

# Charter School Annual Report 2019-20



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**Produced by the High School for Recording Arts  
and Designs for Learning**

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<b>Per...</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Included in section...</b>
Statute	<b>Annual Report Posted to Website</b> Is your annual report posted to the school website?	Posted at ( <a href="http://hsra.org/Resource-Center.aspx">http://hsra.org/Resource-Center.aspx</a> )
Statute	<b>Annual Report Distribution</b> Was the annual report distributed to school employees, parents and legal guardians, and authorizer by publication, mail, or electronic means in a timely manner?	Yes
Statute	<b>School Enrollment</b> Does it contain school enrollment data?	See School Enrollment and Student Attrition
Statute	<b>Student Attrition</b> Does it contain <b>student attrition</b> information?	See School Enrollment and Student Attrition
Statute	<b>Governance and Management</b> Does it contain an update on governance and management?	See Governance and Management
Statute	<b>Staffing</b> Does it contain an update on staffing structure?	See Staffing
Statute	<b>Finances</b> Are there financial statements included?	See Finances
Statute & Contract	<b>Academic Performance</b> Is there an update on the academic performance?	See Academic and Operational Performance
Statute	<b>Innovative Practices and Implementation</b> Does the report discuss innovative practices and implementation?	See Innovative Practices and Implementation
Statute	<b>Future Plans</b> Does the report update on future planning?	See Future Plans

# High School for Recording Arts: Introduction

The High School for Recording Arts, Minnesota Independent School District #4039, has now completed twenty-two years as an independent charter school, and is pleased to present this annual report for the 2019-20 school year. The purpose of the High School for Recording Arts (HSRA) is to deliver an educational program that engages learners, many of whom have been expelled, have dropped out, or are otherwise not enrolled in school. **The mission of HSRA is to provide youth the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma through the exploration and operation of the music business and other creative endeavors:**

- Culturally Sensitive
- Alternative Educational Programming
- Personalized Project-Based Learning
- Diverse Population
- Drug-Free Learning Environment
- Adult-Supervised
- Positive Mentoring
- Safe Space
- Job Training

HSRA's vision statement specifies that: *High School for Recording Arts is defined by its commitment to find and nurture the genius and creativity of every student despite any life challenges or systemic setbacks such as institutional racism, punitive school structures, and more..*

*Our school is built around the recognition that every learner has:*

- *Special talents and strengths.*
- *Passionate interests.*
- *Impactful experiences.*
- *Unique perspectives.*

*At HSRA, each student's unique experiences are matched with appropriate supports and connections to enhance that learner's potential.*

*We believe the key to meaningful learning lies in authentic acknowledgement of each learner's unique abilities and experiences. We encourage each learner's journey to explore and affirm meaning in their lives using creative learning opportunities and strategies. This leads to their active participation in the learning process.*

*HSRA/Studio 4 focuses on developing a learner's ability to see the importance of living, sharpening their talents and abilities so that they may develop self-efficacy, and contribute to a better space and place for them to prosper, grow, create, and be a change agent in their community.*

*This effort leads to our learners becoming positive contributors to their communities, productive and*

*enterprising workers, good citizens and lifelong learners.*

In order to live up to its vision, HSRA espouses four Pillars:

- **ASSET-BASED:** *Instead of seeing a deficit to fix, we begin by building strong relationships and recognize the genius in each young person*
- **WRAPAROUND SERVICES:** *Recognizing that most of our students come from fragile homes and communities, we provide supports such as food, clothing and housing*
- **INNOVATIVE PRACTICES:** *To best support learning, we provide students with connections to recording industry partnerships and deeper learning opportunities*
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE LENS:** *We provide creative space to confront societal injustices and empower our students to act as community change agents*

HSRA began as a pilot program developed by St. Paul-based recording studio, Studio 4 Enterprises, in December 1996. High School for Recording Arts was born in July 1998 with its approval as an independent charter school district by the Minnesota Department of Education. Youth in the community immediately exhibited interest in this program. Through word of mouth, enrollment in the program, which began with just fifteen learners, stabilized at 200-230 students at the school's first facility. HSRA was able to move to its own building in 2013, which led to further expansion in enrollment. HSRA's facility, located on University Avenue midway between downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis, is a former Bally Fitness building which was renovated for the school and Studio 4 recording studios. The building is now owned by HSRA's building company.

The High School for Recording Arts has continued its partnership with Studio 4, a professional music production company. Many students learn through individual and group projects related to core academic areas and to the music industry. Access to the recording studio helps keep students motivated for academic learning. Studio 4 shares space with Another Level Records, a student-operated recording company where many HSRA students work.

In March 2020 High School for Recording Arts, like all public schools across the nation, was required to shift its educational program to a distance-learning mode in March 2020. In response to the spread of COVID-19 Governor Tim Walz ordered schools to be closed by March 18, and gave schools from March 18-27 to plan for distance/e-learning in case of a need for a longer school shut down due to the pandemic. During this time, HSRA created its Distance Learning Plan. Staff worked together to generate a plan that addressed the shift to distance learning while continuing support of students' non-academic needs including supplying food. The plan specified a three-pronged approach in communicating and conveying daily lessons and learning opportunities with students, stating:

- First, we are mirroring and continuing our normal workshop calendar and schedule from the earlier part of the year in our learning management system Schoology. At HSRA, workshops are competency and station based / blended learning in structure which leads to an easy adaptation to distance learning. Teachers are building infrastructure to replace the in-class elements of this system with videos, office hours, and individual interactions as well as clear instructions and progression tables available in Schoology.

- Second, special education and general ed. teachers are collaborating to build individual guided studies which give daily work in each of the core content areas (organized as STEM, Humanities, and Creativity / Mindfulness). These will be delivered as well as available for pickup upon request by support staff, following guidance of the Minnesota Department of Health / Governor’s Office for safety. While all students can also utilize our DAILY HSRA guided studies, they are built especially to print each week and distribute to our students who cannot access Schoology and have phone conferencing with teachers as part of the expectations. HSRA incorporates culturally responsive communication, content, pedagogy and approaches in all our educational decisions and planning.
- Third, to support the project based learning which is an essential part of HSRA, all content teachers will host frequent Google Hangout office hours each week to develop and check in with students on individualized projects, support workshop work, answer questions, and develop validation opportunities for students to continue to develop their online graduation portfolios. During these office hour times, students who can’t access Google Hangouts will work with their advisor to have telephone conferences as well. Support staff will be present in many of these calls and interactions because our staffing is configured in complex Care4Teams to support each group of students. These include advisors, support staff, social workers, teachers, and other operations staff who support student learning during our office hours and individual contact points.

The balance of this report is organized around the elements of Pillsbury United Communities’ Charter School Annual Report Checklist.

## School Enrollment and Student Attrition

The policy of the High School for Recording Arts is to accept all students who request enrollment, as long as they are Minnesota residents and in grades 9-12. Registration materials are available at the school or via the school’s website. Details on the demographics of students attending HSRA are provided in the “HSRA Student Body” chart, in the Program Challenges section below.

*This table identifies the number of students enrolled at the school during the past five school years, and includes estimated 2020-21 enrollment. Data is based on October 1 enrollment.*

School Year	9	10	11	12	Total	Growth Rate <sup>1</sup>
2015-16	81	98	65	71	315	+13%
2016-17	13	42	71	192	318	+1%
2017-18	15	38	63	208	324	+2%
2018-19	7	28	55	189	279	-14%

<sup>1</sup> Calculated based on change from Oct. 1 of the previous year to Oct. 1 of the reported school year, divided by the previous year’s figure.

School Year	9	10	11	12	Total	Growth Rate <sup>1</sup>
2019-20	11	27	71	220	329	+18%
Estimated 2020-21					325	

To accommodate the needs of its mobile student population, HSRA continues enrolling students throughout the year. Typically enrollment climbs from fall through the spring.

Student enrollment at HSRA has been fairly stable over the past several years. There was a decline in enrollment in 2018-19 but student numbers recovered in 2019-20, continuing strong through the end of the year despite the pandemic and shift to distance learning.

## Governance and Management

### Governance

HSRA is governed by a five-person Board which met approximately every six weeks during 2019-20. There were eight regular meetings and one special meeting for a total of nine meetings in all (one meeting was missed at the beginning of the COVID pandemic; and there were two meetings in June, as the school year wrapped up). Board members serve staggered three-year terms. One Board term expired in the fall of 2019, that of Teacher Parent member Paula Anderson; however Paula was re-elected and seated for a new term at the December 2019 Annual Meeting. Officers were also chosen at the annual meeting. Details on HSRA Board membership are provided in the table below.

#### 2019-20 School Year High School for Recording Arts School Board

*This table contains information for ALL board members.*

Name	Board Position, Group Affiliation	Date Elected	Date Seated	Term Expiration	Contact Information	Meeting Attendance
Paula Anderson	Chair; Teacher (#323788)	December 2019	December 2019	Fall 2022	651 287-0890; <a href="mailto:paula@hsra.org">paula@hsra.org</a>	9 / 9
Alicia Sullivan	Secretary/Treasurer; Community	February 2018	March 2018	Fall 2020	<a href="mailto:nileypricey14@gmail.com">nileypricey14@gmail.com</a>	5 / 9
Pamela Weems	Community	December 2018	December 2018	Fall 2021	<a href="mailto:Lovepromo00@aol.com">Lovepromo00@aol.com</a>	8 / 9
Dennis Welch	Parent	December 2018	December 2018	Fall 2021	<a href="mailto:dwelch@frandsenfinancial.com">dwelch@frandsenfinancial.com</a>	8 / 9
Darryl Young	Vice Chair; Teacher (#384827)	December 2018	December 2018	Fall 2021	651 287-0890; <a href="mailto:darryl@hsra.org">darryl@hsra.org</a>	9 / 9

Training was provided for the HSRA Board February 12, 2020. Staff from Designs for Learning provided training covering the three required areas of Governance, Personnel and Finance. This training was attended by all five members.

## **Authorizer**

The High School for Recording Arts' Authorizer is Pillsbury United Communities. The 2019-20 school year was the first year of a new five-year charter contract with Pillsbury, running July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024.

The Authorizer contact is Larry McKenzie ([mckenziel@puc-mn.org](mailto:mckenziel@puc-mn.org) ; 612 302-3409).

## **School Management, Administration and Staffing**

Management of HSRA is led by its Executive Director and facilitated through a Leadership Team. The 2019-20 school year was Tony Simmons' eleventh year as HSRA's Executive Director. E.D. responsibilities include learning about effective strategies for serving today's urban youth in a creative, innovative learning environment; external advocacy, to raise HSRA's profile as a respected model for re-engaging urban youth; elevating HSRA's understanding and influence through alternative accountability measures; reporting to HSRA's governing board; monitoring school finances so as to ensure a financial plan that reflects the educational priorities of HSRA and sustains fiscal health; and on-site leadership / management of HSRA. In addition, the Executive Director focuses on the coaching and development of emerging leaders.

The HSRA Leadership Team includes the Executive Director; the Education Director; the Education Programming Director; the Business Manager; the Studio Director; the Director of Operations; the Director of Student Engagement; the Assistant Director of Student Support, and the Founder of HSRA. Each of the Directors is tasked with developing school systems and practices; and managing appropriate staff in their respective teams to ensure the mission, vision and practice of the school's values are carried out in real time. A team of Assistant Directors support this work: the Assistant Director of Special Education, the Assistant Director of Educational Programming, and the Assistant Director of Operations.

The Director, Founder, Business Manager, Studio Director and Director of Operations are employees of Studio 4 and serve HSRA through the school's contract with Studio 4. David Ellis and Tony Simmons (the Founder and Executive Director) have worked together since 1995-96, even prior to the inception of HSRA. Paula Anderson joined the HSRA team in 2003, and the other Leadership Team members have also been in place for several years. At its meetings the Leadership Team reviews goals and objectives, and current status of the school's operations.

**2019-20 HSRA School Management and Faculty<sup>2</sup>**

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Years Employed by HSRA	Left During 2019/20	Not Returning 2020/21
Tony Simmons		Executive Director (via contract, Studio 4)	19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jacquelyne Amos		Advisory Assistant	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Paula Anderson	323788	Director of Educational and Institutional Effectiveness	16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
David Anderson		Special Education Para	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stephone Atuti		Technology Support Spec.	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Riana Aulet		Accounting Clerk	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Layne Bellamy		Building Support	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Layne Bellamy II		Special Education para	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tikonwaun Blackamore		Lead Special Ed. Advisor	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Matthew Brown		Operations Director (contract)	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Melinda Brown		Housing Advocate	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joey Cienian	452457	Director of Educational Programming	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
David Cox		Maintenance	15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charlitta Ellis		CYS Program Director	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
David Ellis		Founder (contract)	22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jonathan Engelking		Promise Fellow	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Phillip Espinoza Day		Lead Advisor	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dan Frey	445216	Director of Student Support & Engagement	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amanda Galloway		Lead Sped. Advisor	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Malik Hollon		Student Support Specialist	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Johnny Howard, Jr.		Advisor	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bonita Hughes		Business Manager (contract)	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Juan Jackson		CYS Program Manager	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regina Jackson		CYS Program Facilitator	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x

<sup>2</sup> This table contains information for ALL members of the school management/administrative team and also includes faculty employed by the school who did not serve as classroom teachers (e.g. curriculum coordinators, social workers, Promise Fellows, counselors, administrative assistance, paraprofessionals, custodial, technology, librarians, etc.) It does not include Studio 4 staff who work for HSRA under its services contract with the studio.

## 2019-20 HSRA School Management and Faculty<sup>2</sup>

Name	File Folder Number	Assignment	Years Employed by HSRA	Left During 2019/20	Not Returning 2020/21
Tesha Johnson		CYS Program Facilitator	2	x	x
Monique LaBrasseur		Advisory Assistant	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Lewis McCaleb		Promise Fellow	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Leah McGinley		Special Ed. Lead Advisor	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keisha Micheau		Promise Fellow	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Stephanie Miska	384219	Assistant Director, Special Ed.	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nakream Mosthi		Student Support	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Barbara Murphy	375984	Math Facilitator / Student Data Administrator	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agapito Otero		Facilities Manager	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Briana Peery		Student Support	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brian Sandifer		Paraprofessional	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sangster, Cornelius		Promise Fellow	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peneal Tiruneh		Promise Fellow	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Tabitha Wheeler	407062	Social Worker	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Michael Wilson	341907	Social Worker	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Phil Winden		Studio Director (contract)	22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tyrone Winn		Front Desk	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yawn-White, Riley		Promise Fellow	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	x

Staffing remained quite stable at HSRA in 2019-20, in spite of disruptions from the pandemic, and protests following George Floyd’s murder on Memorial Day. Most staff remained through the year, and returned in the fall. Exceptions were Advisory Assistants who were not needed in the fall, and CYS Program Facilitator Regina Carter who retired in 2020 after many years of service to the program. Promise Fellow positions are generally for one year only.

Here is how HSRA’s approach to professional development for its staff is described in its most recent comprehensive School Review application for re-authorization:

At HSRA, because of our unique mission and the complex needs of the population of students we serve, we have extended and holistic professional development opportunities throughout the summer and school year. We train on our mission and culture, culturally relevant youth development, developing strong relationships, identify ACES and student trauma and effectively responding, restorative circles, restorative discipline and classroom management, working through unconscious bias towards student focused practices, and best practices in bringing in community partnerships. We spend an enormous amount of time working with teachers and support staff on developing skills with innovative and varied pedagogical approaches. In this we focus our training around creating culturally relevant

curriculum, real-life and relevant learning opportunities, active learning in the classroom, arts integration, differentiation and modifications for all learners, embracing technology with blended learning and utilizing learning management systems, competency based learning and student driven / centered assessments, literacy integration, interdisciplinary teaching, as well as best practices in project based learning.

Each year we develop PLCs around staff reading groups and have read books such as Chris Emdin's *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood*, Wayne Jennings' *School Transformation*, Ron Berger's *Learning that Lasts*, and Zaretta Hammond's *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. During 2019-20 and continuing to 2020-21, HSRA staff are studying the books *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* by Monique W. Morris and *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

We work with a variety of community partnerships with local artists, nonprofits, and experts such as the Free Black Dirt Collective, The Humanities Center, Rock the Cause, KOFI, the Wilder Center, Domestic Abuse Partnership, The Legal Rights Center, and many more. We also work with specific trainers around Hip Hop Pedagogy, Social Justice Math, Quality Assessments, Check and Connect, and Reading Strategies such as Timothy Jones, Sam Seidel, Isaac Ewell, Michael Lipset, Alice Cook, Sayra Loftus, Nicole Nicodemus, Colleen Kaibal, Joletta Falkner, and Dr. Wayne Jennings.

Our staff participates in local trainings each year such as the MAAP conference, the Social Justice Education Fair, State Education Content Specific conferences, State Assessment Conferences, and variety of trainings with Pillsbury United, Designs for Learning, EdVisions, and MDE. Each year we send select staff to participate and bring back trainings from national professional development such as the Reaching At-Promise Students Association, the Deeper Learning Conference at High Tech High, Design Thinking Training at Stanford's D-School, and Big Picture Learning's national conferences.

Specific professional development for HSRA staff during 2019-20 included the following:

Week of August 12, 2019 (Summer 2019 training for all staff):

- Team building / Culture building, charter school updates
- Sexual Harassment, Respectful Workplace / Student Boundaries / Data Privacy, Alternatives to Suspensions, Mandated Reporting (full day, provided by outside trainer)
- HR Needs – Tech Policy, Insurance, Budget, ADP, Facilities (2.5 hours)
- Advisory team meetings, planning for the year (2 half-days)
- Crisis Prevention Institute / Security training (4 hours)

Week of August 19 (Summer 2019 training, continued):

- Project Based Learning / Validation Portfolio Training (4 half-days)
- Mental Health / Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) – Suicide Prevention & Awareness / Internal Processes and Crisis Management / Homelessness Process / SPED 101 / Mindfulness / HAS & Safer Choices (1 day)
- Restorative Justice (Suspensions, Alternatives to Suspensions, De-Escalation, Mediations) / Preventing School Shootings (2 half-days)
- First Aid Training / Student Emergency Protocol / Medication Policy (2 half-days)

Professional Development during the school year included:

- 9/18/19: School handbook; Crisis Prevention Institute, 1 hour; Social Justice Book Group

- 10/9/19: Social Justice book Group; Special Education Student Strategies
- 10/16/19: LGBTQ Training; Advisory Refresher – Home Visits / Parent Engagement Training
- 11/13/19: Homeless Student Support Training; Special Education Training: ASD; Social Justice book Group
- 12/11/19: Special Education Training: DCD; Social Justice book Group
- 1/15/20: Special Education Training: Deaf / Hard of Hearing; Social Justice book Group
- 2/12/20: DELTA Advisory Boot Camp
- 3/27/20: PBIS Training; Teambuilding
- 4/15/20: Social Justice book Group; Special Education Student Strategies
- 5/13/20: Social Justice book Group; Special Education Student Strategies

## **Director’s Professional Development Plan**

HSRA’s Director, Tony Simmons, does not have administrative licensure. He has a J.D. from Rutgers University, and practiced criminal, business and entertainment law before moving to Minnesota in 2001 to join High School for Recording Arts/Studio 4. Mr. Simmons’ professional development plan includes continuing to learn about effective strategies for serving today’s urban youth, through attending conferences, workshops and networking with fellow educators; continuing to raise HSRA’s profile as a respected model for re-engaging urban youth in education; elevating HSRA’s understanding and influence through alternative accountability measures (including seeking to influence policy at the state and local level), and by demonstrating leadership on-site at HSRA.

At the school, a major focus for Mr. Simmons is supporting the development of emergent leaders, HSRA staff members who are being increasingly tasked with oversight of the day-to-day operations of the school. While he continues to act as a thought-leader in HSRA’s conversation about the type of program the school is and aspires to be, Mr. Simmons’ role has shifted from active management of the program toward mentoring/coaching support for newer leaders in the school. In addition to this role, two critical priorities for the HSRA director are leading innovation in pathways to 21<sup>st</sup>-century careers for students, and leading the school’s efforts to reach accountability goals for the authorizer while staying true to its innovative mission and model.

Mr. Simmons now serves as adjunct faculty at the High Tech High Graduate School of Education) HTH/GSE) in San Diego, CA (<https://hthgse.edu/>). He typically makes a number of presentations at education events each year, and there were several such scheduled for the spring and summer of 2020, but with the COVID pandemic most such events were canceled. One presentation Mr. Simmons was able to make was as a Global Alliance speaker in Hoeje Taastrup (venue in Hedehusene, Denmark) for 150 youth club staff/youth workers.

Also, Tony Simmons serves on governing boards of the local Education Evolving organization, and the national Reaching At-Promise Students Association RAPSAs).

# Staffing

In addition to the Leadership Team, HSRA administration has created career-ladder positions among its teaching staff in order to stabilize the program and ensure effective transition into the future. Lead positions include Assistant Director of Education, Assistant Director of Student Support and Engagement, and Lead Special Education Facilitator. All are filled by teachers.

The table below lists all HSRA licensed teaching staff during 2019-20.

<b>2019-20 High School for Recording Arts Teaching Faculty Information<sup>3</sup></b>				
Name	File Folder Number	Assignment/ Subject	Left During 2019/20	Not Returning 2020/21
Paula Anderson	323788	English Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nicole Belle-Isle	419861	Special Ed. Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joey Cienian	452457	Social Studies Facilitator / Director of Ed. Programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Priscilla Dombek	442963	Special Ed. Reading Specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maureen Foss	395378	Math Facilitator and college support specialist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Haben Ghebregergish	511583	Math Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jessica Johnson	445122	Special Ed. Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amy Lund	467214	Special Ed. Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Amanda MacNeven	496548	Special Ed. (contractor)	x	x
John Meyer	359526	Special Ed. Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Barbara Murphy	375984	Math facilitator/Student Data Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Philip O'Neill	499550	Special Ed. Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Michael Padgett	500825	Humanities Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cynthia Rowell	385236	Math Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Angela Shanley	440215	Special Ed. Facilitator	x	x
Renee Swanson	452059	Science Facilitator / Asst. Director of Ed. Programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toni Wilcox	425272	Humanities Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Darryl Young	384827	Special Ed. Facilitator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>3</sup> This table contains information for ALL teachers employed by the school or providing services contractually (e.g., special education teacher, reading specialist, speech therapist).

## Finances

The financial stability of High School for Recording Arts has been solid during its 22 years of operations. The school has consistently maintained a positive fund balance and robust financial health. HSRA purchased its building, increased staffing over the past several years, and still added to its fund balance. Multiple funding streams are handled efficiently and effectively by HSRA's business office.

The Fund Balanced has increased substantially each of the past two years. In the spring of 2019 HSRA received a \$500,000 donation from Springpoint, funds which are to be used to offset restrictive covenants associated with HSRA's building lease. In Fiscal 2020 HSRA was able to maintain enrollment and again increase the Fund Balance, due in part to the school's successful application to the federal Paycheck Protection Program in the spring of 2020 and other pandemic-related support from the federal government which HSRA was able to access. Average Daily Membership for Fiscal 2020 was 337.79, a significant increase from the previous year's figure which was 299.34. The budget for Fiscal 2021 is conservatively based on 325 students; HSRA had 337 students enrolled by early November, and ADM for the year thus-far of 316.73. The table below summarizes HSRA's Revenues, Expenditures and Fund Balance over the past five fiscal years. Note, these figures do not include HSRA's Building Fund.

**HSRA Financial Summary, Fiscal Years 2016-2020**

	<b>Total Rev.</b>	<b>Total Exp.</b>	<b>Ending F.B.</b>	<b>F.B. - % of Exp.</b>
FY 2016	\$5,230,458	\$5,394,760	\$523,217	9.7%
FY 2017	\$5,876,340	\$5,794,852	\$604,706	10.4%
FY 2018	\$6,099,297	\$6,055,185	\$648,819	10.7%
FY 2019	\$7,216,960	\$6,564,699	\$1,301,080	18.0%
FY 2020	\$6,941,493	\$6,420,333	\$1,822,240	28.4%

## Academic and Operational Performance

### HSRA Academic Program Summary

Despite the daunting challenges in serving a population whose problems seem so entrenched, so multigenerational, and so difficult to solve, HSRA has had many examples of hard-won success. HSRA aims to track data in more complex ways that give a richer and more accurate picture of how the school is doing. Detailed academic performance results are included below, in the "HSRA Academic Performance in 2019-20" section.

HSRA's academic programs engage and retain young people who might otherwise end up on the streets without a high school education. HSRA is a project based learning environment, and a school that provides a curriculum that puts special emphasis on learning through creativity and arts expression, relevant and

impactful cultural learning experiences, skill development and coaching through barriers or gaps in a student's skills. Students learn by creating interest-driven projects overseen by their advisor. Each student at HSRA creates their own personal learning plan which includes goal development around life skills, creativity, and academic progress. They do this with a strong relationship with a HSRA advisor who puts a special focus on the student individualizing their plan at our school to maximize personal fulfillment. Each student's personal learning plan is supported with consistent coaching, check-ins, progress checks, and interventions to help students develop and achieve their goals in the ways unique to them.

HSRA uses a variety of innovative education strategies because it serves students who have a diverse set of needs, learning styles, proficiency levels, and barriers outside of school which produce a complex set of needs before students are ready to learn. In order to ensure personalized learning experiences address student needs, HSRA has created a multi-tiered choice based system in which students work to showcase skill development of core competencies in a validation portfolio. To do this they can learn in interactive workshops which utilize blended learning through Schoology, hands-on experiential inquiry and deeper learning, culturally relevant programming through the lens of hip-hop pedagogy, scaffolded project based learning training and assessment, and open-walled real-world experience. Students are also able to work with content specialists and project teams on individual projects, and work on their competency development with daily pop-up classes, field trips, project labs, community educators, and skill development certifications in HSRA's arts-based innovative learning labs.

Here is a summary of how the HSRA program allows students to meet the State Standards in academic core areas:

Language Arts: HSRA's schoolwide approach to reading/literacy is through daily integrated humanities courses. These courses focus on literature and non-fiction reading which is of high interest and relevant to students' lives. The approach follows strategies advocated by Alfred Tatum in Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males, which seem highly applicable to HSRA's population. HSRA continued to pursue this approach during 2019-20, with education staff studying Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students, by Zaretta L. Hammond. Specific strategies include daily dictation, word walls, reading books in common supported by supplementary materials, support for learning vocabulary from context, free-writing, enrichment activities around books in community meetings and student projects, and writing exercises supported by expository writing lessons. They must demonstrate a range of writing skills, from five paragraph essays to journals to research papers with documentation. HSRA students engage in many forms of inquiry, both by themselves and in small groups. It is common practice that students keep journals or interactive notebooks where they respond to questions, reflect on the day's reading, develop and record new vocabulary, and refine their personal voice. Using these journals, along with larger group readings and multimedia activities helps HSRA students develop their skills as readers, writers, and most importantly, critical thinkers. Students can use our learning management system Schoology to make up work, experience video lessons created by students and instructors, interact in digital community discussions, present work in portfolios, and model quality work for their peers in interactive demos.

Courses are offered daily during every block by multiple teachers, and students are able to sign up for the time that fits their schedule.

Public speaking opportunities abound at HSRA, and students are coached to improve their skills. HSRA also uses reading across content areas, and other disciplines which include reading, writing and speaking skills in their courses and projects. In addition to Language Arts classes/workshops included a Writing Workshop, an HSRA blog class, and a yearbook class. In addition, HSRA offered Short Story and Resume/Cover Letter building guided study opportunities. The Business of Music class includes guided study of poetry and lyrical analysis, via song lyrics. Finally, there was an English class in the studio called "Get on the Money Train" where students wrote music while studying and discussing English concepts.

Math: The HSRA math program is organized around Social Justice Math which alternates between direct instruction in the classroom and individualized competency pathways for each student. The social justice aspect has real life math and focuses on math in the everyday world. The ALEKS web-based learning program from McGraw Hill is also available for students an online math program to supplement courses such as Algebra 2, Geometry, Probability and Statistics and Trigonometry programming (ALEKS, for Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces, replaced Khan Academy in 2019-20). There is also an advanced math for the students that score very high on the MAP test in which they cover Probability and Statistics, Data Analysis, Trigonometry, and Precalculus.

At the beginning of each year (or during orientation when they enroll throughout the year), every student is administered the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test in order to establish baseline data. Initial results from these assessments are used to place students in targeted math groups.

In addition to Social Justice Math, HSRA students take additional Math courses in order to meet state standards and build the mathematical literacy skills to succeed in everyday life. Math classes/workshops offered during 2019-20 included: Aviation (math/physics), Culinary Math, and the TRACK program. There are also guided study opportunities in Math available to students. Here are some details on three of these courses:

- Aviation: Students learn about the parts of a plane, how they move and how to fly. Students learn the physics behind flight of lift, thrust, gravity and drag along with Bernoulli's Principle. They learn some history of flight and about different types of planes along with math related to aviation.
- Junior Achievement finance curriculum: Students in Skills to Pay the Bills learn about interest and credit and the different ways that you can earn interest and get credit. They learn about budgeting and setting goals in their budget to get bigger items. Students learn the difference between good credit and bad and scams that are out there, such as short term payday loans. They learn about net worth and net income and about taxes.
- Culinary Math: Students learn about conversions, work with fractions, unit price, best buy and put what they learn to use by converting recipes and then making the item.
- In conjunction with the special education program we offer an integrated math course offering called construction math where students learn construction and trade skills correlating with their competency progressions in math.

Finally, another important element of HSRA's math program is the Junior Achievement program. Recognizing a need to support general confidence, enjoyment and fluency with real-life, everyday math, HSRA offers courses and options to help students gain experience in these areas. The *Junior Achievement Company Program* supports learning about everyday math and also gives students hands-on experience with the financial aspects of planning and running a business. To support economics education and guide students through realistic personal financial planning and career exploration, HSRA utilizes the *Junior Achievement Finance Park* curriculum. In addition,, a Rock the Cause representative worked with HSRA students on financial aspects of

the entertainment business.

**Social Studies:** The Social Studies Program at HSRA meets the requirements laid out in the state standards through a combination of traditional classes, guided study opportunities and individual projects. The content and format of these different elements is designed to develop both subject knowledge and primary skills in a number of areas. Subject knowledge covered includes but is not limited to key events, people, places and concepts in U.S. and world history, rights and responsibilities of citizens, the role of government, economic systems and religions and cultures of the world. The program also focuses on developing key skills such as gathering, interpreting and analyzing information, understanding cause and effect, consideration of diverse perspectives, evaluating primary and secondary resources, developing and discussing ideas and concepts, and active involvement in social, economic and political issues. Social Studies workshops/classes included U.S. History, Economics, Civics, Personal Heritage Projects (exploration of family roots), Current Events (focused on news media/current events), Global Issues, Language Arts Rooted in History and Social Studies Content, History of American Music, Changemakers, Social Justice Travel Group, Street Law, Urban Music, Money Matters (economics), Hip Hop History, and Know Your Rights (civics curriculum offered in conjunction with the Studio).

**Science:** HSRA students can take a number of courses, or participate in guided study opportunities and/or projects to meet the state standards in science. HSRA science courses and other learning opportunities, such as various Biology workshops, an Environmental Science workshop called “Get Your Green,” Chemistry/Physics workshops such as "Design Zone" and Alpha Science are designed to increase subject knowledge, as well as develop critical thinking skills and scientific reasoning.

In Alpha Science, alpha students were encouraged to explore concepts of physics and chemistry through inquiry-based science projects. Guided projects included: studying fermentation, building a wind turbine, building phone amplifiers, building a boat and having a boat race at Foss Swim School and designing and expanding HSRA's garden.

In Biology, students explore life science topics related to the interdependence of living organisms, environment and ecosystems, genetic variation, cellular biology, the environmental effects of human consumption, consumerism and industrial production and science concepts related to environmental science and climate change. Students learn concepts of biology using student led inquiry, experiential learning, questioning and investigation with an emphasis on building science literacy skills, science inquiry skills and a sense of place and connectedness to the world of science.

In addition to classwork, interactive science notebooks and lab-intensive lessons, students in the biology class this year completed projects which looked at biology in relation to its impact on society. Projects included creating a podcast on human impact in the rainforest, collaboration with Macalester College on recycling programs, creating a science validation based song, and individual student projects on the impact of climate change on various habitats and animal species.

Urban Ecology, a one-month intensive workshop, was taught as well. Through this workshop students learned principles of urban ecology, had multiple site visits to support the content and met with community experts to expand their knowledge further. Site visits included a tour of downtown St. Paul’s EcoDistrict, a tour of a native prairie oak savannah along the Mississippi River, a tour of the Ford Parkway Lock and Dam system, site visits to community gardens and a walking tour of University Avenue’s stormwater management system. Students

collaborated with Macalester College on developing community-based, site specific field trips to expand their knowledge on urban ecology.

All coursework and curriculum is designed to meet state graduation standards. Students are always encouraged to do their own science project on subjects of their interest, which includes earth and space science, physical science, and the life sciences.

Arts: High School for Recording Arts students meet state arts standards through active engagement in a number of artistic endeavors. They learn the technology and theory behind creating and recording music, receive individual instrumentation lessons, participate in choir and other singing groups, and perform often—both in school and at various public events. They create and host their own radio podcasts, and are involved in video production. They also have classes in dance and theatrical improvisation. They take courses in the history of music. There is an art therapy course called Artist Café, run by the school social worker and also a staff-supervised art group. To be a graduate of HSRA, students must demonstrate study of and achievement in the arts, as well as participation in an artistic community.

HSRA students have remained involved in graphic arts work including logo and package design, e.g. album design / labels. Graphic arts work continues, with an emphasis increasingly on material for online use, and includes individual projects and teaming with group projects as the latter need graphic-arts work done. HSRA students have also participated in commercial ventures, and have produced advertising jingles and Public Service Announcement videos. A number of graphic arts projects have been carried out as part of HSRA's innovative Visual Inclusion program, described below under *Program successes and best practices*.

Recent additions to HSRA's arts offerings have centered around sewing and fashion; students have created own lines of clothing and curated fashion shows featuring student-designed work such as customized shoes and closing items. Another new direction begun during 2018-19 involved integrated study of architecture and woodworking: HSRA students studied historic buildings, then built scale models of them in wood.

Music: HSRA students have extensive opportunities to study music and recording techniques in Studio 4's music studios. Since 2017 HSRA has had in place a full time Business of Music & Media class. Over 50 HSRA students participate in the class and learn how to set up their own business and run their own record labels and media companies. Students learn about e-commerce, digital music distribution, radio promotion, news media publicity, entertainment law, digital media strategies, and artist management. They also earn certifications in those areas of study.

Students in HSRA's Business of Music and Media class continue to work to promote the release of new music. During 2019-20 the class collaborated with the student-run recording company Another Level Records to promote the recording *Experience Jazz 2020: The Sound of Distance*, which featured Minnesota teen artists including HSRA students (begun spring 2020, released in the fall; see <https://experiencejazz.bandcamp.com/releases>). Another notable recording project was done during June 2020, in response to the killing of George Floyd: HSRA students collaborated with local recording artists Sounds of Blackness on a project called "Sick and Tired," resulting in release of a song and video on youtube in June 2020.

The Business of Music class has become an essential training ground for HSRA students to discover new talents and develop business skills in a real world setting. It has also inspired students to pursue communications,

business and law degrees at the college level. The Business of Music and Media class visits the job boards for entertainment companies like Warner, Sony, Spotify and more, and trains HSRA students to be able to compete for those jobs.

With the transition to distance learning in the spring of 2020, HSRA’s capacity to utilize the Studio 4 recording studios was temporarily suspended. Starting in the summer of 2020, students have been allowed in the studios individually and with recommended safety precautions in place. To continue the recording-arts aspect of the program under distance learning, HSRA began installing the Soundtrap recording program on students’ Chromebooks. This program along with support from studio staff, allows students to work on sound recording projects while off-site.

A HSRA graduate, currently studying Communications at St. Cloud State, said “I never thought I could go to college. I never thought I could have a job in the music industry until I took the Business of Music class at HSRA. I thought no one cared enough to give me a chance.”

The curriculum provides incentives for further study and higher education, lays the groundwork for personal business development, and builds students’ confidence and familiarity with the services and institutions of society. Through these programs, HSRA helps turn youth with the potential of being social problems into productive members of society. HSRA’s programs prepare youth to take jobs in the recording industry as well as teaching the business and job skills necessary for entry level and skilled positions in various occupations.

The HSRA program seeks to implement the Community Learning Centers (CLC) model, a national education reform design focusing on integration of learning into the community, individualizing the learning program, and obtaining active involvement of all students in their own learning. A particularly critical feature of the CLC model for the HSRA program is the advisor/advisee system. Each student has an advisor who is responsible for understanding all the points that a learner needs to cover to complete their education, which points the learner has already completed, and which they need to complete.

## HSRA Contract Goals and Performance in 2019-20

The below table shows HSRA’s goals and measures developed for accountability with its authorizer, Pillsbury United Communities. There are goals in three areas: Academic; Governance; and Operations and Leadership. Within each of these areas there are multiple goals and measures, with the largest number of goals in the Academic realm. These goals and measures were finalized in the spring of 2019 and approved in May 2019 but then needed to be revised in the spring of 2020 to reflect the realities of the shift to distance learning. The 2018-19 school year was the final year of HSRA’s previous contract with Pillsbury; goals and measures for the 2019-2024 contract term differ in a number of ways.

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Academic Goals</b>	
Retention, New Students: Proportion of students both enrolled at least 45 consecutive school days and attending at least 30 school days will be at	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Academic Goals</b>	
least 50% (of total students enrolled for any part of the year), for each year of the contract.	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>There were a total of 227 students newly-enrolled at HSRA during 2019-20. Of these students, 178 or 78% remained enrolled at least 45 days consecutively, and attended at least 30 days.</i>
Retention, Established Students: Among students who attend at least 30 days during the school year, HSRA will meet its stick-rate <sup>4</sup> of 70%, for each year of the contract.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>Retention by this measure was 90%, based on 397/440. There were a total of 440 students who attended HSRA at least 30 days during 2019-20; of these students:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 326 remained enrolled the last day of school</li> <li>• 39 graduated</li> <li>• 32 transferred to another district</li> <li>• 43 did not remain engaged (33 withdrew after 15 consecutive days absent; 6 moved or withdrew without requesting a transcript; and 4 were committed to correctional facilities)</li> </ul>
Credits earned: Students enrolled for a full semester and attending at least 75% of days enrolled will make expected progress toward graduation, defined as earning on average at least four credits/semester for each year of the contract.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>Average number of credits earned by students meeting the criteria (total of 130) was 5.80, significantly exceeding the goal of 4</i>
Graduation Rate: Annual graduation rate <sup>5</sup> will be at least 85% for each year of the contract.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>HSRA's 2019-20 Graduation Candidates list included 41 students, of whom 38 graduated by year's end (grad-rate of 93%).</i>
Academic Growth, Reading: For each year of the contract during which school remains in session on-site, at least 50% of students enrolled	<i>Not applicable for 2019-20</i>

<sup>4</sup> Defined as, proportion of students who remain engaged in their education, i.e. remain enrolled at HSRA to the end of the school year, transfer to another school, or graduate by year's end.

<sup>5</sup> Graduation rate defined as: proportion of students enrolled 10/1 who are grad-eligible based on credits, combined with proportion of students who enroll later but are deemed grad candidates based on credits, who do graduate by year's end. Note: Reported list of students is not limited to students attending at least 75% of days enrolled. This was included in the proposed definition for this measure but has been dropped as this would unreasonably limit the list: as is typical of drop-out recovery programs, many seniors at HSRA attend less than 75%.

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Academic Goals</b>	
throughout the year will meet or exceed their reading score target, as shown by results on the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP).	
Academic Growth, Mathematics: For each year of the contract during which school remains in session on-site, at least 50% of students enrolled throughout the year will meet or exceed their mathematics score target, as shown by results on the Northwest Evaluation Association's MAP.	<i>Not applicable for 2019-20</i>
Project-based Learning: At least 75% of students who are continuously enrolled <sup>6</sup> and attending at least 75% of days enrolled will earn at least some of their credits through school-based projects, for each year of the contract.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>There were a total of 60 students enrolled throughout the 2019-20 year and attending at least 75% of days enrolled; review of credits earned shows that all of these students earned at least some credits through projects.</i>
Post-secondary acceptance: At least 90% of HSRA graduates will be accepted to college or other post-secondary institutions as evidenced by acceptance letters in their digital portfolios for each year of the contract.	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>All graduates applied for and were accepted in a post-secondary program</i>
Student engagement: HSRA students will continue to show higher ratings on EdVisions' Hope Survey than students at traditional schools for each year of the contract during which school remains in session on-site.	<i>Not applicable for 2019-20</i>

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Governance Goals</b>	
Board assessment: All HSRA Board members will annually complete a survey to identify areas for improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>Survey was not done during 2019-20, though training was completed, attended by all five Board members in February 2020. Note, this measure has been revised for the new school goals, now stating the Board "will annually identify their training needs and carry out training to address those</i>

<sup>6</sup> Continuously enrolled defined as: Enrolling by October 1, and maintaining un-interrupted enrollment thereafter, up to the last week of school.

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Governance Goals</b>	
	<i>needs by June 30<sup>th</sup>.</i> "
Strategic planning: The HSRA Board of Directors will review and update its strategic plan annually.	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>HSRA Board discussed the strategic plan in December 2019 but did not make specific updates. Planning postponed spring/summer 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the plan is to be revisited and revised by winter 2020.</i>

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Finance Goals</b>	
Audit findings: HSRA will reduce the number of audit findings over time, moving toward the goal of no more than three minor findings (NOTE: measure lags a year, e.g. FY20 audit results reported to the Board fall 2020)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>There was one minor finding in the auditor's report for Fiscal Year 2020, reported at the November 2020 Board meeting.</i>
Fund balance: HSRA will demonstrate healthy finances by increasing its fund balance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>Fund balance increased in FY20 by \$521,160, from \$1,301,080 to \$1,822,240, per FY20 audited Financial Statement</i>
Fundraising: HSRA will raise an increasing amount of revenue from grants and donors	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>HSRA received \$268,365 from grants/donations during Fiscal 2020. This is less than in the previous year, when grants totaled over \$900,000 including a single \$500,000 grant; however the FY total is greater than in either of the two fiscal years prior to that<sup>7</sup>.</i>

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Operations and Leadership Goals</b>	
Professional Development Plans: At least 80% of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met

<sup>7</sup> HSRA received \$233,191 in grants/donations in FY 2018, and \$191,610 in FY 2017.

Charter Contract Goal	Results, 2019-20
<b>Operations and Leadership Goals</b>	
staff employed throughout the year will have two PDP / Review meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>At least 21/24 educational staff employed throughout the year had two PDP / review meetings (88%)</i>
Staff SMART goals completion: At least 80% of HSRA educational staff employed throughout the year will complete SMART goals set forth in their initial meetings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal partially met <input type="checkbox"/> Goal currently not met  <i>At least 21/24 educational staff employed throughout the year completed SMART goals (88%)</i>

## Program Successes

Program successes and best practices in place as HSRA during 2019-20 included the following:

- **Success through project based learning:** HSRA’s academic programs engage and retain young people who might otherwise end up on the streets without a high school education. HSRA is a project based learning environment. Students learn by creating interest-driven projects overseen by their advisor. The project based curriculum provides a way for learners to navigate through the subject areas they must master on their path toward graduation. Instead of breaking up learning into specific subject areas, a learner decides on a project to work on, then seeks out teachers with relevant content-area expertise to support the project. In addition to addressing academic content standards, student-designed projects at HSRA provide hands-on experience in managing one’s own work, problem solving, and how to work together as a team. In addition to individual projects, there are group projects, small classes, and a variety of guided study opportunities based on students interests and needs.
- **Continuing to effectively serve Homeless students.** A large proportion of HSRA’s students experience homelessness, as discussed below in the Program Challenges section. However, an analysis of semester-credits earned, by homeless / highly mobile students who remained continuously enrolled for a full semester, showed that these students earned an average of 4.6 credits per semester in 2018-19, and 4.7 credits in 2019-20. Earning five credits per semester is considered to be on-track for graduation, so most homeless students who are able to remain continuously enrolled at HSRA are in fact making the expected academic progress. These results are particularly impressive when one considers that the list of homeless students includes many who attend sporadically.
- **Continuing success of the Visual Inclusion Program (VIP),** a strategy designed to create transitional opportunities for special education students by developing entrepreneurial skills, post-secondary options, community engagement and leadership skills. VIP empowers special education students by focusing on their creative strengths, and allowing them to use these strengths while learning about video production and technology.

- Peer Education. Since 2011 HSRA has acted as the nonprofit host of the HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention and Awareness (HAS) program (official name is Check Yo' Self Health and Wellness Center). This program provides prevention services to youth aged 13-24 for over 18 years, with funding through the state of Minnesota. HSRA benefits from the co-location of this program at its facility because this allows better accessibility for HSRA students to the STD education, prevention and testing resources HAS provides. This relationship continued since; HAS is now organizationally integrated into HSRA.
- Requiring graduation portfolios from all graduates, including a college acceptance letter. This requirement for graduation has been in place since 2009-10. HSRA staff provide assistance to seniors in applying to colleges; their acceptance letters are part of their graduation portfolio which is required for graduation. Students also work with the college placement specialist on their Financial Aid Form. Staff have observed that the college application process helps students think through what they want to do after graduation, helping them prepare for the next stage in life.
- Implementation of Check and Connect to retain students and keep them engaged in education. This is a research-based truancy prevention program developed at the University of Minnesota, focusing on practical strategies to prevent truancy and re-engage at-risk students and families. Advisors identify students who are at risk due to factors outside school, and a staff member works with the students to help them address challenges they are facing, and stay in school. The Check and Connect program is supported by two Americorps Promise Fellows at HSRA specifically to work with Check and Connect, each with a caseload of approximately thirty. The Check and Connect is now implemented by advisors with all students, while those with academic or behavior red-flags are referred to lead Check and Connect staff for more intensive assistance. The Assistant Director for Student Support coordinates the Check and Connect program; new students work with him for two weeks after which they are passed either solely to the advisor, or additional services recommended. There are several trainings on Check and Connect during the school year.
- HSRA students continued to create and perform music during 2019-20; two particularly notable music projects were *Experience Jazz 2020: The Sound of Distance*, promoted by HSRA's Business of Music and Media class and featuring Minnesota teen artists including HSRA students (begun spring 2020, released in the fall), and "Sick and Tired," a collaboration with local recording artists Sounds of Blackness which was developed in response to the killing of George Floyd in May. Other music-related projects included:
  - Performance at Pillsbury United Communities' Leading Forward: Building a Community of Changemakers conference in October 2017; HSRA students were honored to perform at their authorizers' major fall staff development event which was attended by several hundred charter school educators from around the state.
  - HSRA's "Get on the Money Train" English class is putting HSRA students' music compilations on Spotify
  - HSRA's Business of Music and Media class worked with the local Frogtown Radio station (FM WFNU 94.1) on the weekly show "Tha Air"

- Through HSRA’s Business of Music program, students have learned to form their own record labels with international distribution through streaming platforms like Spotify and iTunes.
- Finally, HSRA’s continuing success in raising funds from grants and donations is also worth noting. This provides evidence of the interest the HSRA program is generating outside the school walls, as well as providing additional revenues to support programming. HSRA continued to enjoy success in grant-writing during 2019-20; notable grants included:
  - Bush Foundation – Community Creativity grant, \$55,000
  - State Arts Board – contract received, \$37,100 for HAS to do a comedy clinic working with local comics
  - St. Paul Foundation, Council of Black Male Success – grant totaling \$22,000, for a project to change the trajectory of black boys and young men
  - Bush Foundation – grant totaling \$35,000 to host a conference, titled Z Renaissance; this was planned for spring 2020 and was finally done in an online format, in June.
  - McKinney-Vento Homeless Education grant shared with MNIC, \$20,000 (federal grant totaling \$40,000, have which HSRA receives half)
  - 2Revolutions/Bush Foundation – grant for \$45,000 received June 2020 for use over one year, to put on some events in a virtual setting
  - Propel – Council of Black Male Success (program of the St. Paul and Minneapolis Foundations) - \$16,000 grant
  - Youthrise – Bridgemakers grant, \$7,000
  - St. Paul Foundation – Conventional School Study grant, \$5,000
  - Wilder Foundation – Center For Policy Design grant, \$5,000

## **Program Challenges**

The nature of HSRA’s student population creates a number of challenges. HSRA serves students who are highly mobile, many coming from unstable home settings. Most are over-aged and under-credited compared to their peers in traditional high schools (an analysis of student demographic data in October 2017 showed average age of HSRA students at 17.88 years; the school’s demographics have remained similar since). Most HSRA students do not live with their parents; many are teen parents or carry out parental roles to younger siblings. Most are behind academically, many are involved in the criminal-justice system, and close to half are homeless at some point during the year.

As many of the students we serve come in with significant barriers in their lives, these are often matched with enormous resiliency skills. That being said, serving this population does create challenges which HSRA addresses through a number of strategies. HSRA’s advisory structure, student support and engagement team, transition specialists, and social work team work with each student on individual goals and skill development around Social Emotional Learning Competencies and Self-Advocacy skills. Students work to secure vital records, develop communication and organizational skills, code-switch in professional environments, secure housing and financial literacy skills to budget responsibly, develop life

skills with support groups and projects, and develop post-secondary plans to be self-sufficient and successful when they graduate. HSRA employs two social workers (1.5 full-time-equivalents during 2019-20; increased to 2.0 as of fall 2020) who address issues of teen homelessness, striving to help students find stability in school and in their lives. The social workers connect students to human services resources that can help with issues of housing and medical care. HSRA also has a school nurse (via a contract for services) on-site regular hours each week, who can refer students to medical care. Since the 2012-13 school year, the social worker has been assisted on services relating to housing for homeless students, by a Housing Advocate who is provided through a McKinney-Vento Homeless Education grant on which HSRA collaborates with the Minnesota Internship Center Charter School.

With the support of the Wilder Foundation, HSRA was able to undertake a study during 2019-20 to examine factors that cause students to leave school, or to stay – with particular attention to school-specific factors such as curriculum, teaching, and student-adult relationships at school. This effort worked with students to interview a sampling of 30 students, including 10 each of HSRA alumni, students who left HSRA without graduating, and current students. Quantifiable data was available for nine of the ten current students and is summarized below<sup>8</sup>.

## High School for Recording Arts’ quantitative findings

### Data Summary

Student	ADS	CDS	Total Schools
A	1.8	9	9
B	1.3	8	7
C	0.5	3	4
D	0.3	1	2
E	0.3	1	2
F	0.0	0	1
G	0.5	2	3
H	1.8	7	5
I	1.2	6	5

On average, the sample group experienced 0.8 disruptions per school year, 4.11 disruptions over the course of their high school career.

The limitations of the small sample size are significant as the figures vary widely between students.

	ADS	CDS	Total Schools
Mean	0.843	4.111	4.222
Median	0.5	3	4
Standard Deviation	0.685	3.408	2.587

HSRA, like all public schools, faced the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement to transition to distance learning in the spring of 2020. Additionally issues of racial and social unrest spurred by the killing of George Floyd added to the challenges of our community. Staff came together to establish a distance learning plan in the required timeframe during March 2020 in response to COVID-19. HSRA’s distance learning program provided for supporting the continuation of learning and addressing students’ non-academic needs as well, which included dealing with the trauma in the aftermath of the Floyd killing and unrest. Staff hosted student and community conversations to reflect on the moment and support each

<sup>8</sup> Average Disruption Score (ADS) means the total number of high school disruptions experienced by the student divided by the number of years the student has attended high school. Cumulative Disruption Score (CSD) means the total number of high school disruptions experienced by a student over their entire high school career. While this small group of students is not necessarily representative of the HSRA student body as a whole, the students were selected randomly.

other.

Enrollment and attendance remained strong through the spring. HSRA staff met during the summer of 2020 to identify revisions to the Distance Learning Plan. HSRA continues to operate via distance learning in the fall of 2020, with limited on-site Targeted Supports provided for students and their families.

The below table sheds light on HSRA’s student demographics.

<b>HSRA Student Body, 2014-2019<sup>9</sup></b>					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total enrollment, fall	315	318	324	279	329
Gender					
Male	58%	59%	58%	59%	55%
Female	42%	41%	42%	41%	45%
Ethnicity					
African-American	79%	68%	68%	63%	66%
Multi-racial	-	14%	15%	18%	15%
Caucasian	6%	8%	5%	5%	6%
Hispanic	6%	8%	10%	12%	12%
Asian or Native American	8%	2%	2%	3%	2%
Eligible for free / reduced-cost lunch	84%	85%	86%	88%	84%
Receiving special education services	17%	23%	27%	29%	25%

The vast majority of HSRA’s students come from low-income backgrounds as shown by eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals. Twenty-nine percent had active IEP’s as of October 1, but more students are identified with special needs as the year goes on. About half of HSRA students are categorized as homeless or highly mobile at some point during the year.

HSRA’s individualized program helps highly mobile students by providing a learning setting that they can leave and then return to without forfeiting whatever progress they had made, as would be the case in a school with conventional semester-long courses (HSRA does offer semester-long courses as well, but students who are engaged are able to receive partial credit if they have to leave the program). While school staff strongly encourage students to remain enrolled, and make sure they know consistent attendance is necessary to make steady academic progress, the circumstances of students’ lives sometimes force them to leave school for a time. Also, to accommodate students enrolling at different times during a term, there is an orientation program that takes several days, during which enrolling students go through organized activities to learn about the program and create an individualized learning plan. The orientation is offered multiple times during the year, not only during the first week of school.

<sup>9</sup> Figures here are based on October 1 figures reported by MDE. Also note, Multi-racial was a new category established the 2016-17 school year.

Other challenges which HSRA continued to address during 2019-20 included:

- Maintaining and increasing enrollment – HSRA saw a decline in student numbers in 2018-19 compared to the previous year, representing the first such decline in several years. Publicity and student recruitment efforts were stepped up during the summer of 2019, and enrollment returned to prior levels for 2019-20 (as of Sept. 30, 2020 HSRA had 323 students enrolled, so in spite of the COVID-19 and other challenges, student numbers remain strong for fall 2020).
- The level of violence in the community near HSRA and from which HSRA students come, continues to affect the school. HSRA continues to revisit its strategies for proactively addressing the effects of trauma on student behavior issues, practicing a system of trauma-informed behavior management with a strength based intervention system rooted in the principles of restorative justice. HSRA has a student support and engagement team consisting of five trauma/behavior specialists who work to engage with students in advance of potential incidents. In addition, to address incidents when they do arise HSRA has a system of intervention teams that consist of a student’s advisor, a student support staff member, a special education case manager if applicable, and a community or family member to mediate and create a restorative plan to violations of our school code conduct and handbook. The trauma/behavior specialists have caseloads of students referred to them by advisors or teachers, whom they work with on social/emotional and behavior challenges, in order to address issues proactively through informal interventions both in the behavioral and academic realms. HSRA also continues to maintain a crisis team as well as its security staff who include off-duty police officers.

HSRA’s crisis-team is trained in the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) methodology for de-escalating violent and potentially violent situations. HSRA staff are trained yearly on the Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey (ACES) and Trauma-Informed behavior response and classroom management with a variety of practitioners, social workers, and community experts. During 2018-19 Active Shooter training was added to HSRA’s all-staff training.

- Serving a large special education population. HSRA serves a large proportion of students with special learning needs, including many students who have special needs which are not identified immediately. The most common areas of disability are Learning-Disabled and Emotional-Behavioral Disabilities. The proportion of special education students served is typically around 30% per program staff. In serving its special-needs students, HSRA staff have found that on the one hand, African American youth are often over-identified for special learning needs in previous schools; and on the other hand, other schools are often slow to send documentation of students’ IEP’s. At HSRA every student has a Personal Learning Plan (PLP); for special-needs students, the PLP advances the goals of the IEP.

Special education students are integrated in all classes HSRA offers. This is done through the team teaching model and push in classes. HSRA has a reading specialist, who will provide direct instruction, in a non-general education class, for students show reading level is 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and below. Students also have the opportunity to record small group instruction in math. HSRA has a differentiation specialist (special education teacher) who works directly with general education

teachers offering differentiation strategies to support a student who is on an IEP.

- The federal/state requirement that high schools be evaluated based on students' on-time (four-year) graduation rate is problematic for HSRA. By design the school serves students who are significantly behind in credits and academic skills; about half of HSRA's students are aged 18-21. When a student enrolls at age 17 or 18 with only a handful of high school credits from previous schools, it is impossible for that student to graduate "on time." Newly entering students have consistently been a year and a half behind in credits on average. State-monitored measures now include five-, six-, and seven-year graduation rates which are better for HSRA, providing more chances to show the school's effectiveness in drop-out recovery. For instance, HSRA's 7-year grad rate increased, from 43% in 2017 to 57% in 2018 and remained at 54% for 2019.
- Attendance continues to be a challenge. Given the chaotic nature of students' lives outside school, attending school consistently is very difficult for many. Per close-to-final HSRA attendance data, overall percent-of-attendance during 2019-20 was 58.62%, an improvement compared to the previous year when the overall attendance figure was 52.82%. Although this attendance data is within the national range for reengaged students, HSRA still constantly strives to improve. The school has a team of staff, the Student Support and Engagement department, which makes attendance and retention of students their main focus. To encourage students to remain engaged with their education and attend school regularly, HSRA has implemented a set of strategies including phone calls to students who are unexpectedly absent, home visits to targeted students, and supporting students in their efforts to access transportation, housing, healthcare, and jobs, factors which interfere with many students' ability to attend school consistently. The Check and Connect program, in place since 2013-14, remains a key part of the school's ongoing effort to engage and re-engage students in learning.

## **Innovative Practices and Implementation**

HSRA subscribes to the motto: "We are not trying to get better in order to attract 'better' students; we are trying to get better to better serve the students we've got!" Since its inception twenty years ago, HSRA has sought to target dropouts and potential dropouts, and constantly looks for and uses best practices in addressing their unique needs. HSRA has always been committed to serving the underserved and to becoming an example of a "destination school" for opportunity youth. HSRA continues to target students who were not being served by traditional schools. For example, the school mission includes the statement that HSRA provides youth the opportunity to achieve a high school diploma through the operation and exploration of the music business and other creative endeavors.

As the only public high school in Minnesota that is co-located with a professional music recording studio, HSRA is a highly innovative program! HSRA also employs recognized best practices for drop-out recovery. The Reaching At-Promise Students Association (RAPSA, online at [www.rapsa.org](http://www.rapsa.org)) lists the following best practices for drop-out recovery:

- Open entry / open exit enrollment

- Individualized learning pedagogies tailored to student needs and goals
- Technology and innovative modalities such as blended learning and project-based learning
- Access to and/or partnerships for wrap-around services for students

HSRA has been using these practices since its inception.

In addition to the music recording industry focus and utilization of best practices for drop-out recovery, innovative practices in place at the school include the following:

- Customized strategies for students build pathways to post-secondary education. Through its educational program, HSRA seeks to create pathways for students to develop the skills and knowledge they'll need to fulfill their post-secondary goals that will lead to a career. HSRA focuses particularly on developing and certifying skills linked with the music industry, photography, technical trades, entrepreneurial and business skills, as well as core academic and socio-emotional development necessary for success in the professional world. Students have access to PSEO while attending HSRA and many choose to take college classes at local community colleges. HSRA also has a robust program of college visits and college and job fairs in house.
- As a new approach to help its over-aged and under-credited students prepare to graduate and succeed in post-secondary education, HSRA established an Accuplacer Prep / Grad Lab advisory. Grad Lab is intended for students who are the most over-aged and under-credited but still eligible to graduate by year's end. In the Grad Lab, students take the Accuplacer reading and math tests and review their scores with their advisor and subject-area teachers, comparing scores with the cut-scores needed to avoid remedial classes in the degree-seeking program of their choice. If there is a gap, the advisor and teachers work with the student to establish a competency-based curriculum, and assign tutoring sessions to help students raise their scores, to the score they need. The Grad Lab was planned during 2018-19, and implemented as a pilot program during 2019-20, serving serving 15-25 students. Though negatively impacted by the shift to remote learning, which makes experiential labs and hands-on projects more difficult, the Grad Lab continued through spring 2020 and is operating again in 2020-21.
- HSRA's project-based focus, described elsewhere in this Report, is an innovative approach to meeting academic standards while utilizing students' own interests to power the learning process. The project-based learning focus is supported by well-equipped workspaces: each student has their own desk and computer, providing an office-like work environment.
- Commitment to cultivating a diverse staff, to match its diverse student body. This is how this aspect was described in HSRA's QSR application, fall 2018:  
We have always had one of the most diverse staff and student populations in Minnesota. Despite the challenges of finding licensed teachers of color in Minnesota, we ensure that our students see themselves in the adults working in the building. We have always had a diverse board, diverse leadership, and diverse ideas! We are committed to find ways to increase the number of licensed teachers of color at HSRA, and are interested in

pursuing either formal or informal grow-your-own programs, perhaps in collaboration with other programs.

- Integration of student learning with real-world practice, e.g. by supporting public events with artistic performance, sound and technical support; and access to commercial radio exposure for public service announcements and publicity.
- HSRA students continue to be involved in high-level group projects; examples during 2019-20 included the “Sick and Tired” collaboration with Sounds of Blackness and the *Experience Jazz 2020: The Sound of Distance* collaborative recording.
- The Check and Connect program, a research-based strategy to improve student attendance and retention, is another innovative practice in place at HSRA.
- Since 2011 HSRA has acted as the nonprofit host of the HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention and Awareness (HAS) program (official name Check Yo’ Self Health and Wellness Center). This program provides prevention services to youth aged 13-24 for over 18 years, with funding through the state of Minnesota. HSRA benefits from the co-location of this program at its facility because this allows better accessibility for HSRA students to the STD education, prevention and testing resources HAS provides. This relationship continued since; HAS is now organizationally integrated into HSRA.
- Team-teaching around real-world authentic projects.
- The Visual Inclusion Program, described elsewhere in this report, which creates transitional opportunities for special education students by developing entrepreneurial skills, post-secondary options, community engagement and leadership skills.
- Finally, HSRA’s development of its facility constitutes an important innovation; this is how this aspect of the school was described in HSRA’s QSR application:  
One other major way we have realized our mission over the past contract term is in purchasing, renovating, and expanding our building at 1166 University Ave. in St. Paul. It has long been our vision that our students have a permanent footprint in the community--a building that would truly make the students feel welcomed, valued, and that the community is invested in their development as people and future citizens. Most charter schools serving at-risk populations do not have the luxury of having permanent homes, much less homes with state-of-the-art recording studios. Purchasing the building was a long and arduous process. In fact, High School for Recording Arts is the only alternative high school in the United States to be given an investment-grade rating by Standard and Poor’s, with whom we have formal conferences annually. In purchasing the building, we sought not only to secure our future, but to secure a place for the arts in this increasingly visible and valuable part of the Twin Cities.

## Future Plans

For the future, HSRA plans to continue the successful practices currently in place while continually reviewing and enhancing the program. For instance, HSRA is seeking to take advantage of what the school has learned since March 2020 about staying connected with students through distance learning, treating the pandemic as but an opportunity to innovate. Summer staff sessions and ongoing development activities carried out by school leadership enable HSRA to maintain quality and continue to improve the program.

Fully utilizing its new facility continues to be a major focus for HSRA. The long-term vision for HSRA's facility is to become a "Twin Cities Youth Village":

The Twin Cities Youth Village has the potential to be one of the most recognizable symbols in the Midwest. The vision that HSRA founder David "T.C." Ellis and program director Tony Simmons have had has emerged into a reality. Education is just the beginning. The Village would feature campus housing to assist our young people who need residency.

The new facility is envisioned as a youth-centered, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and community center featuring Studio 4's state of the art music recording studios, gymnasium, and commercial kitchen. HSRA leadership is proud to take HSRA into its next chapter with this new facility which aims to be a beacon of hope to the youth of our community and their families. In the spring of 2017 HSRA was awarded a grant from the St. Paul Foundation to carry out a feasibility study of the Twin Cities Youth Village, to be designed by African American youth. The Village is envisioned to include: incubator business launch pads, educational and re-engagement incentives and opportunities for youth, youth residential lofts, self-sufficiency services, co-mentorship, public green space and an outdoor state of the art performance space.

Beginning in 2017, HSRA has had an effort underway to establish a school which will replicate HSRA through a pilot program in Los Angeles. Activities in support of replicating the model began in the summer of 2017, and have continued since, with a pilot program operating during 2018-19 and 2019-20. The pilot site features every aspect of the mothership program in St. Paul. There is an advisory group of stakeholders, parents, community members, and artists that are eagerly awaiting the culmination of years of research, planning and hard work. One of the leaders of the HSRA-Los Angeles effort provided this update:

In our first, pilot year in Los Angeles, we tripled our enrolment and doubled our average daily attendance. Together with our students, we visited recording studios frequented by some of the world's top recording artists, invited Grammy-winning guests into our own recording studio for collaborations and master classes, and started our own, student-run business making music for other businesses in our community. Through this business we produced songs for the Ever Forward Club and Comfort LA, both California-based social enterprises. Our students produced and released their first music video, performed at the world-renowned Deeper Learning conference, appeared in Netflix-produced music videos, appeared on the legendary BeatJunkies Radio, and earned Studio 4 certifications in the basics of sound engineering and musical production. Our students became cultural ambassadors and activists in their communities, taking part in ballot-day events to get out the vote and working to pass a bill that prohibits police from using "fear" as a reasonable excuse to employ the use of deadly force. Perhaps most importantly, for the health and wellbeing of our students and their families, we successfully placed 57% of our students in paid internships in the

music industry. Through an innovative partnership with the Los Angeles youth worksource centers, we were able to certify our program as a youth work site, employing our students at \$13.25/hour for 120 hours during the school year. Through this program, our students ran their own record label on campus for credit in core courses.

Finally, HSRA remains committed to working with its authorizer and other committed parties such as the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and RAPSA, to identify or develop relevant, appropriate and challenging measures of success for schools serving at-risk populations. This work is informed by ongoing research on effective strategies for drop-out prevention and recovery.