

Learning in a Family Environment

Minnesota Charter School District #4035

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**Leah Jones, Executive Director Nou Yang, Board Chair**

930 Geranium Ave. E.

St. Paul, MN 55106

Phone: 651-793-6624

Fax: 651-344-0586

Email: leah.jones@lifeprepschool.org

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**Learning in a Family Environment**

**Background**

At LIFE Prep, we consider ourselves a family -- one in which ALL students are important to us. Our name says it all... LIFE Prep stands for Learning In a Family Environment.

Our core values are "LOVE, LEARN, ACHIEVE, SUCCEED." These values guide us in providing the loving and encouraging atmosphere our students need to thrive in their learning. We challenge all students to grow as learners and expect the best from them. Our goal is to prepare students for success, not just while at school, but also in their communities and in their lives and for their futures.

We believe all students can learn. Students build success through all the supports LIFE Prep offers. At the core of our academic program are Individual Learning Plans for all students. Each student learns through a plan designed to support their specific needs. Both accelerated learning and supported learning are a part of our daily academic programming. Minnesota Math and Reading Corp provide instructional support along with Title Reading services and University of Wisconsin, River Falls, Falcon Tutors, as well as University of St. Thomas (UST).

LIFE Prep’s goal is to prepare each and every student to be career and college ready. Our students learn strong 21st century skills and each student is prepared to take the next steps through middle school, high school and beyond.

LIFE Prep is entering our 23rd year with a strong commitment to providing a nurturing, family-like learning environment. Our core values, LOVE, LEARN, ACHIEVE, SUCCEED are at the heart of our daily work and show the strength of our commitment to our students success.

**District Name, Number, and Address**

LIFE Prep, Minnesota School District #4035, is a charter school in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood of St. Paul. The school’s address is 930 Geranium Ave. E., St. Paul, MN 55106.

LIFE Prep served students from Pre-K through sixth grade during the 2020-2021 school year. The school was established in 1998 and in June of 2018, completed its 21st year. Located in the complex owned by St. Casimir’s Church of the St. Paul Catholic Dioceses, LIFE Prep inhabits the space formerly used by St. Casimir’s School. The website for LIFE Prep is www.lifeprepschool.org.

**Mission**

LIFE Prep School believes all students can learn and our students are at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to strong, standards based and differentiated instruction for all students. Our commitment to closing the achievement gap comes from a dedication to academic accomplishment through the delivery of a rigorous curriculum. The inclusive multicultural community is a safe place to learn and overcome adversity. Learning In a Family Environment empowers students to own their success.

**Vision**

LIFE Prep ignites a desire to achieve and inspires students’ hope for a bright future.Students develop self-confidence through their accomplishments and are empowered to pursue their dreams. We provide encouragement and a foundation for perseverance; preparing students to thrive as individuals on a successful life path.

**Purpose**

LIFE Prep is focused on improving pupil learning and student achievement in the following areas.

*1. Increasing learning opportunities for* ***all*** *pupils. This includes: strong advocacy for each student and small learning environments; flexible grouping based on learning needs; Response to Intervention (RtI) for reading and math tutoring during school, and 6:00 a.m. - 7:30am for morning care.*

LIFE Prep uses a Daily 5 model to provide all students with small group, differentiated instruction. Student learning is guided by Individual Learning Plans for each student based on their current assessments and needs. Both Reading and Math Corp provide individual and small group instructions for students. Wisconsin River Falls University Tutors also provide daily tutoring during the school day and during after care.

LIFE Prep’s RTIis a 3 tiered process for both academic and behavioral components. A final referral to the Special Education Child Study Team is completed if necessary.



The before school program is available for students beginning at 6:00am.

2. Measuring learning outcomes and creating different and innovative forms of measuring outcomes by engaging multiple measures of proficiency and growth, including Star Assessments for Math, NWEA MAP testing, LLI, MCA testing, and progress monitoring during interventions.

LIFE Prep student achievement is tracked and measured in a variety of ways. Each student’s learning goals are documented on their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and progress is monitored on these goals. The ILP is a tool used by our Cities Connect Counselor, classroom teachers, and SAT team. Progress is monitored for both support and enrichment opportunities. Formative and summative assessments are conducted in classrooms by a student’s primary teacher based on state standards. Students are assessed using standardized testing with the NWEA a minimum of 3 times a year. All students participate in the MCA or MTAS as appropriate.

3. Creating new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program. The School operates on a shared decision-making model and distributive leadership.

LIFE Prep practices shared decision making through an Instructional Leadership Team structure.

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### **Instructional Leadership Team**

The instructional leadership team (ILT) is the overarching leadership group overseeing the five constituent leadership groups within the continuous improvement (CImp) team. The ILT met weekly and made important decisions about instruction, assessment, and curriculum. These decisions were informed by the work of the five leadership teams of the CImp team: DuFour, Q-Comp, standards, response to intervention, and student assistance team.

### **Q Comp Team**

In order to examine grade level data, support teacher advancement and leadership, as well as come to consensus on how to best teach the important skills and concepts of the grade level during distance learning, LIFE Prep formed horizontal, or grade level, learning teams that worked from the four essential questions of a PLC as defined by Richard DuFour, et. al. in Learning By Doing (2010):

1. What is it that we want students to learn?

2. How will we know if they have learned it?

3. What will we do if they did not learn it

4. What will we do if they did learn it?

There are four components in a Q Comp system:

* Career ladder/advancement options (teacher leadership positions and responsibilities)
* Job-embedded professional development (frequently utilizing teacher leaders and professional learning community structures)
* Teacher evaluation
* Performance pay and alternative salary schedules

 Teacher leaders used the book “The Distance Learning Playbook” by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and John Hattie. This book focused on how to best support students during distance learning. Teachers met every week to discuss the challenges of online learning and share strategies that have helped students be successful. Twenty out of twenty-two teachers met their QComp goals and received full payment.

**Response to Intervention**

LIFE Prep began a school-wide response to intervention (RtI) program in 2014-2015. This was spurred by the hiring of two Title I teachers, who recorded and analyzed student data and developed comprehensive strategies for students to improve in math and reading skills. During the school year, there were four six-week intervention cycles with students who were below grade level. The goals are to serve every child who qualifies and for students to exit the intervention being caught-up to grade level. Title I continues to be an important part of our program.

**Program Model**

During the 2020-2021 school year, 74.2% of our students were eligible for free or reduced price school meals. We serve many students from families with limited resources to support learning in the home. LIFE Prep welcomes all students regardless of background and seeks to provide a learning environment that meets the child where they currently are to help them progress and succeed throughout their tenure at LIFE Prep and beyond. Some of the school’s important features are:

* ● High academic standards
* ● Data driven decision-making policies
* ● Academic achievement supported by assessments
* ● School-wide Response to Intervention (RtI) services
* ● Standards-based instruction
* ● Low student to staff ratio
* ● Free breakfast and lunch
* ● Building is open from 6:00 A.M through 3:00 P.M
* ● Family and community involvement
* ● Diverse student population
* ● Music, art and physical education each day
* ● Reading Corps for grades K-third grade
* ● Math Corps for grades 3-6
* ● Q-Comp teacher growth program
* ● Student teachers from University of Wisconsin River Falls & University of St. Thomas (UST) - Due to COVID, tutors were unavailable for online teaching.
* ● Weekly college tutoring from the University of Wisconsin River Falls & UST
* - Due to COVID, tutors were unavailable for online learning

In the 2020-2021 school year, LIFE Prep was open from September 8th, 2020 -June 4th, 2021. The school offered an extended learning year Distance Learning (ESY) program during August 2021.

LIFE PREP continues to welcome and celebrate diversity with a wonderfully diverse population. This diversity allows for the understanding, honoring, and learning of cultures through direct interaction and learning together.

**School Governance**

An organizational chart showing the governance and management responsibilities of individuals and groups of LIFE Prep can be found in Appendix A of this document.

**Board Composition**

**2020-2021 School-Year Charter Public School Board**

2020-2021 Virtual Annual Board Meeting Date: May 17th, 2021

| Name | Title | Membership Type |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Leah Jones | Executive Director | Ex Officio |
| Nou Yang | Board Chair | Parent |
| Christine Obermueller | Secretary | Teacher |
| Katie Schlosser |  Treasurer | Teacher |
| Lorna Alamari | Member | Community Member |
| Laura Mueller | Member  | Teacher |

**Committees of the Board**

**Executive Committee**

The members of the executive committee were Leah Jones, Christine Obermueller and Nou Yang

**Policy Committee**

The members of the policy committee were Christine Obermueller, Leah Jones, Kelsey Nelson, Christyna Sherrod, and Lindsey Rogers

**Finance Committee**

The members of the finance committee were Leah Jones, Katie Schlosser, and Nou Yang

**School Board Trainings**

During the 2020-2021 school year, the following members received board training:

| Member | Date |
| --- | --- |
| Nou Yang | 12/16/19 |
| Christine Obermueller | 12/16/19 |
| Katie Schlosser | 12/16/19 |
| Laura Mueller | 12/16/19 |
| Lorna Alamri | Resigned from the board before completing training  |
| Pang Vang | 12/16/19 |

**Board Practices, Processes, and Performance**

The board reviewed the bylaws at its annual meeting of the membership in May 2021.

Open meetings laws are followed by posting meeting times on the school website and on the exterior door of the school. Minutes of past meetings are posted on the website.

Prior to each board meeting, agenda items are collected by the vice chair and organized by the chair. During the meetings, parliamentary procedure is followed with motions, discussion, and voting. The secretary records votes in the minutes.

The board has three active committees in perpetuity: executive, finance, and policy. Key decisions are made by the board in committee or in general or special sessions. Each committee delivers a report at the general meetings of the board. The board is briefed on the monthly financial report by Dawn Jenkins of the Anton Group.

A written executive director’s report is delivered during each meeting. Topics included are the following

1. Enrollment
2. Attendance
3. Finances
4. Instruction & Culture
5. Student Behavior
6. New Considerations

The board approves an annual budget and revises it as necessary.

**Administrative Team**

| **Name** | **MDE File Folder #** | **Assignment** | **Years Employed at LIFE Prep** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Leah Jones | 430650 | Executive Director & Principal | 17 |
| Christyna Sherrod | 476774 | Assistant Director | 10 |
| Lori Steider | x | Admin. Asst. | 13 |
| Kelsey Nelson | x | Chief Operating Officer | 7 |
| Lucas Balfant | x | Facilities Manager | 2 |

**Evaluation of the Administrative Team**

The executive team of the board of directors supervises the executive director and assistant director. At the end of the school year, the board reviews the goals and the progress made toward the goals. Based on the performance of the executive director and the assistant director, the board may decide to renew the contract of the executive director and assistant director or decline renewal of the contract for the following school year.

All other members of the administrative team are periodically coached and evaluated by the executive director.

**Food Program**

The food service program was coordinated by Thang Nyugyn. He organized the menus, the sales of meals, and the school staff. He teamed with the staff hired by our caterer, Caravan Kids Catering (CKC). During a typical school year, CKC staff prepares and distributes the food and cleans trays and kitchen surfaces. They load and help with storage. However, due to distance learning our food program looked very different. CKC prepared one week’s worth of breakfasts and lunches at a time. LIFE Prep was open from 9:00-11:00am for families to pick up meals. Deliveries were made to those who did not have transportation.

**Teaching Faculty & Licensed Staff**

**Teachers & Licensed Staff**

|  | **Name** | **Assignment** | **File Folder #** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Colleen Diaz | Pre-Kindergarten | 508960 |
| 2 | Emily Carver | Pre-Kindergarten | 508161 |
| 3 | Beth Larson | Kindergarten | 371109 |
| 4 | Kuturah (Kate) Roth | Kindergarten | 402221 |
| 5 | Maggie McInerney | 1 | 509283 |
| 6 | Christine Obermueller | 1 | 474811 |
| 7 | Cassandra Sprandel | 2 | 493806 |
| 8 | Brittany Hughes | 2 | 480937 |
| 9 | Emma Lindley | 3 | 498276 |
| 10 | Katie Schlosser | 3 | 470935 |
| 11 | Madison Wiederhoeft | 4 | 499233 |
| 12 | Brittany Pierce | 4 | 470821 |
| 13 | Jeanna Manning | 5 | 496304 |
| 14 | Beau Junker | 5 | 492766 |
| 15 | Kyle Newsome | 6 | 484268 |
| 16 | Lindsey Rogers | 6 | 1005057 |
| 17 | Laura Mueller | Title I | 488076 |

| 18 | Ellie Karr | Title I | 474609 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 19 | Christine Brinkman | ELL | 444374 |
| 20 | Renee Hendrickson | Special Education | 503572 |
| 21 | Garth Kirkham | Special Education | 479783 |
| 22 | Heidi Wilson | Special Education | 385693 |
| 23 | Anne Mee | School Counselor | 503369 |
| 24 | Natalee Tangen | Social Worker | 1005568 |
| 25 | Carole Dunn | In-House Substitute | 180309 |
| 26 | Greg Flood | COVID Coordinator & In House Sub | 1003223 |

**Teacher Coaching, Supervision, and Evaluation**

At LIFE Prep, teachers are observed at least three times per school year. One formal observation is conducted by the principal and two are conducted by teacher leaders on the Q-Comp team. Feedback and scores are reported to the principal and a professional development plan is made for each teacher with advisement by the Q-Comp coaches and the principal.

**Instructional Support Staff**

| **Last Name** | **First Name** | **Assignment** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ashbach | Leslie | Kindergarten SpEd Para |
| Hoskins |  Chris | 6th Grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional |
| Ochoki | Miya | 2nd Grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional |
| Ochoki |  Cassie | 3rd Grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional |

| Drake | Lee | 5th Grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Fulford | Jevone | 5th Grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional |
| Xiong | Cee | 1st Grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional |
| Nesja | Dawn | 6th grade SpEd Program Paraprofessional/Substitute SpEd Teacher |
| Daily | Chelsie |  4th SpEd Program Paraprofessional |

**Student Enrollment and Demographic Data**

|  | **12-13** | **13-14** | **14-15** |  **15-16**  | **16-17** | **17-18**  | **18-19** | **19-20** | **20-21** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total Enrollment as of October 1st | 400 | 417 | 323 | 306 | 300 | 317 | 312 | 266 | 233 |
| Black | 40% | 42.9% | 42.1% | 44.6% | 40.6% |  44% | 47.8 | 52.6% | 54.4% |
| White | 23% | 21.1% | 16.4% | 11.5%  | 6.3% |  5%  | 5.1 | 4.9% | 4.7% |
| Latino | 10% | 6.5% | 9.3% | 10.3% | 8.8% | 8.5% | 8.7 | 9% | 9.0% |
| Asian | 26% | 27.8% | 30.7% | 32.4%  | 37.6% | 40%  | 36. | 31.2% | 28.8% |
| Native American | 1% | 1.7% | 1.5% | 1.3% | .1% | .1% | 1.3 | 1.5% | 1.7% |
| Eligible for Free/Reduced | 76%  | 71.5% | 76.8% | 72.46% | 81.7% | 88.2% | 81.1 | 77.8% | 71.7% |
| English Learner | 6% | 4.8% | 5.6% | 20.8% | 5.6% | 10% | 11.2 | 13.5% | 11.2% |
| Receive Special Education Services | 11.5%  | 11.0% | 9.0% | 6.4% | 10.3% | 8% | 10.9 | 11.7% | 12.9% |

**Attrition Rates**

LIFE Prep began the 2020-2021 school year with 240 (as of September, 2020). At the end of the school year, the enrollment was 231 students (as of June, 2021). This is a loss of 9 students which is a 3.75% decrease

**Offerings**

Students from grades kindergarten to sixth grade study English language arts, mathematics, and social studies in the classroom. Physical education classes occur each day for all students; while art, and music classes are on an AB schedule for all students, as well as science. However, because we remained in distance learning for the 2020-2021 school year, these classes were on a modified schedule and were provided by their classroom teacher.

**Instructional Leadership Goals from 2020-2021**

**Achievement Goal 1: Reading Growth**

70% of students who have been continuously enrolled from 1 October, will be at grade level in the spring as measured by the NWEA MAP reading test or show at least one-year’s growth on the NWEA MAP reading test.

**Results-** Due to COVID-19, NWEA was only administered to students in grades 3rd-6th in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 at LIFE Prep School. Students in grades K-2nd were unable to log into NWEA due to technology issues and an error message from NWEA regarding pop up blockers and screen display issues. 51 out of 119 students completed the Reading NWEA in Fall 2020 **and** Spring 2021. Out of the 51 students, 34 students were at grade level, or made one-years growth (66%) on the NWEA MAP reading test. Goal was not met.

**Achievement Goal 2: Mathematics Growth**

76% of students who have been continuously enrolled from 1 October, will be at grade level in the spring as measured by the NWEA MAP mathematics test or show at least one-year’s growth on the NWEA MAP reading test.

Due to COVID-19, NWEA was only administered to students in grades 3rd-6th in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 at LIFE Prep School. Students in grades K-2nd were unable to log into NWEA due to technology issues and an error message from NWEA regarding pop up blockers and screen display issues. 48 out of 119 students completed the Math NWEA in Fall 2020 **and** Spring 2021. Out of the 48 students, 12 students were at grade level, or made one-years growth (25%) on the NWEA MAP reading test. Goal was not met.

**Student Growth**

**Achievement Goal 3: Academic Achievement-Proficiency Reading**

53% of students who have been continuously enrolled from 1 October will be proficient (meeting or exceeding the standard) on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment for reading.

Results: MCA’s were administered in Spring 2021 to LIFE Prep students; However, due to COVID-19, only 45 out of 119 students took the MCA’s. Many families opted out of testing or simply did not show up on testing day. It is also important to note that students took both math and reading on the same day, as well as science for 5th grade students. Limited data is available. Our students do not meet this goal due to challenges faced by COVID-19. 11.1% of our students met or exceeded the MCA’s. LIFE Prep did not meet their goal.

**Achievement Goal 4: Academic Achievement-Proficiency, Mathematics**

 61% of students who have been continuously enrolled from 1 October will be proficient (meeting or exceeding the standard) on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment for reading. Limited data is available.

Results: MCA’s were administered in Spring 2021 to LIFE Prep students; However, due to COVID-19, only 45 out of 119 students took the MCA’s. It is important to note that students took both math and reading on the same day, as well as science for 5th grade students. Limited data is available. Our students do not meet this goal due to challenges faced by COVID-19. 11.1% of our students met or exceeded the MCA’s. LIFE Prep did not meet their goal.

**Achievement Goal 5: Racial Achievement Gap Reduction**

Reading for students who have been continuously enrolled from 1 October, the School will post proficiency achievement gap reductions (meeting or exceeding the standard) on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment for reading by race: 2% for Asian students, 14% for Latino students, and 9% for Black students.

Result: \*Due to COVID-19, only 45 out of 119 students completed the MCA’s in Spring 2021 due to parent refusal or absentee. Data is limited in regards to racial achievement gaps. The total number of populations of students who completed the MCA’s include White student populations is CSTR, 14 of 14 Asian students of whom did not meet, 21 Black students with 18 out of 21 students who did not meet (16.7%), and Hispanic and Latino population that is CSTR. With MCA 2020-2021 and the cancellation of MCA’s in Spring 2020 LIFE Preps achievement gap calculations present a challenging date to reduce racial achievement gap due to COVID-19.

**Achievement Goal 6: Special Education Achievement Gap Reduction**

Reading for students who have been continuously enrolled from 1 October, the School will post proficiency achievement gap reductions (meeting or exceeding the standard) on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment for reading by a protected class of 5% for Special Education Students.

Result: \*Due to COVID-19, only 45 out of 119 students completed the MCA’s in Spring 2021 due to parent refusal or absentee. Our Special Education population is CSTR, no data is available.

**Achievement Goal: 7 Attendance**

The School will have a measurable goal of 95% average daily attendance every year.

Result: Due to the challenges of COVID-19 and distance learning, LIFE Prep’s average daily attendance was 80.12%.

**Financials**

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**Challenges for the Upcoming Year**

***Decreasing Enrollment***

LIFE Prep faces the same challenges as most charter schools in St. Paul. As the choice options grow in the city, the student population is more widely dispersed. Attracting and keeping students becomes a major focus for our school for the next year and for years to come. As students return to in-person learning it’s expected that enrollment will be a struggle since many families are considering private education, online learning options, and homeschooling for their child/ren due to the ongoing pandemic.

***Student Achievement***

Student achievement on standardized tests often drive decisions as to where to place students. Because so many of our students were unable to take the MCAs and MAP testing, it will be difficult to have an accurate data analysis of our students’ progress and needs for the upcoming year. New goals will need to be sent once we have the new data. Interventions will need to be put in place and additional staff will need to be hired to meet these needs.

***Student and Staff Mental Health***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning we know there will be a huge need for mental health support for all students returning to in-person learning. In order to address the needs of our students, we will be hiring additional school support. This includes counseling services and SEL curriculum. Teachers will be provided with optional counseling support and additional mental health days.

***21st Century Education***

Core competencies such as collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving are at the heart of educational needs for the future success of all our students. LIFE Prep will need to be able to keep pace with the expectations and to be able to provide opportunities for students to gain these skills.

**Future Goals**

**Professional Development For All Staff**

*Equity/Diversity Training-* Our staff will be focused on working towards providing racial/equity/and culturally competent learning for all staff at LIFE Prep through Perry Wilkinson from Regional Centers of Excellence. Through this training teachers will gain experience in racial self-awareness/bias, facilitating conversations about race in the classroom, and incorporating equitable content/classroom management strategies in the classroom.

***Technology***

Providing technology to ALL students. Each student in grades Pre-K through 6th will have a device for the 2021-2022 school year. As well as continue with providing online resources such as IXL, Seesaw, and Epic.

***Addressing Learning Loss***

It’s expected there to be significant learning loss across grade levels and all subjects wil literacy being hit the hardest. In order to address this, LIFE Prep will be hiring a Literacy Specialist and replace our outdated literacy curriculum. The Literacy Specialist will focus on serving our students with the highest needs and coaching staff on effective strategies to address reading loss. This will be a full time position.