



## Learning Community Charter School

Recognized as a Lighthouse Awardee during the 2021-2023 term for diversifying the teacher workforce.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Lighthouse District Initiative recognizes districts that have demonstrated measurable progress for equitable outcomes. The NJDOE is proud to welcome the Learning Community Charter School to the third cohort of Lighthouse Districts.

### Learning Community Charter School Demographics

- 638 Total Students
- PK–8 Grades Offered
- 30.7% Economically Disadvantaged
- 6.1% Students with Disabilities
- 0% English Learners
- 14:1 Student to Teacher Ratio

**Want to learn more? Contact us.**

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### Learning Community Charter School Equity Story

Below, you will find a narrative describing the ways that Learning Community Charter School has diversified the teacher workforce.

#### Engaging Diverse Stakeholder Groups about Policy to Increase Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

Learning Community Charter School (LCCS) has made an ongoing commitment to faculty retention and recruitment. This is particularly focused on making sure that our faculty represents the diversity of our student body. This is done through an inclusive hiring process and embedding supportive retention practices once candidates join our team. LCCS is particularly proud of the close relationship we have developed with New Jersey City University (NJCU). We've participated in several federal grants they've received, and over the past three years, we've been part of their Teacher Intern program. This program allows NJCU students considering careers in education to receive well-paid (\$17 per hour) internships within our classrooms. Our research into recruiting a diverse faculty indicates that a school must build its own pipeline to hire teachers of color. The NJCU program provides us with access to outstanding diverse candidates for future positions at LCCS. Our faculty takes on a mentoring role with their NJCU interns much akin to how we work with first-year teachers. As the Head of School, I provide monthly workshops on issues in education, problem-solving, and leadership development for our interns. They often become our first tier of candidates to hire for new positions in the coming school year. LCCS also applies best practices in terms of hiring overall. Our faculty members play a key role in hiring, serving on hiring committees and making sure when interviewing candidates of color that we let them know about our school's anti-racism work and commitment to integrating the Teaching for Justice Social Justice Standards. We formed a Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Leadership Committee for the start of the 2020-2021 school year to provide an even greater level of support from the teacher level to assist our teachers of color with any additional support they might need from colleagues of color.

#### Distributed Teacher Leadership Related to Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

LCCS made strides in two areas in this regard. Our BIPOC Leadership Committee not only provides support for our faculty members of color but also analyzes data in terms of faculty retention and turnover for faculty members of color. This is a high priority at LCCS, and this data is shared twice a year at Board of Trustees meetings. The BIPOC Leadership

Committee continues to make recommendations and implements programs to provide support for all LCCS faculty members of color. This is an outgrowth of faculty professional development regarding social justice and anti-racist school practices. The committee provides a safe space for faculty members of color to advise the school on how to continue to be a positive and welcoming school environment for teachers of color and for all of them to perform at the highest level. LCCS administration considers faculty leadership development essential for the overall success of the school. Through ongoing classroom walkthrough conversations, post-observations, and Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, administration regularly encourages and provides opportunities for growth and leadership for all interested teachers. Given the school's flat structure there are ongoing opportunities for all faculty members to participate and contribute to school improvement and management. We also understand that developing a trusting relationship and showing that school administration "walks the walk" in terms of support is essential when working with faculty members of color. This means that we must be prepared to provide organizational safety and support whenever faculty members of color are encouraged to take on new projects. When a new initiative is proposed, first we determine how we can bring someone to the table ready for new opportunities and challenges. This activates a backward planning process for considering how we best support this individual in terms of a teacher-leader role and what might be potential obstacles encountered along the way (We always consider implicit bias regarding race, gender, and sexual orientation as a potential obstacle). After a project concludes we seek feedback from all involved particularly regarding their experience and how to support improvement for future situations. Our BIPOC Leadership Committee additionally conducted bi-weekly trainings for all staff on topics including privilege, microaggressions, and processing current events, such as the rise in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate crimes due to the pandemic. Through these trainings, staff also received resources to have important conversations about race and social justice in their classrooms. In addition, the BIPOC Leadership Committee worked with each grade level to evaluate their curriculum for BIPOC representation. We believe these types of trainings not only support our existing BIPOC staff, they educate and inform all staff, and create an environment that attracts teachers from diverse backgrounds to come to LCCS.

### **Professional Learning and Mentoring Related to Equity and Diversity in the Teacher Workforce**

Processes are in place to reach our families by any means necessary. Information sessions are held for parents/guardians to learn about programs that are advantageous for their families and students. The Guidance Department provided literature in various languages, students/families were provided with interpreters if needed, and intentional discussions with counselors were conducted. Additionally, home visits were put in place to increase attendance. The administration conducted meet and greets to familiarize families with programs and learning opportunities. Seminars are conducted on the college application and financial aid process. As a feeder high school, information sessions are held to acclimate new students.

### **Involving Stakeholders in all Stages of the Policymaking Process**

LCCS considers an effective hiring target one in which our diverse faculty hires outnumber our white cisgender female hires. This is not an easy target to hit but as the most diverse school in New Jersey we believe this goal set by our Board of Trustees, managed by the school administration, relying heavily on our faculty regarding recruitment and identification of outstanding candidates is an essential aspect of our overall success as a school.

### **Integration of Quantitative Data Sources for Improvement in Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce**

Teacher diversity data is shared in October and June with the entire school community at board and faculty meetings. Data looks at the overall racial and demographic representation of our faculty in comparison with our student body. This data is analyzed to determine patterns and identify additional successful practices for recruitment and retention and areas for concern as well. Our faculty for 21-22 is 42% BIPOC. We are proud to say that within our BIPOC faculty members they are represented in STEM, English, health, safety, and school leadership. We are confident that learning from and interacting with faculty members that empathize, understand, and connect with our students' experiences is essential for their academic and social emotional growth.