618,366 | 100% | 4,165,748 | 33% |
| | | | | | |
| Expenditures: | | | | | |
| | Special Education | 7,457,414 | 46% | 1,137,301 | 9% |
| | General Education | 2,632,558 | 16% | 1,117,634 | 9% |
| | Admin | 899,499 | 5% | 113,306 | 1% |
| | Pupil Support | 508,708 | 3% | (39,944) | 0% |
| | Facilities & Operations | 2,652,028 | 16% | 1,068,139 | 9% |
| | Transportation | 2,206,624 | 13% | 563,627 | 5% |
| | Total Expenditures | 16,356,831 | 100% | 3,960,063 | 32% |
| | | | | | |
| Revenues > Expenditures | | 261,535 | | | |

Revenues for Lionsgate Academy were largely from state special education, making up 81% of total revenue. General education revenue accounted for 15% of the total revenue. Revenue from Federal sources included CSP Grant revenues earned and special education revenue and accounted for 2% of the total. Other sources of revenue were grants and donations which accounted for 2% of the total revenues.

## Revenues

Federal
2%

Other
2%

General Education
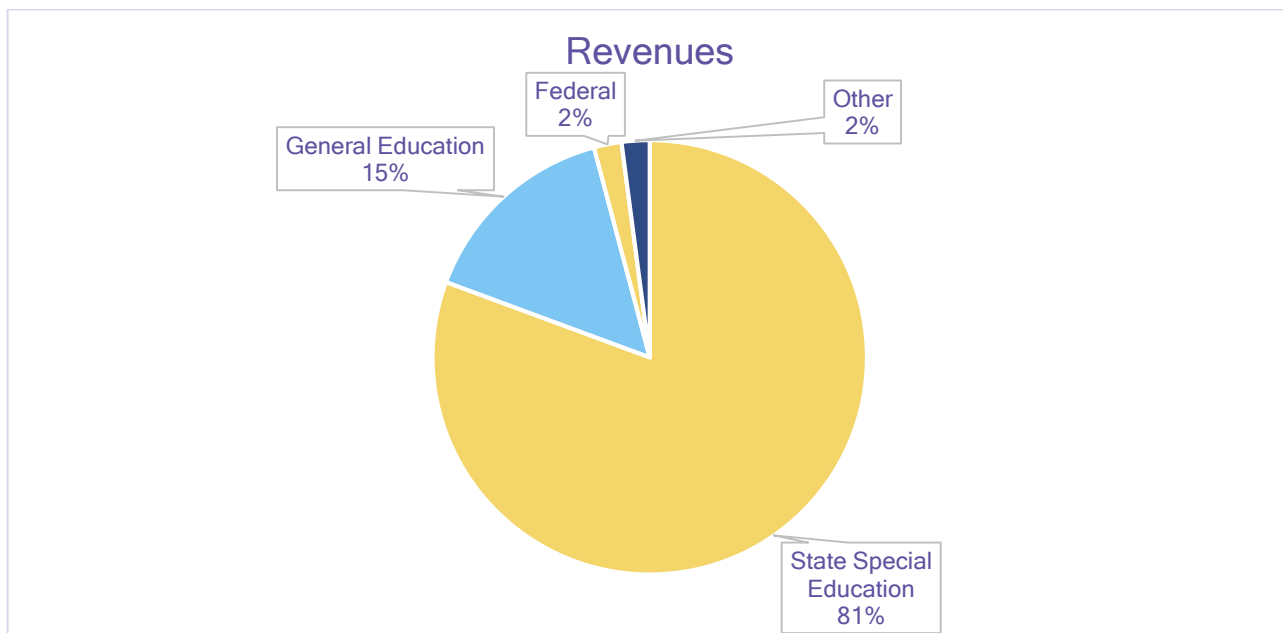15%

State Special
Education
81%

Figure 2. 2018-19 Revenues

Lionsgate expenditures are illustrated below. The largest portion of expenditures was in special education (46%), followed by facilities and operations (16%) and general education (16%). Transportation accounted for 13% and 6% of expenditures were attributed to administrative costs. 3% of expenditures fell under pupil support.

## Expenditures

Transportation
13%

Facilities & Operations
16%

Pupil Support
3%

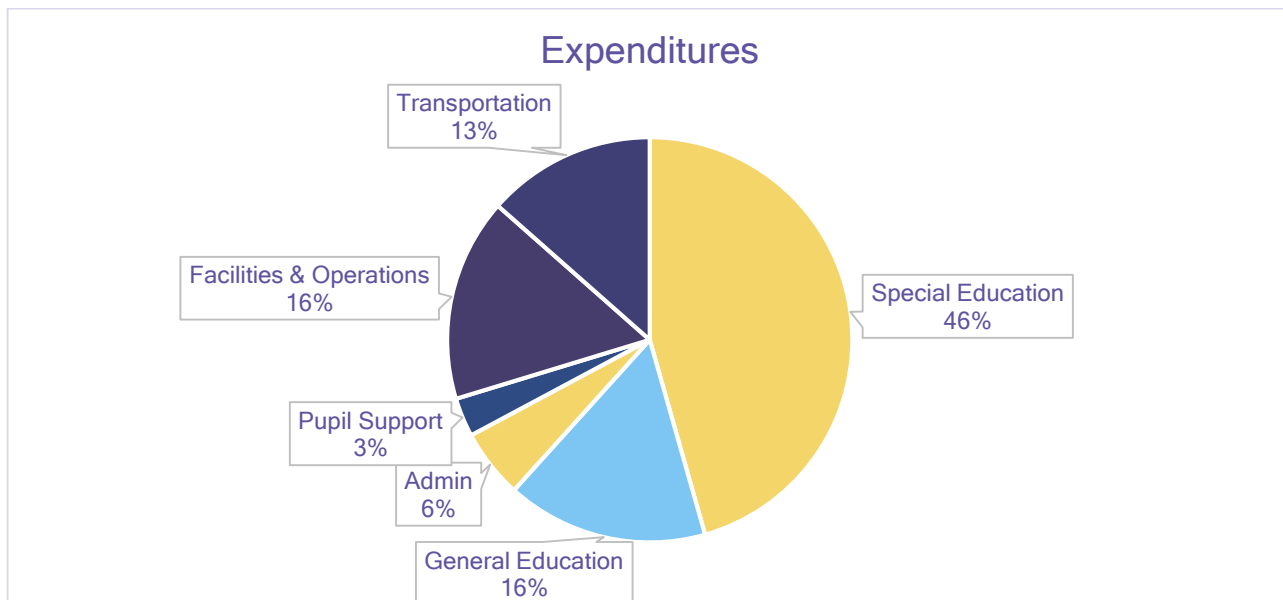Admin
6%

General Education
16%

Special Education
46%

Figure 3. 2018-19 Expenditures

# INNOVATIVE PRACTICES AND IMPLEMENTATION

During the 2018-2019 school year, Lionsgate embarked on a number of innovative practices.  Of these, two practices are highlighted here:

- *Learning Teams*
- *Thematic Learning in Setting 4 Program - Phase I - Planning*

## Learning Teams

In fall 2018 at the Minnetonka Campus, a new initiative for staff learning was created by Rachel Boyack, Principal of the Minnetonka Campus. Previously, staff were assigned to cohorts based on years of service at Lionsgate, where once a month they met together to review assigned readings and discuss case studies. As the years went on, many returning staff had been through all of the cohorts, and were ready for a new professional development opportunity.

The concept of Learning Teams is based on Professional Learning Communities where staff meet to review academic data and create interventions or strategies to increase student academic achievement. Since more than half of Lionsgate Academy Minnetonka's staff are made of staff that may not have a direct impact on academics (educational assistants, service providers and case managers), a traditional Professional Learning Community route was not created. Learning Teams give staff members choice in what they want to learn, dedicated time to work together on a shared goal, an opportunity to share their research or professional development, and an opportunity to lead learning with their colleagues. Topics for Learning Teams are driven by staff suggestions inspired by a goal of student learning and/or school culture, must follow the mission of Lionsgate Academy, and should be aligned with our goals from our authorizer (increase student academic achievement and increase IEP goal achievement). Learning Teams in the 2018-19 school year included: Digital Resources for Academics, Book Study - *Masterminds and Wingmen*, Cross-curricular unit planning, Executive Functioning, Tier 1 PBIS, Project-Based Learning and Restorative Practices.

A survey was sent to Lionsgate Academy Minnetonka staff at the end of the 2018-19 school year to gather feedback on the concept of Learning Teams and about 75% of staff responded. Of those responding, 90% of staff members agreed that they learned information during Learning Teams that could be applied to their daily work, and 80% of staff agreed that Learning Teams were a valuable use of their time (met at least once a month during Tuesday afternoon staff meeting times). New initiatives that were created from the Learning Teams for the 2019-20 school year at Minnetonka include pilot groups for Restorative Practices circles and a flex-time schedule for Wednesdays that provides all students an opportunity to practice social and academic skills while socializing during the school day (PAAWS).

The concept of Learning Teams is now being duplicated at the Shoreview and North St. Paul campuses. Minnetonka's Learning Teams for the 2019-20 school start started in October and are looking at Alumni Planning, Girls on the Autism Spectrum, Learned Helplessness, and a Student Mentor Program. PAAWS and Restorative Practices are continuing as Learning Teams to support the implementation of these initiatives.

# Thematic Learning in Setting 4 Programs - Phase I - Planning

## Background:

The students who attend Lionsgate Academy's Lynx program have diverse needs in mental health, behavior, and academics. Generally speaking, the traditional approach to teaching, which assumes heavy reliance on textbooks, class discussions, and paper and pencil assignments or tests, has not worked for these students in the past. They are non-traditional students, and therefore our approach to teaching them needs to match this.

## Vision:

The Lynx academic structure is based on **thematic learning**. Thematic instruction organizes curriculum around a central theme that is explored across all disciplines taught at Lynx, providing a rich, interdisciplinary experience. It is designed to develop traditional academic skills, like reading, writing, and problem solving within a practical, relatable, real-world context. Themes are chosen by Lynx teachers in collaboration with the District Curriculum Coordinator and Lynx program leaders. When choosing the themes, the team considers the following:

- *The theme be compelling to our students*, considering our students' unique interests to ensure all students have an access point to the topic.
- *The theme has depth and rigor*, so that the topic can be fully explored through all disciplines and from many perspectives.
- *The theme is an overarching, big idea that relates to the human experience,* so that learning is relevant to students' lives.

Benefits to using a thematic approach to learning include:

- Provides an integrated learning experience instead of studying isolated disciplines.
- Highlights relationships of knowledge across academic disciplines and everyday life.
- Assumes that students learn best when they can associate new information across content areas and make holistic connections to their own lives and experiences.
- Discourages rote learning, which historically has not been effective for Lynx students.
- Encourages more student choice and hands-on learning, which in theory, will increase student engagement and decrease behaviors caused by disengagement in the classroom.

There is also a **project-based** component to our vision that is actualized in the choice project hour worked into student schedules. This is a new class that is held daily and offers students an opportunity to explore a "passion project" of their own choosing related to the current theme. The goal is for students to create a project that pursues a personal interest or curiosity related to the theme. In doing so, they will develop project planning skills and practice sustaining attention to long-term tasks. The projects are chosen by the students and planned in collaboration with the project class teacher. MHBAs will support students in following their project plan set up by the student and teacher. Their progress is monitored through self-reflection and close monitoring from the project class teacher. This is a special part of the student experience that pulls together learning from various contents and provides an opportunity for students to showcase their unique talents, interests and curiosities.

## Curriculum Development Process:

After the theme was chosen and related topics were brainstormed, the team curated resources, lessons, and content for students to study in each of the major contents taught at Lynx: ELA, math, science, social studies, and transitions. The team sought to curate:

- Diverse types of text and media (literature, informational, articles, scripts, interviews, poetry, podcasts, videos, etc.)
- Various learning activities that could be differentiated (hands on labs/experiences, worksheets, games, simulations, writing activities, community outings, etc.)

Once content was curated, Lynx teachers prepared and sequenced lessons for the content areas that they teach. A "Thematic Overview" was created for each quarter's theme that outlines a rationale, essential questions, standards covered, and lesson scope and sequence for each content area.

## Implementation:

Initial implementation is planned for the fall of 2019. Students at Lynx are placed into one of two groups based on their grade, typically dividing grades 7-9 and 10-12, with flexibility in groupings considering instructional level, group dynamics, and social skills. There are 3 Lynx teachers, who also hold caseloads of 3-4 students. The teachers specialize in different disciplines:

- ELA and Social Studies
- Math and Science
- Transitions, electives, and the Choice Project Class

Students transition to classes throughout their day according to their schedule, moving together with their grade-level groups. Classes are 45 minutes long. **The thematic lessons that are taught in each class are the same for both groups, but differentiated based on student need, meaning that within each content, teachers do not prepare separate lessons for students in group 1 and group 2. Instead they focus on differentiating the lesson by altering the presentation of content, student product, or process of learning either for individual students or the whole group.**

How each class approaches thematic learning varies due to the nature of the discipline:

**ELA:** Each quarter will feature a different teaching method that best compliments the quarter's theme. For example, 1st quarter has the classes reading the same book which provides opportunities to teach the basic content language, practice discussion skills, and other general skills necessary for students to work more independently throughout the rest of the year. In quarter 2, students will be offered choice in the texts that they read, according to their reading level, and so the structure of the class will adapt to more generalized discussions around the theme that each student will contribute to with their own insight drawn from the text of their choice. Quarter 3 will involve more of a scaffolded approach as the class studies sample texts together followed by individual explorations. Quarter 4 returns to a student choice text model like Quarter 2.

**Math:** Because of the sequential nature of mathematics, the structure for this class will remain mostly traditional. The typical routine for this class is to begin with a check-in, then a warm up math activity, continued with a lesson that is followed by individual practice. The warm up activities will relate the the quarterly theme, but the lessons will teach the rote skills for the level of math being taught, that being pre-algebra for group 1 students and algebra for group 2, with some outliers needing differentiated studies. When feasible, the theme will be worked into the lessons.

**Science:** There are many domains in the study of science: life science, earth and space science, physical science, chemistry, physics, and forensics. In our approach to thematic learning in science, we will be focusing on many of them throughout each theme, unlike a traditional class that focuses on one domain all year long. Each lesson, lasting anywhere from 2-5+ classes, will relate to the theme and explore a different domain of science. Again, the lessons are the same for each group but differentiated based on student needs.

**Social Studies:** Similar to science, social studies is composed on various domains (citizenship and government, economics, geography, and history) which will be addressed as appropriate to the current theme. The approach to teaching social studies will mirror that of science.

**Transitions:** Transitions class encompasses life skills, post-secondary exploration, independent living skills, executive functioning, employment skills, and more. The class will have themed days that explore different components of transition, all of which will relate to the current theme.

The **Choice Project Class** is structured differently from all other classes. The class is 1 hour long. There are phases that the class will progress through:
*Introduction to the theme:* Each quarter, the class will begin with a discussion about the current theme that should include activating prior knowledge of the theme and brainstorming of subtopics. This time should also be used for going over the structure of the class, expectations for projects and work time, and reviewing the "phases" listed here so that students know what to expect. Students are provided a packet (here is a link to the packet template) that guides them through completing an individual choice project. In this stage, the teacher first provides *just the 1st page* of the packet. Students should first read the "Why is this theme important" and "essential questions" sections. This can be addressed as a whole class discussion or activity. Students then form some of their own curiosities about the theme, writing at least 3 questions that they would be interested in exploring further on their own.

## Choosing and planning the individual project:
The teacher then provides students with the 2nd page of the packet. Using the "menu" provided, students choose the product that they are most interested in working on. The menu offers a "student proposal", which allows students to propose an idea not already on the choice product menu, but it needs to be approved by the teacher. Ultimately the project they plan will work towards answering one of their curiosities about the theme. Students write a short description of their idea and then they meet 1:1 with the project class teacher to fill out the 3rd page of the packet together (it can be filled out digitally, then printed and given to the student or a blank copy

printed and written out using pencil). This conference is essential to the success of the project. In the session, the student and teacher will:

- *Discuss the idea.* The student drives this discussion. The teacher's role is to get curious and ask questions that will draw out a clear understanding of the student's interests and motivations to complete the project. The student's aspirations should match their capabilities; if the project seems too easy or overly complicated for the student to be able to work on independently, the teacher should guide the student toward a more appropriate idea.
- *Make a step by step task list.* This should be simple and to the point, written in student-friendly language.
- *Search for some resources together.* The teacher drives this part. As they talk about the project plan, some resources that the student will need can be written in this section. This could include a list of physical materials they will need, research they will need to do (providing websites, texts, videos), tutorials or manuals they will need to access, etc.
- *Determine objectives.* The teacher and student determine what the student will learn through completing their project. This conversation could start out by the teacher simply asking the student what they want to learn by doing the project and the conversation can flow from there. Objectives should be written in student-friendly language.
- *Create a timeline of deadlines.* This step is driven by the teacher. Looking at the calendar for the quarter provided in the packet, the teacher, in collaboration with the student, sets milestones ("checkpoints") towards the project completion and assigns a due date for each milestone.

*Project work time:*

Each class is dedicated to work time for students to work on their choice projects. Students should be referencing their packets each class, especially the project steps, resources, and project timeline. Each class the teacher sets up a schedule to individually check in with each student to monitor their progress, seek out and answer any questions or misconceptions, or coach them through struggles they are having. MHBAs support students during this time by motivating them to sustain attention to the task, providing technical assistance for research, and aid in following their plan. Any questions students have about content or their projects (especially if it involves changing a part of their project plan) should be directed to the teacher. It must be mentioned that the MHBAs role is that of *support*, not *direct*. The project should be comprised of the *student's work*, not overhanded by adult influence.

- A reflective component to this phase is the "Daily Progress Log" that each student fills out at the
- end of each class. They will record a summary of what they worked on that day and reflect via a likert scale on how engaged they were in their work that day. MHBAs should support students in this closure activity at the end of each class so that the record is accurate.

# FUTURE PLANS

During the 2019-2020 school year, Lionsgate Academy will continue to work on the identified goals of the balanced score card strategic plan. The plans include a continuation of initiatives begun in the 2017-2018 school year that are ongoing

## Objectives

Expand student program options or program sites
Improve student outcomes
Increase family engagement
Grow Reputation

## Initiatives and Performance Measures

| Initiative | Performance Measure |
| --- | --- |
| Research and report options for future CTE programs at Shoreview | Presentation of a CTE plan that defines the scope of the proposed program, identifies initial partners and details a time-line for goals and milestones to launch CTE program at Shoreview<br>Select CTE program and start date. |
| Select existing tool that will provide a continuous assessment of a student's progress from grade 7 through exit at age 21 or before. | Evaluate tools and determine the benefits and weaknesses of each.<br>Recommend adoption of a single tool or combination of tools that will serve as a universal assessment of progress toward successful transition.<br>Conduct a pilot of a small group of students using the tool/tools and report on outcomes. |
| Educate and communicate resources to families | Create a portion of LGA website that has the resources for parents.<br>Scope and sequence of content, monthly online.<br>Data of parent/student participation in accessing resources. |
| Develop core identity, what makes LGA unique and disseminate the LGA way. | Integrate new and existing documents (core values, 4 pillars, etc.) to create a philosophy on the LGA way.<br>Create a document to present to potential partners. |
| Create alignment for Transition programming across campuses | Vertical and horizontal curriculum map. |

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & WORLD'S BEST WORKFORCE

The World's Best Workforce is a local accountability program for all schools in Minnesota.  Lionsgate Academy utilizes the Performance Framework with its authorizer, NEO, to meet the accountability requirements for student achievement and other performance measures.  The annual meeting for the World's Best Workforce was held on November 20, 2018.

The district advisory committee for the World's Best WorkForce is:

| Name | Role in District |
|---|---|
| Brandy Schwab | Principal, Shoreview Campus |
| Kristi Person | Perkins Lead, Business Teacher |
| Brent Valinga | Community Member |
| Jenny Schmidt | WBL Teacher, Transition Program |
| Tanner Berris | WBL Teacher, Transition Program |
| Stephen Pettersen | Parent, Industry Representative |
| Chad Sites | Parent |
| Sara Byzdovsky | District Transition Coordinator |
| Aaron Leisen | Director of Finance & Operations |
| Diane Restorff | Executive Director |

## Equitable Access to Qualified Teachers

The term "equitable access gap" refers to the difference between the rate(s) at which s tudents from low income families, students of color, and American Indian students are taught by inexperienced, out-of-field, or ineffective teachers and the rate at which other students are taught by the same teacher types. This is not to be confused with the "achievement gap" (how groups of students perform academically); rather, "equitable access gap" is about which student groups have privileged or limited access to experienced, in-field, and effective teachers.

Districts/charters are encouraged to monitor the distribution of teachers and identify equitable access gaps between and within schools, but they may also make comparisons to the state averages or to similar schools. It is important to note that some of the most significant equitable access gaps occur at the school and classroom level. Districts/charters may also use other indicators of "effectiveness" such as teachers receiving stronger evaluations overall, teachers with strengths in particular dimensions of practice (e.g., culturally responsive practices), teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, or teachers with demonstrated student growth and achievement results.

Lionsgate administration reviews data annually at the end of every school year. This review allows us to monitor if we need to make adjustments for ensuring equitable access to experienced, licensed teachers for

students of color, American Indian students and students from low income families. Lionsgate uses an index system:

- teachers are assigned a score based on years of teaching experience, type of license (tier 1, 2, 3, or 4), years teaching at Lionsgate, and the teacher's overall performance score.
- The combined scores of all teachers are averaged, yielding a mean quality index score and a standard deviation.\
- Student schedules are examined and each student receives a score based on the mean of his teachers' indices. Any student whose teacher index score falls below 1 standard deviation is flagged. If this student identifies as a student in the target group, his or her schedule is modified so that the student's teacher index schedule is within the average range.

The administrative team reviews the equitable access data. This includes all building principals, the directors of human resources, finance and operations, student services, technology and the executive director.Lionsgate has no identified equal access gaps; however, Lionsgate will continue to monitor the data to ensure that this situation remains the status quo (i.e., no gaps).

# Teacher and Student Racial and Ethnic Diversity Alignment

The following racial and ethnic groups are present in our district among students and are not yet represented in our licensed teacher staff: African American or Black (6.9%), Individuals identifying as two or more races (9.2%), Latino (2.7%)and American Indian/Alaskan Native (.4%). Lionsgate would need to add 7 additional teachers of color and 1 American Indian/Native Alaskan teacher to reflect our student population.

The root cause contributing to a lack of student access to teachers of color and American Indian teachers is the disproportionate unavailability of teachers of color. Research suggests strongly that there is a lack of supply of teachers of color due to Hiring bias, certification tests that teachers of color are less likely to pass, a racial gap in bachelor's degree attainment, and lower retention rates for teachers of color among other factors. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). To further challenge our ability to hire teachers of color, charter schools pay less and have more expensive medical benefits, so that Lionsgate must compete with districts who can pay as much as $4,000.00 more for a first year teacher.

The Lionsgate Foundation is offering some tuition reimbursement to teachers at Lionsgate who are enrolled in programs leading to licensure. Lionsgate has sought to partner with Learning Disability Associates (LDA) to support their state-approved alternate path to licensure program.

# Smart Goals

## Close the Achievement Gaps between Student Groups

Lionsgate Academy focuses on closing the achievement gap between students receiving special education services and their non disabled peers in the state of Minnesota. Lionsgate uses student proficiency on MCA scores in mathematics, reading, and science to compare the achievement of our students receiving special education services and the state.

Over 90% of students at Lionsgate Academy receive special education services. Lionsgate disaggregates students by those receiving special education services and those not receiving special education services. We identify individual needs in the areas of math, reading and science through the use of the NWEA MAP assessment. Students who are more than 2 grade levels below their peers as measured on the MAP have identified goals on their individualized education plans in the areas of math and reading. Additionally, Lionsgate uses science and language usage scores on the NWEA-MAP assessment to place students in classes where they can receive specialized instruction. Often courses are co-taught with a special educator and a general educator to ensure that access to the general education curriculum is provided for students with special needs. Lionsgate implements its strategies well, reviewing student placement at least two times per year. The NWEA-MAP assessment provide individualized growth targets for these students which are monitored in the fall and spring to help teachers determine if teaching practices are effective.

**Goal:** *The schools 2018-2019 proficiency rate for students in special education will exceed the state's proficiency rate for students in special education in math, reading, and science as measured by the MCAs.*
**Result:** *Lionsgate Academy students receiving special education exceeded the state's proficiency rate on the MCA math, reading and science for students receiving special education. '*
Goal Met

## All Students Career and College-Ready by Graduation

Many students enroll at Lionsgate at least two years below standard norms in math, reading and science as measured by the NWEA-MAP assessments. Lionsgate seeks through careful remediation and planning to ensure that students can meet their individual growth targets as set by the assessment.

**Goal:** *At least 60% of students who are more than 2 grade levels behind in math and reading will meet their individualized growth targets on the NWEA-MAP assessments from fall to spring.*

**Results***: Thirteen percent of students who were more than 2 grade levels below national norms met their individualized NWEA-MAP growth target in mathematics and 31% of students who were below national norms met their individualized growth targets in reading.*
Goal Not Met

## All Students Graduate

With Lionsgate's high percentage of students receiving special education, our graduation role accounts for the 3 years of transition services to which all students may be entitled depending on their individual needs. Transition placement is an IEP team decision. Once the team determines that the student has met the IEP goals in the areas of transition, that student may graduate. Lionsgate's personalized learning environment is supportive in helping 100% of our students graduate from high school.

**Goal:** *Ninety percent of continuously enrolled students either graduate on time or graduate within the 7-year graduation period.*
**Results**: *One hundred percent of continuously enrolled students graduated within the 7 year graduation period.*
**Goal Met.**

Lionsgate Academy tracks the achievement of students' progress on their individualized objectives that support the attainment of their IEP goals. Tracking progress on IEP goals and objectives holds special education staff accountable for attainment of prescribed goals over the year. Data are recorded at each IEP meeting, tracking the progress that students have made since their last annual IEP. Data are disaggregated by service provided, which allows Lionsgate to monitor patterns in areas such as speech, language arts, or emotional regulation.

**Goal**: *The median percentage of objectives achieved is greater than 70% for students enrolled for more than one year.*
**Result:** *The median percentage of IEP objectives achieved for the 2018-19 school year was 80%.*
**Goal Met.**

Student credit accumulation is tracked for all students for language arts, social studies, science, math and electives. Student's status is reviewed at the student's annual IEP meeting and at the end of each academic quarter to determine if the student is on track to graduate. If students fall behind, plans are made to help this student make up needed credits or to identify a graduation track that will be determined by the student's IEP team and based on the student's individual accomplishment of IEIP goals.

**Goal**: *At least 80% of students will meet their annual credit accumulation goal, whereby maintain on track to graduation status.*

**Result:** *In the 2018-19 school year, 92% of students were on track to graduate as measured through their credit accumulation.*
**Goal Met.**