

Friendship Academy of the Arts, ISD # 4079-07

2019-20

Annual Report



Minnesota Charter School District #4079

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**FRIENDSHIP ACADEMY OF THE ARTS
2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

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In the 2019-20 Friendship Academy of the Arts' (FAA) Annual report, the objective is to show what inspires the determination to take a Journey to Excellence and continue to expect the best and raise the bar for our students, families, staff, and board. It is the hope that insight will be gained as to our drive to achieve greater accountability, increased accomplishment, and a lasting impact to put FAA on the path to sustainable, responsible growth.

Statutory Information Regarding the Charter School Annual Report

124D.10, Subd. 14. includes the following requirements:

A charter school must publish an annual report approved by the board of directors. The annual report must at least include information on:

- School enrollment,
- Student attrition,
- Governance and management,
- Staffing,
- Finances,
- Academic performance,
- Innovative practices and implementation, and
- Future plans.

Primary Statutory Purpose

Friendship Academy's statutory purposes as identified in our school's contract with Pillsbury United Communities are as follows: Friendship Academy's primary statutory purpose is to improve all pupil learning and all student achievement. Friendship was very strategic in finding ways to accomplish this primary purpose with a considerable amount of time invested in learning best practices from schools with similar demographics throughout the state and nation to discover the most effective strategies to meet the needs of scholars and families.

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School Information

Contact Information

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Grades Served: K-7

FAA Mission

To educate children to be confident, competent and creative citizens.

FAA Vision

Empowering scholars to be lifelong leaders and learners by developing the whole child socially, emotionally, academically and artistically.

FAA Beliefs

Our beliefs about the value of all people:

- *Every person deserves respect.*
- *Each person's intrinsic value is non-negotiable.*
- *Every student possesses the potential to learn.*

Our beliefs about our educational experience:

- *High standards stimulate achievement.*
- *Higher-level thinking and social skills are developed through exploration and self-discovery.*
- *Arts integration enhances the learner intellectually and culturally.*
- *Leadership is a critical life skill that must be intentionally developed.*
- *Family involvement is critical to learning.*

Our beliefs about the impact of our school:

- *Learning is a lifelong process.*
- *Education provides access to unlimited opportunities.*

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Authorizer Information

Pillsbury United Communities

Our mission is creating choice, change and connection.

Pillsbury United Communities is committed to ensuring all students are prepared and ready for life. As a charter school authorizer, we work to make certain that every young person is in school, engaged and in an environment that believes in their endless potential- no matter their current circumstance.

PUC authorized charter schools align with our mission, vision and values, as well as demonstrate the capacity to be successful with the following student populations:

- Students who qualify for free or reduced lunch
- Students whom English is not their first language or their parents first language
- Students who have special needs and/or have a different learning styles
- Students who are significantly behind academically
- Students who are culturally and ethnically diverse
- Students who are disengaged and/or dropped out of school and have re-engaged (high school)

The Office of Public Charter Schools (OPCS) is responsible for providing compliance oversight and monitoring academic achievement, financial, governance, operational strength and performance goals for each of its schools. PUC serves 8,000 students with 70% identified as a community of color, 62% identify as black, and 80% free and reduced lunch students. Friendship Academy's contractual relationship with Pillsbury United Communities began in 2016 with a common belief that focuses, *"To make certain that every young person is in school, engaged and in an environment that believes in their endless potential- no matter their current circumstance."*

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Student Enrollment & Demographics

Enrollment

Student enrollment at Friendship Academy has been one of many great successes. In 2001, Friendship Academy began with an enrollment of 37 students. In 2019-20, enrollment sustained year over year to 168 scholars with an average of 52 on the waiting list. The table below shows Friendship’s enrollment trend data.

Grades	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Kindergarten	22	27	17
1st Grade	22	21	26
2nd Grade	22	26	20
3rd Grade	24	24	27
4th Grade	19	28	16
5th Grade	28	17	25
6th Grade	21	25	18
7th Grade	N/A	N/A	19
Total	159	168	168
Total ADM (Average Daily Membership) for year	155.09	160.2	165.21

Annual Waitlist

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
All Students on Waitlist	49	35	52

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Demographics

Friendship Academy is a public charter school district that serves 168 culturally diverse K-7 students (96% African American and 4% Caucasian). Eighty percent of students are economically disadvantaged urban students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. The students who attend Friendship Academy come from the surrounding communities as indicated in the table below:

City of Residence	# Students in Fall 2019
Minneapolis	93
Brooklyn Center	11
Brooklyn Park	13
St. Paul	11
	128
Below is a list of the other areas where students live.	
AppleValley	1
Bloomington	5
Champlin	1
Columbia Heights	2
Crystal	1
Eagan	2
Eden Prairie	3
Fridley	3
Inver Grove Heights	1
Mendota Heights	1
Minnetonka	1
New Hope	3
Plymouth	8
Ramsey	3
Richfield	1
Robbinsdale	1
St. Cloud	1
Woodbury	2
	40

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Type	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total Enrollment	159	162	168
Male	79	76	79
Female	80	92	89
Special Education	18	16	16
African American	155	156	161
Latino	0	0	1
Asian/PI	2	0	0
American Indian	0	0	0
Caucasian	2	6	2
Homeless	2	4	6
F/R Lunch	85	118	134

Student Attendance, Attrition & Mobility

Student Attendance

Overall, data provides evidence of consistent performance in student attendance, averaging above 93.4% for 2019-20.

Student Attendance	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Overall Attendance Rate	93.4%	96.05%	93.57%

Student Attrition

Friendship Academy maintains high student enrollment, re-enrollment, interest, and demand. Historical data reveals that Friendship has a very low student attrition rate due to the focus on creating

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an environment where students, staff, and families can nurture their genius. The positive, loving environment Friendship Academy offers with high expectations are attributes parents have identified as reasons they continue to keep their children enrolled in Friendship Academy.

Percentage of student* who were continuously enrolled between October 1 of 2018-19 school year and October 1 of 2019-20	80%
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Student Mobility

Friendship's mobility index trend data is very consistent for the last four years. Friendship has an exit process in place. The data shows that the main reason for students who transferred out during the school year was relocation, transportation, attending schools closer to the family's home, and family separation.

Percentage of students who were enrolled for 90% or more of the 2019-2020	90%
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Our Family Survey Data

100% say their child believes he/she can do well in school

100% say their child is making satisfactory progress

90% satisfied with their child's teacher

100% feel their child is safe and cared for

100% say FAA gives them opportunity to be involved

90% feel comfortable bringing forward concerns

70% say FAA communicates effectively

70% satisfied with distance learning offered

100% overall satisfaction

100% would refer someone to FAA

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Our Scholar Survey Data

78% of Scholars believe they can do well in school

64% like coming to school

83% believe there is a caring adult in the school and help let's them know they believe in them

76% have a good relationship with their teacher

71% say parents help with their work

76% believe school is a safe place

76% feel they do artistic activities

38% felt connected during distance learning

Innovative Practices and Implementation

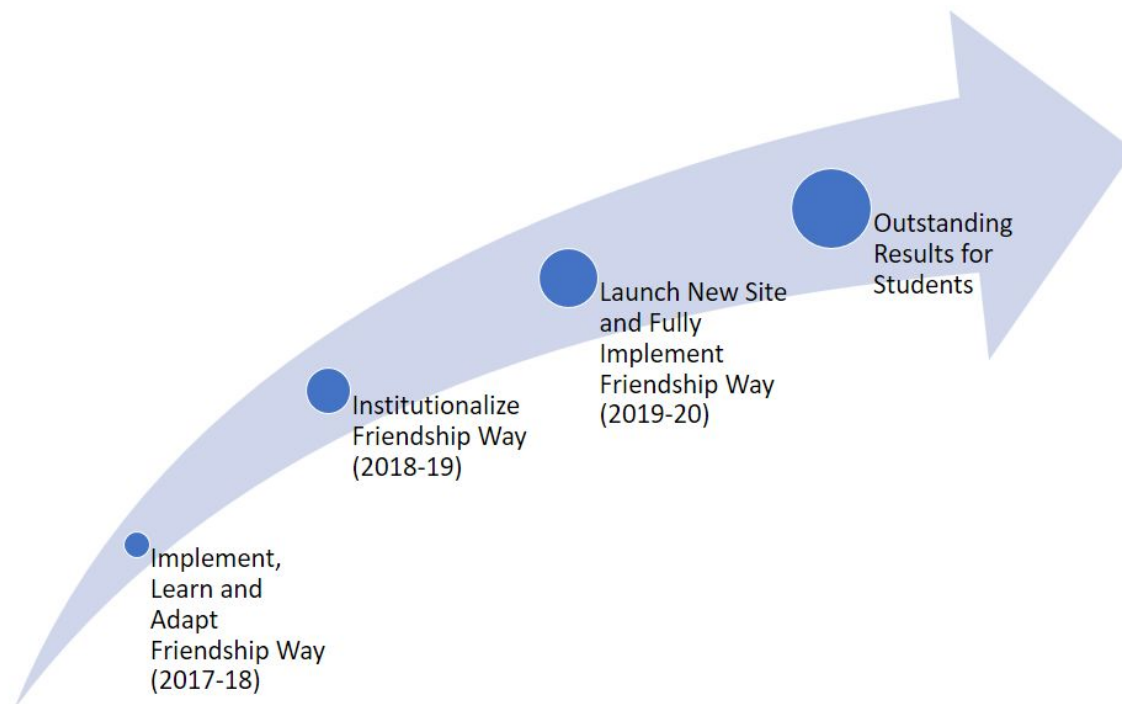


Friendship Academy of the Arts adopted a strategic growth plan through 2020 that is the framework for responsible expansion. One of the key findings of the strategic planning process was the need to create clarity and consistency relative to academic strategies and cultural practices at the school. FAA faculty and staff developed The Friendship Way in the summer of 2017 the 2018-19 school year was the first

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full year of implementation. This model provides the foundation for “how things are done at FAA” and is further described in the section on the School Model, as well as other references throughout this plan. The Strategic Plan provides a three-year trajectory for the school’s growth and improvement:



The purpose of this whole child model is to explicitly lay out academic and cultural norms and expectations for everyone in the FAA community. Much of what is articulated in The Friendship Way has been integral to the school’s culture for years – establishing a warm, caring environment that emphasizes strong relationships among all community members, rigorous academics with high expectations of scholars, and integration of the arts into the curriculum. The Friendship Way comprises four interrelated pillars: Academics, Leadership, Family and Community Collaboration and Art Integration. At the heart of the model are FAA’s beliefs about the importance of friendship at school and in life.

The Friendship Core

Core to The Friendship Way is the belief that the ability to build and sustain respectful relationships and enduring friendships is one of the most essential life skills. It is key to a successful personal and work life, and to being a competent, engaged citizen. FAA strives to create a positive, supportive and affirming learning environment committed to a philosophy of excellence. Helping students develop the

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interpersonal skills necessary for effective relationships and friendships is interwoven throughout The Friendship Way.

Friendship Way 2019-20 Accomplishments

“Welcome Party” for the Beginning of the Year

Pep Rallies

Themed Sock Hops

Staff gatherings

Various Staff Appreciation Weeks

Weekly Shout outs on FAA Radio

Random Acts of Kindness

1st Virtual Field Day

End of year celebration to reconnect students and staff

Student Success Team

Data driven online referral system

New restorative referral system

Implemented January 2019

Focus to maximize time in the classroom

3 step process involving relationship building, individual plans, social emotional development, and family collaboration

Academics

FAA is committed to nurturing the genius of all of its scholars and endowing each of them with a high quality education. Across grade levels, FAA teachers provide rigorous, standards-based instruction and use research-based strategies to help develop the whole child—academically, socially, emotionally and artistically. Throughout the school, teachers use common methods and consistent language. Lessons are data-driven, and the school is striving to create individualized learning plans for each student. FAA uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices to clarify classroom expectations for everyone in the school community. To provide the best instruction possible,

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FAA collaborates with educational experts to integrate best practices into the curriculum. At FAA, parents/guardians are essential partners in their child/ren's education, and the school extends significant outreach efforts to develop this partnership.

Structural Enhancements

Operation Director

Instructional Mentor/Coach

Data/Assessment Coordinator

MTSS Coordinator

Weekly Data Meetings

More inclusive informal and formal observation and feedback

Leadership Development

Ed Fuel Executive Coaching

Achievement Network Instructional Leadership

Relay National Principal Fellowship

Relay Instructional Leadership Training

Academic Partnerships

Achievement Network (Anet) (3rd-6th)

Groves Academy (K-2nd)

Reading Corp Member

Freedom School

Areas of Success

Implementation of new Math and Reading curricula new teachers

Summer Curriculum Support

Established consistent 1:1 feedback and planning support meetings with teachers

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Increased accountability for timeline for feedback, both for teachers and leadership team

Teaching and learning cycle implementation

Leadership

FAA's definition of leadership is doing whatever it takes to make the community around you collectively function better, grow stronger, and prosper. It is doing the right thing even when no one is watching, and setting a positive example and guiding all members to becoming the community you hope to achieve. While leadership has long been a focus at FAA, the approach was formalized in the summer of 2017 with staff training on *The Leader in Me*. Goals of leadership development across the school are to give everyone a common understanding of and language for leadership, to increase student agency in all areas of their lives, and to empower student voice in influencing their environments, including the school community.

Leadership is deemed a critical skill at FAA because it supports everyone in reaching their potential as scholars, artists and community members. Strong leadership among all members of FAA will limit distractions at school, model positive behavior, foster interpersonal relationships, and promote professional and academic growth. Most important, it will imbue scholars for life with the skills to become strong leaders at home, in the classroom and at school, and in whatever community is important to them.

Leadership 2019-20 Accomplishments

3rd of 3 year Leader In Me Implementation

Successful Student Council elections that represented each grade

Incorporated more student voice via Student Council

Mascot identified

- THE STARS

1st Virtual Leadership Day

Family and Community Collaboration

FAA knows that it "takes a village to raise a child." Supported by research, FAA places a high value on engaging families in the school community and provides multiple opportunities to encourage parent/guardian involvement.

Ongoing research shows that family engagement in schools improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior.

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-- Garcia, Lily E., and Thornton, Otha (November 18, 2014). *The Enduring Importance of Parental Involvement*, NEA Today.

Similarly, FAA recognizes the value of having the support and engagement of the community in the school, and of having students contribute to the community, thus significant effort is also invested in school-community collaboration.

Family and Community Collaboration 2019-20 Accomplishments

3rd Annual Community Brunch

3rd Annual Daddy's and Doughnuts (1st virtual)

3rd Annual Mommy's and Muffins (1st Virtual)

Monthly Give-a-ways at Family Nights

Art Integration

The arts play a prominent role at FAA, both in terms of being integrated into classroom learning, and as a focus of the school's enrichment program. A goal is to enable students to explore and tap into their creative abilities so they are confident and proud of their artistic expression. This arts focus is evident in walking through FAA, as student artwork adorns the walls, and depending on the time of the day, one might be treated to students practicing for a performance or assembly.

Art Enrichment Offerings

SPANISH

STEAM

BALLROOM DANCE

BILLINGSLEY SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND ARTS (BSOMA)

GIRLS ON THE RUN

AFRICAN DRUMMING

STEP TEAM

LINE DANCE

FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

VISUAL ART

INTRO TO IT & DANCE

STUDY HALL

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Our Community Artists Partners

BSOMA

HEART & SOUL DRUMMING

BLACK DATA PROCESSORS AND ASSOCIATES (BDPA)

TRINA'S LINE DANCE

HEART OF DANCE (DANCING CLASSROOMS)

STAFF INCLUDES:: JULIA SABAL, LYNN SMITH, JOVIANNI DAVIS, WILLIAM WESLEY, LERCONGA JOSEPH, KAYLA DEMERY

Marketing/Fundraising

Raising community awareness of FAA and its many successes is a key objective of FAA's marketing plan. This will facilitate student recruitment as the school grows and expands. The current marketing plan was updated the summer of 2017 by a committee composed of a Board member, the executive director, the marketing and recruitment administrative support and the teacher mentor/instructional coach. The marketing and recruitment administrative support has overall responsibility for implementing the plan and she solicits help from others as the need arises. It is critical to monitor and adjust the marketing and student recruitment plan annually, with particular attention on quantifying what strategies are most effective for attracting new students to the school.

FAA has a 12-month promotional and student-recruitment strategy. In addition to recruiting students, FAA is aiming to achieve high public awareness so as the school grows and expands it will be easier to fill seats. The specific goal for recruitment each year is to fill the number of seats available and have a long-enough waiting list to fill seats as they become available.

A multimedia campaign is planned to disseminate information, through the use of social media, press releases and feature stories for local newspapers and broadcast outlets, the school newspaper and external banners. New brochures are being designed, and every effort will be made to connect with key contacts to place materials in highly visible places in churches, community centers, pre-kindergarten facilities, parks and recreation centers, health clinics, apartment buildings, beauty salons and barbershops.

Following are the key monthly areas of focus for the marketing and recruitment plan:

- January/February: Kindergarten Roundup
- March: Retention and re-enrollment

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- April /May: Open enrollment for all grades – an open house will be conducted weekly, and members of the FAA community will attend resource fairs as well as increase distribution of promotional materials
- June, July and August: Recruitment and awareness – in addition to other approaches, members of the FAA community will attend festivals and fairs prevalent in the summer
- September: Recruitment and awareness
- October/November/December: Awareness

Recruitment and Retention Monitoring Plan

The leadership team will use two monitoring tools: one for new students (recruiting) and one for existing students. Together, this will provide the leadership team with a clear and updated view of future enrollment at any moment.

Recruitment Tracker with Schoolmint

The recruitment tracker includes the name of every potential new student (all grades) who may enroll at FAA. The tracker will identify key information including:

- Student/family contact information
- What grade they will be in next year
- How they learned about FAA or expressed interest in the school
- What recruitment event(s) they have attended
- What personal contacts (email, calls, home visits, texts) have been made to the family
- Whether they received an application packet
- Whether they completed the application packet
- What our internal assessment is of their likelihood to enroll:
 - High (application packet completed; strong personal indication they will attend FAA)
 - Likely (received application packet; strong personal indication they will attend FAA)
 - Maybe (some interest but may be considering other schools or haven't yet received an application packet)
 - Low (little response to recruitment strategies, may see other schools as their better choice right now)
 - Unlikely (no response to personal contacts, no demonstrated interest in recruitment strategies)

Enrollment Tracker with Schoolmint

The enrollment tracker includes the name of every existing student (all grades) who attends FAA. The tracker will identify key retention information including:

- Student/family contact information
- What grade they are currently in; what grade they will be in the following year
- What, if any, concerns there are in their continued attendance at the school

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- What our internal assessment is of their likelihood to remain enrolled next year:
 - High (every indication shows they will stay at FAA; no reason to think they will leave)
 - Medium (there are some indications they may leave, follow up may be required to address their concerns)
 - Low (there are strong indications they may leave, they are actively looking at another school or relocating geographically)
 - Not returning (they have indicated they will not be returning to FAA next year)

Community Partnerships

Friendship Academy involves the community in its educational programs. We believe that it takes everyone to make our organization the best learning environment possible for our students. Our robust professional development and educational programs could not have been made possible without contributions from our business partnerships. We are very grateful for their partnerships and dedication to sustaining Friendship Academy's academic excellence with students and staff.

Through the work of the Americorp VISTA, relevant, descriptive and contact information for current and potential funders, advocates, and supporters, and created Google spreadsheets -- one with all information, one to measure our frequency of contact with said organizations and type of interaction.

We worked on maintaining relationships with our current funders and researching more potential funders that we could reach out to in the future. We maintained current relationships mainly through communication and have gathered all of our information on current and potential funders and advocates into charts and spreadsheets.

Here is a list of 2019-20 community partners:

Partnership Entity	Purpose	Type of Support
Angel Donor	Operational Support	Donation
Greater Friendship MBC	Annual Uniform/School Supply Drive	Donations
City Joy	General Operations Support	Donation
Jay and Rose Phillips Foundation	Marketing/Family Community Involvement	Americorp Vista
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools	Policy/Legislative Issues	Membership

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MN Comeback	Facilities/Expansion	Technical Support
Reading Corp	Reading Intervention	PT Reading Corp Member
Youthprise	Healthy Snacks	Sponsorship
Children Defense Fund	Freedom School	Grant
Monitors Foundation	Chess Club/Boys Group	Grant
Great MN Schools	Strategic Planning	Grant/Technical Support
African American Community Response Team	Additional Devices	Donation
Charter School Growth Fund	Expansion Support	Grant
Bush Foundation	Individualized Learning Support	Grant
Graves Foundation	Middle School Individualized Learning	Grant

Out of School Programming

Through the support of a 21st Century Federal Grant and in partnership with Children Defense Fund-MN (CDF-MN), FAA was able to provide before and after school programming through Freedom Schools.

The *CDF Freedom Schools* program enhances children’s motivation to read and makes them feel good about learning. At the same time, the program connects families to the right resources in their communities. Freedom School students engage in a research-based, multicultural Integrated Reading Curriculum that supports them and their families through **five essential components**:

1. High quality academic enrichment
2. Parent and family development

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3. Civic engagement and social action
4. Intergenerational servant leadership development
5. Nutrition, health and mental health

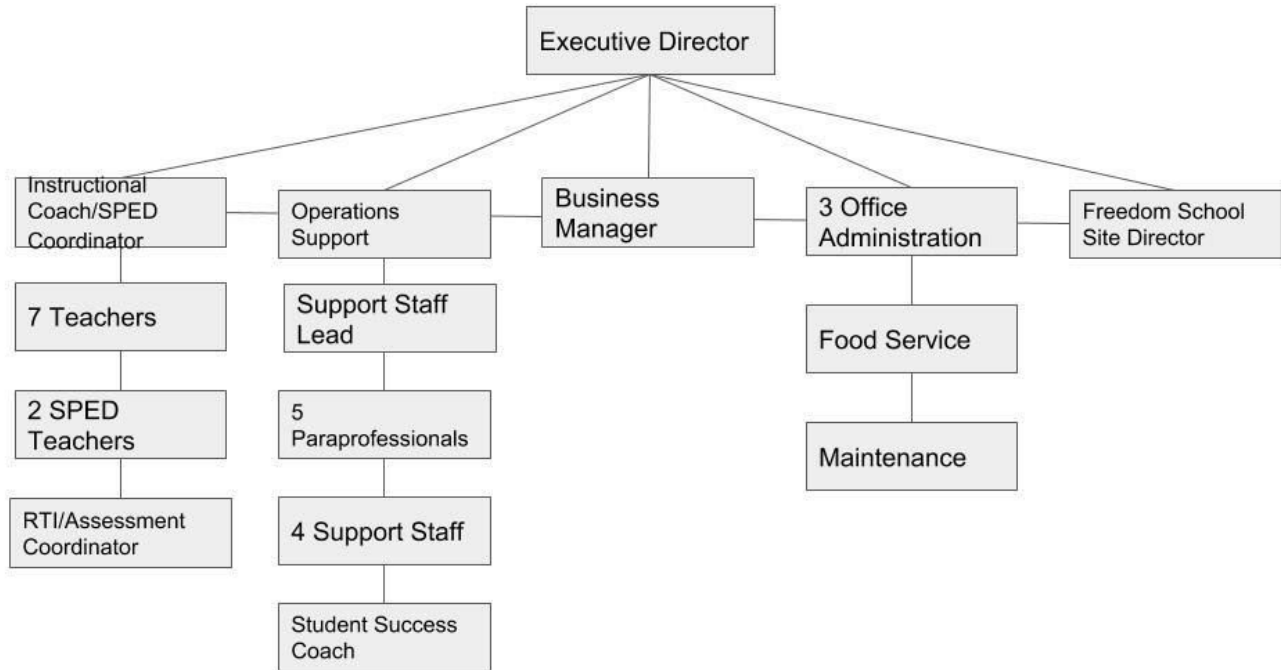
The five essential components align with the mission, vision, beliefs, and goals for 2019-20. The before and after school program had the opportunity to serve 50 scholars while the summer programming served 70 scholars. We were able to partner with the African American Community Response Team to do a Get on the Bus campaign where our students had the opportunity to participate in person for the first two weeks. The remaining weeks of classes were administered virtually.

Staffing

FAA believes that “learning is a lifelong process” and continuous development needs to take place at every level of the organization. Our philosophy is to always put the best teachers in front of our students. Friendship had a 65% retention rate among teachers from the Spring of 2019 to the Fall of 2020 and 85% retention among all staff. This is an example of our commitment to investing in the professional growth of our staff and students.

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Friendship Academy of the Arts 2019-20 Organizational Chart



Staff Survey Data

65% teacher retention 2019-20

85% of current team returning

97% rate FAA as a great place to work

94% feel supported by administration

91% feel comfortable voicing concerns

97% say they receive adequate PD

61% say FAA communicates effectively

88% believe there is adequate teamwork

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Professional Development

Friendship Academy provides staff opportunities for professional development in the summer and weekly throughout the calendar school year. These professional learning communities are teacher led by the academic director and designated PLC lead teachers in its good faith effort to continuously improve instruction for advancing student achievement.

Teachers received initial and ongoing professional development in the following areas:

- Curricular alignment with the MN state standards
- Data-driven decision making process and data coaching
- SIOP instructional strategies
- Classroom management and engagement
- Measurement and assessment
- Differentiated instruction
- Social Emotional (Innocent Classroom Technologies)
- Technology Integration
- Leader In Me Professional Development
- CPR/First Aid
- Achievement Network (ANet) Instructional Support

Friendship Academy, quality compensation (Q Comp) school, has in place a teacher evaluation system that incorporates ongoing administrative evaluation, peer observation, and student data to guide and motivate teachers to increase effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers receive job-embedded professional development by participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) on a weekly basis, receiving mandatory clock hours for licensure renewal.

Teachers are observed a minimum of three times per year, a PLC lead teacher, and/or a mentor/coach that includes a pre- and post- observation conference; providing critical feedback to improve instruction. Teachers receive timely-data analysis and data coaching sessions on student achievement, at least three times a year. This is beneficial in advancing a teacher's instruction, knowledge of their student's abilities, and provides for any targeted individualized coaching and learning to help ensure that every student will be successful through monitoring, targeted interventions, and differentiated individualized instruction.

Implementation of best practices for improving instruction, curriculum, technology, and collaboration are revised annually, focusing on increasing student achievement, upgrading curriculum and developing effective programming. Teachers identify learning targets for every class setting, and address the needs of all students, align learning targets with common summative and formative assessments. All teachers and paraprofessionals work to identify and develop course objectives, and utilize effective instructional strategies. They assist with organizing curriculum for intentional language

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development and also provide instructional coaching and feedback to assist teachers in successfully facilitating student progress and success.

All of Friendship staff are trained annually and provided job embedded staff development throughout the year to ensure that everyone is using the approaches and innovative practices with fidelity. Our system is established to promote high teacher efficiency to maximize student growth and sustained high performance.

Data Driven

Assessing and evaluating each student's progress toward meeting state and local academic goals includes Friendship staff evaluating student progress toward college and career readiness standards by adhering to state and national standards and assessments for individual students including those in sub-group categories. District measures of success include exceeding state standards in the areas of math and reading. Data from student assessments is reviewed regularly by staff members to monitor student progress, and to measure instructional effectiveness. Also, data from the child find and Response to Intervention (RtI) teams help to determine student program placement.

Academic Performance: Goals & Results

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA)/NWEA Results

Due to the impact of COVID-19 the MCA and Spring NWEA were not administered.

ESSA Accountability Measurements

Academic Achievement Rate

Due to the impact of COVID-19 the MCA and Spring NWEA were not administered.

Academic Progress

Due to the impact of COVID-19 the MCA and Spring NWEA were not administered.

Math Academic Progress

Due to the impact of COVID-19 the MCA and Spring NWEA were not administered.

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Reading Academic Progress

Due to the impact of COVID-19 the MCA and Spring NWEA were not administered.

Consistent Attendance

This is a measure of students who attend school on a regular basis and are not frequently absent. A student is considered consistently attending if they attend more than 90 percent of the time the student is enrolled during the year. The data below shows a state average of 85.3% for consistent attendance. FAA performed above the state average at 92.7%.

Cycles of Improvement

Annually the leadership team meets to reflect on all of the key data points collected during the year, including reports from the Student Success Coach and The Friendship Way Teams, classroom observations, student-assessment results, and survey results from staff, students and parents/guardians. This information is analyzed to determine key strengths and opportunities, which are prioritized based on the factors that have the greatest impact on student achievement and the school's culture. In collaboration with The Friendship Way teams, the Leadership Team identifies the top goals for the following year and a plan to achieve them, using the SMART goals process; this information is presented to the Board for approval. The Leadership Team monitors progress monthly to determine if any modifications are needed achieve the goals. Additionally, the leader team meets to monitor progress of their pillars and to make recommendations when changes are needed.

Governance & Management

Friendship's board demonstrated the capacity to effectively govern a successful charter school. Friendship Academy materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract and school bylaws relating to school board composition and training, and the board demonstrate the capacity to govern an effective charter school, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Composition, skills and experience
- Elections
- Background checks
- Training
- Onboarding

Friendship's board engaged in appropriate decision-making and oversight through effective and transparent board meetings. Friendship Academy materially complies with applicable laws, rules, regulations and provisions of the charter contract relating to board decision-making and oversight, with the following elements fully developed and functioning effectively:

- Conducting meetings

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- Meeting documentation
- MN Open Meeting Law
- Policy development, implementation and review
- Establishing clear performance expectations for the school that align to the charter contract
- School performance evaluation (academic, financial, operation, environmental education)
- Key organizational documents and decisions

The Board of Directors of Friendship Academy consists of seven members. Skills and expertise of Board members include: accounting, consulting, corporate management, non-profit management and training, public school teaching, college counseling, and youth advocacy. All seven Board positions were up for election this year. Board members recognize the need for leadership continuity and are considering Board policies that would provide for staggered terms over at least two years. Board leaders are seeking additional members with marketing and fundraising expertise.

Friendship Academy’s meeting minutes provide clear and concise evidence of the Board’s engagement in appropriate decision-making, that includes providing leadership, setting policies, and developing accountability practices that will ensure high student achievement, reviewing performance data and budgets, contracts, annual reports, financial audit, and leases. Friendship Academy’s monthly agenda contain director reports from the Executive Director and committees.

A comprehensive Board binder is given to each Board member. Agendas, minutes, board packets, bylaws and policies are kept in the front office and posted on the school’s website.

Name	Board Position	Group Represented
Wendy Hines	Board Chair	Community
Anansia Joseph	Board Co-Chair	Community
Brenda Hill	Marketing Committee Chair	Community
Maya Brown	Fundraising Committee Chair	Parent
Katharine Manual	Governance Committee	Parent

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	Co-Chair	
Jules Porter	Governance Committee Co-Chair	Community
Akuorkor Ablorh	Secretary	Teacher

Finances

FAA will submit audited financial information to Pillsbury United Communities and the Minnesota Department of Education on or before December 31, 2020. It will be publically available at www.friendshipacademy.org.

To address questions regarding school finances, financial reports of 2019-20, and/or an organizational budget for 2019-20, please contact:

Friendship Academy of the Arts Charter School
District #4079
2600 E. 38th St.
Minneapolis, MN 55445
Office: (612) 879-6703

Friendship Academy’s financial performance of 2019-20 provided the school with remarkable opportunities to further expand their academic programs. Friendship’s outlook for 2020-21 continues to be positive, as the school looks forward to future growth in enrollment, and approaches to future opportunities that provide the best quality education possible for students.

Information presented below is derived from preliminary audit figures.

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FRIENDSHIP ACADEMY OF THE ARTS CHARTER SCHOOL NO. 4079 MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOOL AS A WHOLE

Net Position

The School's *combined* net position was (\$732,870) on June 30, 2020 (see Table A-1).

**Table A-1
The School's Net Position**

	Governmental Activities as of June 30,		Percentage Change
	2020	2019	
Current and Other Assets	\$ 6,519,157	\$ 1,339,556	386.67 %
Capital Assets	5,424,533	24,690	21870.57
Total Assets	<u>11,943,690</u>	<u>1,364,246</u>	775.48
Deferred Outflows of Resources	991,790	1,291,367	(23.20)
Current Liabilities	2,412,237	73,645	3175.49
Net Pension Liability	1,144,289	1,074,331	6.51
Long-Term Liabilities	9,018,790	-	N/A
Total Liabilities	<u>12,575,316</u>	<u>1,147,976</u>	995.43
Deferred Inflows of Resources	<u>1,093,034</u>	<u>1,296,950</u>	(15.72)
Net Position:			
Net Investment in Capital Assets	(751,554)	63,706	(1279.72)
Restricted	524,183	-	N/A
Unrestricted	(505,499)	146,981	(443.92)
Total Net Position	<u>\$ (732,870)</u>	<u>\$ 210,687</u>	(447.85)

The School's net position decreased by \$943,557 due to expenses exceeding revenues. The net position decrease is primarily related to GASB Statement No. 68, requiring the recording of liabilities related to the School's proportionate share of unfunded portions of statewide pension plans. Along with this the decrease was due to the School having multiple new debt issuances in the current year.

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An Analysis of Distance Learning at Friendship Academy of the Arts **Kerry Kliman - Academic Director**

In early 2020, the novel disease coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19, entered and ravaged across the United States. State governors issued executive orders to safeguard and protect citizens from this debilitating and deadly disease. As a result, schools across the country were forced to move to distance learning programs, or even close entirely.

On Sunday, March 15th, Governor Tim Walz signed an executive order issuing the closure within two days to plan and prepare for distance learning. Minnesota schools remained closed to in-person instruction for the rest of the school year, leaving school leaders, staff, students, and stakeholders to simultaneously manage and adjust to education within this new setting.

In response to this announcement, Friendship Academy of the Arts created and implemented a distance learning program entitled “Friendship Academy Distance Learning Program” within three weeks. Every student was provided with a technological device to take home, and instruction was transferred to virtual learning through synchronous classes, pre-recorded videos, and digital platforms. Non-academic services, such as internet hot-spots, meals, and childcare for essential workers were offered to all families.

Program Context

Friendship Academy is a K-7 charter school located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, serving one hundred and sixty-eight students. During the implementation of this program, there were eight classroom teachers and less than thirty-five full-time employees. Despite its compact student body, Friendship is a nationally accredited Blue Ribbon School and has been recognized for its role in closing

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the achievement gap. The majority of students are low-income students of color who are transported from throughout the Twin Cities.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of context, schools must support the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being of students because they are vital to the future health and success of each individual. Given that school closure was an unprecedented situation, as well as the fact that distance learning and similar programs had never before existed, Friendship Academy had little guidance, research, or best practices with which to establish and maintain this plan. This program was designed to offer students continuity of learning and the necessary non-instructional services to support individual well-being and development. However, if children do not have access to effective and rigorous instruction, as well as the necessary support services, they will not be provided with equitable opportunities guaranteed to them in their right to a free, appropriate public education.

Rationale

The rationale for the program study is the necessity of providing an education program that is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of race, gender, ability, background, or context. With the closure of schools as a result of the coronavirus (otherwise known as COVID-19), instruction and non-academic services must remain equitable and accessible to each and every student.

Student, staff, and stakeholder surveys revealed that there were significant strengths and opportunities for development in the school distance learning program. Leadership reflections and internal dialogue suggests that there must be an intentional, systematic approach to the design and execution of distance learning in order to ensure that all students are engaged in learning. Moreover,

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quantitative data was collected, but never evaluated in order to drive reform and improvement to the program. Recognizing that the pandemic continues and that schools may not return to traditional, brick-and-mortar education, distance learning programs must be evaluated, analyzed, and adjusted in order to ensure that all students are provided with a quality educational experience. Evaluation of this program should and must be considered in order to drive social justice and equitable educational opportunities.

Following the first week of distance learning, the Academic Director and Executive Director created and sent out a survey to all families at Friendship Academy of the Arts in order to learn more about and assess their initial experiences with distance learning. Additionally, the Academic Director crafted and sent out a survey to classroom and special education teachers.

The surveys consisted of a combination of qualitative open-ended questions and quantitative multiple-choice questions. Both surveys were sent to staff and families via email on Friday, March 27th, and school stakeholders were able to respond within one week. Twenty-seven families responded. After the window closed, the core leadership team met to review the information collected.

At the end of April, school leaders developed the use of a document entitled “Students of Concern” in order to identify and support students who were frequently absent. Beginning on Friday, April 24th, teachers created and then updated this list of students they were concerned about. This document was updated weekly and shared with administrators, who could then contact and support students and families who were not consistently engaged.

During the final week of school, the Academic Director and Executive Director met again to discuss and create summative assessment surveys that would be sent to students and parents. Separate

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questionnaires were developed for students and families, and distributed to both parties on Thursday, June 11th. The surveys were sent through email, learning management systems, and on social media. Responses were collected for the following two weeks. Forty-two students and ten families responded.

In July, members of the core leadership team conducted informal interviews with support staff, licensed teachers, students, and parents regarding their experiences with and feelings surrounding distance learning throughout the spring. Responses were paraphrased and recorded in a shared spreadsheet for all school leaders to view. Additionally, all members of the core leadership engaged in self-reflection and recorded their thoughts for others to read. In both instances, three questions were asked:

- 1) What do you think we got right in the spring? What worked well for you? Why?
- 2) What did not work for you in our spring response? What would you have liked to see us do that we did not?
- 3) When you think forward to the fall and school reopening, what is most important to you?

School attendance data was tracked and recorded daily by teachers in an online database. According to school policy, teachers recorded students as present if they had one daily interaction, either through participation in a synchronous virtual class or through submission of classwork by midnight. The MARSS coordinator then pulled reports from this software system to view school attendance totals. One report displayed the total school attendance by month. A second report disaggregated attendance data by month. Each monthly report included the total number of students in each grade, the number of male and female students in each grade, the number of excused and unexcused absences, the average percentage of attendance for the group as a whole, and the average

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percentage of attendance for male and female students. To disaggregate the data before and during distance learning, the average attendance was added, and the total was divided by the number of months.

Data Analysis and Findings

Attendance and Student Engagement

Figure 1 displays the average attendance of students at Friendship Academy of the Arts each month as a whole and by gender. Prior to school closure, total average attendance was over 94% every month. After school closure was issued by the governor of Minnesota to begin no later than March 17th, Friendship Academy closed its doors to students at the end of that day. Distance learning instruction began the following week, though average monthly attendance declines and is never above or equal to attendance during traditional, in-person instruction.

April was the first full month of distance learning for Friendship Academy, and it had the lowest average attendance of the entire year. In April, male attendance was 6.71% lower than that of girls. At the end of the month, school leaders developed and implemented the “Students of Concern” document to support students who were teachers subjectively considered unengaged. In May, however, average monthly attendance rose by 6.18%, and remained almost the same for the month of June. The improvement in attendance following the implementation of this list suggests that the intervention had a positive impact.

Attendance Totals By Month

Month	Total Attendance	Female Attendance	Male Attendance
September	97.88	98.05	97.69

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October	97.55	97.74	97.34
November	96.93	96.22	97.74
December	94.42	94.97	93.80
January	95.58	95.27	95.92
February	96.27	95.99	96.59
March	91.43	91.14	91.77
April	84.09	92.58	85.78
May	90.27	89.69	90.92
June	90.77	89.10	92.66

Figure 1

Figure 2 exhibits the average attendance for each grade level, broken down into the months which consisted of traditional, in-person instruction (from September to February) and during distance learning (from March to June). Seventh grade has perfect attendance before and during distance learning; given the teacher's low performance on teacher evaluations, this record is not considered to be accurate.

Attendance is lower during distance learning in every grade other than seventh grade. Kindergarten and first grade have the lower average attendance of all grade levels both before and during distance learning, though there is greater disparity between these grade levels and older grades during distance learning. Anecdotal research revealed that educators and school leaders both attributed the lack of student engagement of early primary students to their inability to independently utilize

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technology (thus rendering them dependent on adults to participate in live classes and small groups, as well as to turn in daily assignments).

Average Attendance by Grade Level

	September-February	March-June
K	94.85	74.52
1	94.38	80.70
2	97.62	93.51
3	96.63	92.73
4	96.32	94.62
5	95.71	86.50
6	96.71	93.26
7	100	100

Figure 2

Communication

Friendship Academy sent a survey to all families in June to receive feedback. Figure 3 illustrates the results of one question. Out of more than one hundred families, there were only ten responses. 70% of families surveyed rated communication with teachers in distance learning as excellent or fair, and 30% of parents indicated that they perceived communication to be only fair.

An end of the year survey was also sent to all students, and 42 out of 164 students responded. Results from one question in this survey are represented in Figure 4. 31% of students who responded indicated that they did not feel connected to their teacher throughout distance learning. Thus,

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approximately one-third of both parents and students indicated that communication or connectedness were not satisfactory.

How would you rate your communication with your child's teacher during Distance Learning?
10 responses

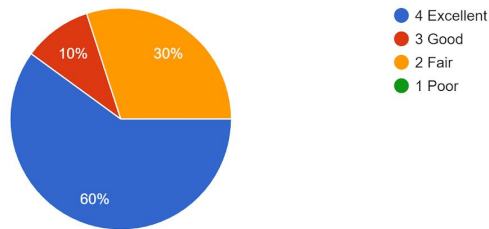


Figure 3

I felt connected to my teacher during Distance Learning.
42 responses

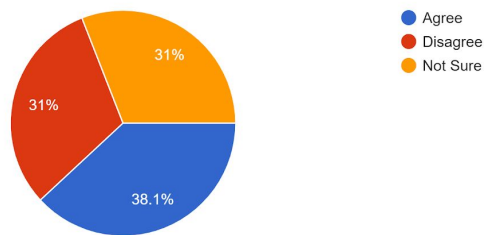


Figure 4

Special Education Students

Anecdotal research further indicated that students who have special needs also faced similar challenges, either as a result of inexperience with technology, lack of in-person support and attention, or the change in educational structure and routine. Additionally, special education students appeared more frequently on the “Students of Concern” document than did general education students. This

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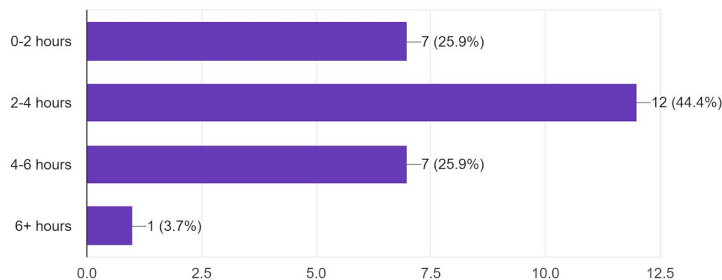
suggests that special education students were further marginalized by distance learning when compared to their peers.

Personalized Learning

After the first week of distance learning, Friendship Academy sent out a survey to all parents to receive feedback and make improvements. Figure 5 illustrates that although over 96% of students spent between zero and six hours on school activities a day, there was a wide range within these time frames. Most students spent between two and four hours a day on school assignments. When asked to rate the amount of their child’s workload, as displayed in Figure 6, approximately two-thirds indicated they were satisfied, while almost one-third rated the workload as too little. It is not possible to disaggregate data to cross-reference how many hours of schoolwork families felt was too much or too little.

This data suggests that in order to meet the needs of more parents, Friendship Academy must take a more student-centered and personalized approach to instruction. The benefits to individualized learning, particularly in online or blended learning, were found in multiple and various sources during the literature review.

How much time has your child spent, on average, doing “school” every day?
27 responses



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Figure 5

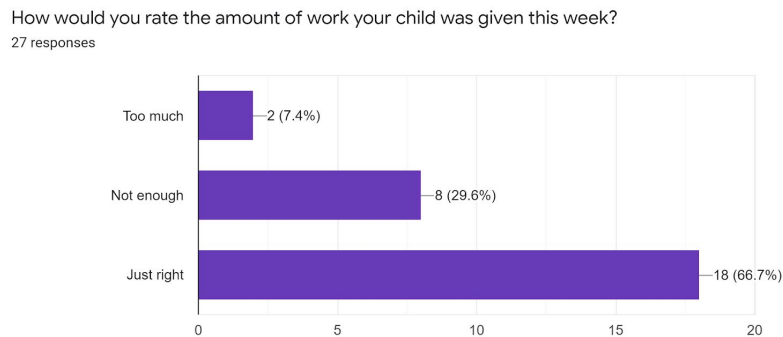


Figure 6

What and How Students Learn

Anecdotal evidence from teacher and leadership interviews suggested that educators and school leaders were more interested in how students learn rather than what they are learning. Findings from the literature review indicated similar results, in that the learning process, particularly as it relates to technology access and resources, was discussed and focused on more frequently than the standards or knowledge that students could or should be learning. Friendship Academy had no formal plan or procedure to determine, track, or evaluate the academic content provided to students; there was thus a lack of accountability for teachers in regards to instruction.

Recommendations

Interventions

Students who were younger or who receive special education services were less likely to be engaged or attend school during distance learning. The interventions implemented as a result of the

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“Students of Concern” list had a positive impact on attendance and participation, as evidenced by Figure 1. It is recommended that interventions continue, and that they are particularly focused on and narrowed to students who are in kindergarten or first grade, have a SPED label, or appear on the lists generated by teachers. Teachers and administrators should continue to utilize this list and develop increasingly specific routines and systems around its use. To accomplish this, it may be necessary to rethink and revise staff roles and dedicate an entire position to family and student engagement.

Communication Clarity

In order for communication to improve between teachers and families, it is recommended that school leaders clarify what effective communication is and how it occurs. This can be accomplished through gathering anecdotal evidence such as interviews and open-ended questionnaires, as well as surveys asking parents to identify communication preferences. Following this, school leaders should discuss and develop communication protocols to improve family and community collaboration and engagement. Technological resources, such as guardian summaries through learning management systems or online, integrated gradebooks, should be implemented so that families can have access to information when and how they desire. Regular, frequent touch-points between parents and school staff should be built into the school calendar and explained as a requirement for fulfilling job responsibilities.

Content Accountability

School leaders should establish a clear vision and definition of what effective instruction is and what content should be covered. Teachers should be held accountable to what they teach, which can be tracked and monitored through lesson plan submission. School leaders must create academic norms

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regarding instructional skills and academic knowledge, which will contribute to the implementation of rigorous curriculum and quality teaching, as well as promote equity between and among all students. Intellectual preparation as it relates to pacing guides and standards should be required consistently; this can be accomplished through the regular occurrence of grade level planning meetings and data tracking and monitoring. It is also recommended that professional learning communities (PLC's) continue, with a more specific focus on standards and content, rather than tools and resources that facilitate instruction.

Personalized Learning

Friendship Academy should execute a system of personalized learning in order to support the needs of every student. Individualized learning plans should be developed in coordination with both parents and teachers to ensure that the specific interests and requirements of each child is met. These learning plans should be referenced frequently and inform daily instruction. Teachers, parents, and students should engage in collaborative reflection and action-oriented planning every trimester, which will enable all parties to track and monitor progress. Consulting with students about their progress, as well as identifying and stamping action steps, should occur at least once a month to build the capacity of each student as an individual to meet their own self-determined goals and objectives. Because learning and instruction has been adapted and modified, students will be more engaged in learning, receptive to instruction, and communication between parents and teachers will improve.

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SOAR Analysis

Present	Future
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Implemented quickly · Framework communicated early · Offered both synchronous and asynchronous instruction · Teachers were empowered to make and adjust instructional choices · Instructional coach and professional development was offered as support · PLC's continued · Staff and stakeholders had voice through surveys · All staff and students were provided 1-1 with devices · Food and other resources were offered and distributed to anyone who needed · Wireless hotspots were offered 	<p>Aspirations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensuring equitable access for all students · Technology training sessions for students and families · System for identifying and supporting students of concern · Following classes asynchronously · Establishing school-wide systems and expectations for technology use that supports instruction · Offering choice for all families · Individualized learning plans for each student that identify goals and create specific action steps · Regular, consistent communication plans implemented to increase and improve communication between families and teachers · Integration of attendance and gradebook to improve communication · Teacher ability to modify and adjust curriculum
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Improved communication between staff and parents · Addressing students of concern and getting them engaged consistently · Adapting instruction to utilize technology to support student engagement · Maintaining rigorous instruction of new material · Technology capacity of staff, students, and families · Strong virtual routines, procedures, and expectations 	<p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Higher rates of satisfaction from both teachers and parents regarding ease and success of communication · Resources dedicated to intentional and innovative technology plan · Professional development geared towards modifying curriculum for virtual settings · Development of individualized learning plans (ILP's) with three check ins with families and monthly progress monitoring with students · Tracking system for students of concern · Attendance that is equal to traditional instruction · Student achievement that is at least equal to traditional instruction

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Future Plans

FAA is excited to enter into its 20th year of serving the community. This year We successfully signed purchase agreement for the site located at 3320 E. 41st in Minneapolis. After many years of searching this campus is in the ideal area of operation. Starting in the fall of 2020, FAA will have a Primary campus serving approximately 100 K-1 scholars and an Intermediate Campus serving approximately 250 2-8th grade scholars. This is a part of a three year growth plan and will be the first year 8th grade will be offered. The expansion team also met with City of Minneapolis officials, Councilman Andrew Johnson, and the Longfellow Community Council (LCC) to discuss the new site and complete the process of obtaining the appropriate building permits and waivers. The core expansion team consists of FAA board and core leadership team, John Cairns (attorney), Ten Square (project development) and Schiber and Mullaney (general contractor).

We were able to secure investors for our bond transaction! We are now finalizing all of the necessary documents to close on the property December 16, 2019!!

Friendship Academy of the Arts is engaging in an intentional planning process to prepare for three possible scenarios for reopening school in the Fall of 2020. Below is a template of the plan that will be completed by July 27th when the State of MN decides which model we will adopt to start school in the Fall of 2020. We are actively working with our partners from Bellwether Education Partners, Achievement Network, along with guidance from MDE and MDH to create a framework for our plan. The core leadership team is focused on continuing to develop the plan based on our guiding principles. The plan will then be presented to the Advisory team involving administration, teachers, marketing and recruitment, parents, and students. The FAA Board will also be engaged to provide additional feedback and support in an effort to ensure stakeholder's voice is significant in forming the final plan.

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Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students Students and teachers should minimize close contact and follow all other required and recommended MDH guidelines.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits Students and teachers should maintain six feet of social distancing and follow all other required and recommended MDH guidelines.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only Students and teachers will continue to be engaged daily in teaching and learning. Prioritize continuing to provide critical services such as food services to support the health and safety of students. Provide guidance to teachers regarding delivery of distance learning and expectations during distance learning.

[Covid-19 Distance Learning Plan](#)