



**THE LEARNING
COMMUNITY**
a public charter school



ANNUAL REPORT 2009



21 Lincoln Ave RM 310
Central
January 25th 2000
Mr Michael K. Brown
Executive Vice President - Store Operators
Lowes, Boulevard
Mile, NC 28117
Mr, Mr Michael K. Brown,
My name is Bernardo I'm in
and my teachers Name is
can you donate some turf
School which is the Learning
Director School?

proving poverty is not a barrier to student achievement

If you are holding our annual report in your hands right now, you are a friend of The Learning Community. We are extremely proud of this report as it represents the hard and strategic work of our remarkable team over the first five years of our existence. It would be hard to find another team as talented, passionate and diverse in this state or perhaps, this nation.

While we celebrate our accomplishments we are always striving for the next innovation, seeking the next turning point for a child or welcoming the next family or friend to join us. We know this is a very privileged journey, being both participant and witness to real success where most people would wager success impossible.

One of our main goals for the next five years is to ensure that our story as one of the best educational opportunities in Rhode Island (for both students and teachers) is no longer one of the best kept secrets in the state. We need you, our friend, to help us raise awareness about The Learning Community. We ask that you share this report with people you think would make great champions of our work and our story. Invite your friends over for a tour. Whisper in someone's ear about us at your next party or gathering. The success of our next phase of development is up to you, our friend.

Our story is in your hands. Please pass it on.


Sarah Friedman and Meg O'Leary, Co-Directors



Zobong Norman, Chair, Board of Directors



Our mission is more than words
on a page – we live it every day...



At The Learning Community, we believe that literacy empowers each individual to have a voice, assume community responsibility and take social action. We expect leadership at every level. We grow teacher leaders, student leaders and community leaders.



Our vision is to catalyze change
beyond our four walls.

The Learning Community is transforming from a single charter school into an engine for broader reform by offering systemic, targeted and transformative professional development for educators, schools and districts. It is not enough for small centers of excellence to thrive in our urban communities. The Learning Community is proving that poverty is not a barrier to achievement, within our school and beyond our four walls.

We have built a true **community**
of **diverse learners.**

OUR STUDENTS

- We served 342 students in grades K-5
- 80% Latino, 15% Black, 5% White
- 100% have important stories to tell
- 21% live with one adult in the home



OUR FAMILIES

- Live in Central Falls (51%), Pawtucket (29%) and Providence (20%)
- 76% speak primarily Spanish at home
- 86% qualify for free or reduced-price lunch
- 100% attend parent conferences and 96% attend open houses

OUR TEAM

- 100% of classroom teachers are certified and highly qualified
- 79% of teachers have graduate degrees
- 44% speak Spanish and 35% are people of color
- 100% feel families and the community are supportive of our school

*source: Internal family intake data, Fall 2008;
internal SALT survey data, Spring 2008.*



“I am also learning. With the ideas that you are giving me, I am going to help my child.”
Claudette Chávez, parent

The Learning Community has the best family engagement of any public school in Rhode Island.

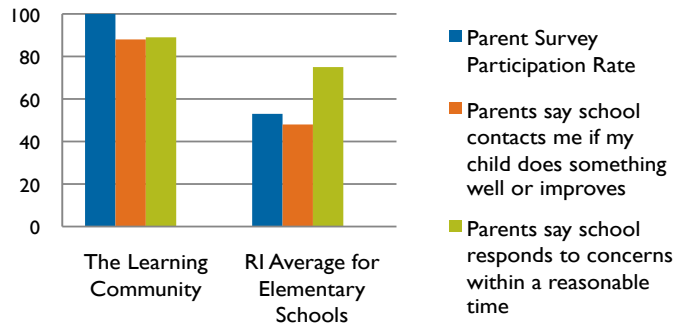
For the second year in a row, the Rhode Island Department of Education found that The Learning Community had the best family engagement of any public school in the state.

- For the third year in a row, we ranked first in the state for the percentage of parents who say the school calls when their child does something well or improves.
- Our school is again the state's highest ranking urban school for the percentage of parents who say the school "responds to my concerns and requests within a reasonable amount of time."

In 2008-09 virtually all families attended at least one Parent Cafe (92%), came to an open house (96%) and attended parent conferences (100%).

source: Information Works 2009, www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu/2009/; internal family data

Best Family Engagement in RI
Learning Community Compared to Other Elementary Schools



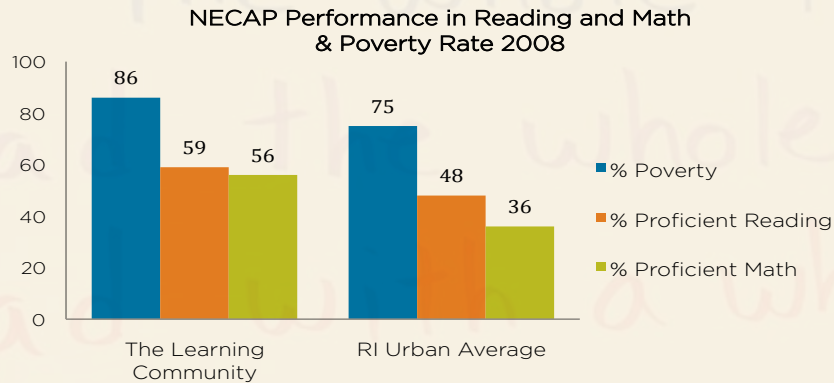
“Never have I once heard my children complain about getting up each morning to go to school. Each week brings more growth and learning and I owe it all to The Learning Community.”

Raymond Vargas, parent

Reading Workshop

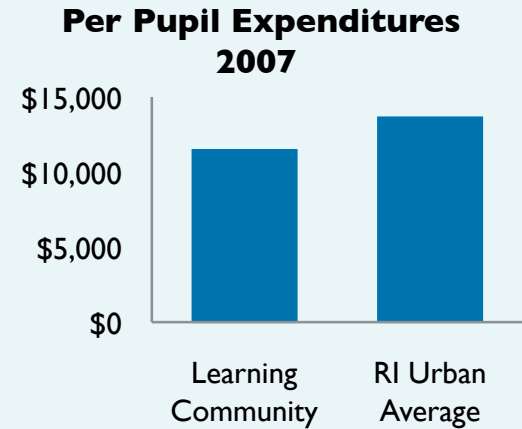
Our students continue to outperform other urban districts on state tests.

On average, The Learning Community outperformed other urban schools – even those with lower poverty rates – on state standardized tests. Once again our students outperformed students in our sending districts – Central Falls, Providence and Pawtucket.



source: RIDE www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/; October 2008 enrollment

The Learning Community is doing more with less.



The Learning Community spent less per pupil than other urban school districts in Rhode Island, yet our results far exceed the urban average.

source: Based on the most recent data available; In\$ite, RIDE www.ride.ri.gov/Finance/ride_insight/

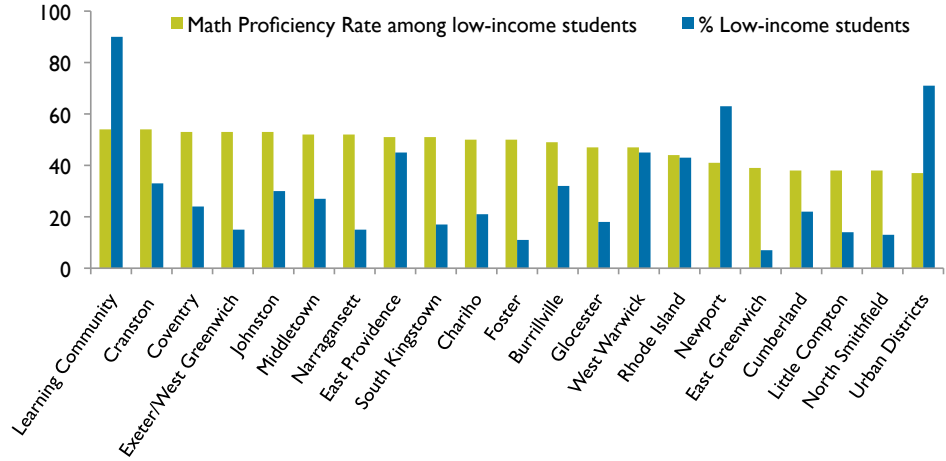




The Learning Community is closing the achievement gap.

The #1 challenge our nation's schools face is the considerable gap in performance between low-income students and all other students. At The Learning Community low-income students outperformed low-income students in 62% of the state's suburban districts in math.

Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students Proficient in Math and Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students Overall for Selected Districts Grades 3-5



Sources: RIDE www.ride.ri.gov/Assessment/; RIDE October 2008 enrollment

“

“We’re supposed to be worrying about our homework, but instead we’re worrying about our fathers and what is going to happen to them.”

4th Grade Student Erika Arias, speaking at the launch of the National Family Unity Listening Tour sponsored by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Erika’s father, who has lived in the U.S. for 20 years and is married to a citizen, is working to untangle issues with immigration.

“

“We fix problems. We inform our teachers and maybe we even fix it for ourselves. We’re a community. We help each other and other people. We get to change stuff all together.”

4th Grade Student Emely Landero speaking at the RI State House about leadership in honor of National Charter School Week, May 2009

We use our voices to speak out.

“

“When I was in second grade, we had nothing to do at recess and some of us needed something done about it.”

Student Jason Diaz describing how students spoke up about the need for change at recess. One student’s letter resulted in a \$100,000 grant to the school from Lowe’s. Families, team members and volunteers helped build the playground during the summer of 2008.

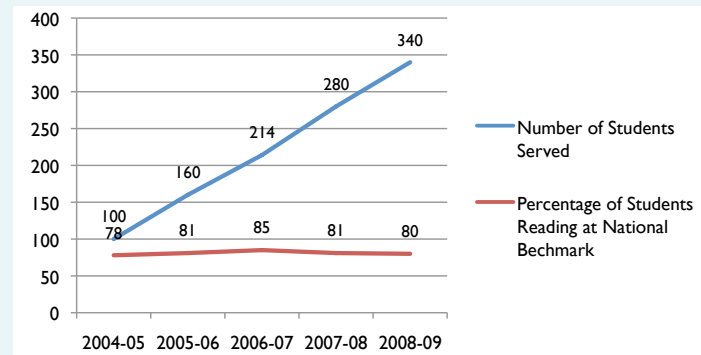


Adults at The Learning Community spoke out too. Team members visited with members of Congress to advocate for federal support for charter schools and dozens of family members wrote letters and visited the Rhode Island State House to talk about the importance of high quality public education for all children.



We have built replicable systems to support all students to reach their academic potential.

We have designed systems that ensure no child, not one, falls through the cracks, and that every child is working to his or her potential. Each quarter we assess every student's progress, and the results help us align our resources to offer immediate support to students – with dramatic results. In 2008-09 80% percent of Learning Community students were reading at or above the national benchmark. These results have remained steady over our last four years even as we have tripled the number of students we serve.



“Schools that are truly dedicated to excellent teaching at some point become deeply aware that it must be the work of many hands. You can’t have multifaceted reading instruction in a single teacher model, especially with students who are coming in with English language needs.”

Graham O’Halloran, Teacher

We are rethinking the way schools work to address the needs of a high poverty student body.



“Last year, I had a student who suffered a severe trauma two weeks before school started and was disrupting class a lot. I met many times with our team to talk about what was working and what wasn’t. By the end of the year, it was a major transformation. He started out as a high-need kid but he didn’t need nearly as much support by the end of the year.”

Lynn Lotierzo, Teacher

Every fall we review every classroom with our clinical team to discuss potential social, emotional or physical barriers that might prevent a child from learning. Then we respond rapidly. In October 2008 over one-third of our students were identified as having a social, emotional or physical needs significant enough to require attention or intervention. Within 3 weeks:

- 45 of the 120 students were referred to our social service partners
- 34 students were scheduled for a full Rapid Response Team session
- 37 were referred to our new on-site social skills groups run pro bono by our social service partners

In 2008-09 we launched a partnership with Gateway Healthcare to increase the on-site counseling available to students and families. In 2009, The Learning Community received a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation to support expansion of our social and emotional support systems. In addition to mental health support The Learning Community provides extensive referrals for legal, health, housing, food, child care and other services that confront the challenges of poverty.

Intensive professional development keeps us at our learning edge.

Our school is founded on a belief in continuous professional development. Every adult in our school is working at their “learning edge,” so that our students receive the best.

- We are connected to a national network of consultants, researchers and thinker who offer new ideas.
- We have nurtured a culture of continuous improvement where honest feedback and critique is offered and received and pushes us to excel.
- Our faculty has co-created a rigorous rubric for measuring progress.
- Our entire team engages in intensive facilitated planning during the summer and throughout the year. Teacher teams have 2.5 hours of common planning time during school hours each week.
- Our special education system was deemed one of the strongest state-wide in a 2009 audit by the RI Department of Education.

There is an enormous demand to be a part of The Learning Community.

STUDENTS: We have a waiting list of over 400 students. 31% of the Central Falls Kindergarten population applied to our school for 2008-09.

VISITORS: Over 250 people from education, business, social services and government visited during 08-09 to learn more about our work.

TEACHERS: In 2008 over 200 people applied for 5 teaching positions. More than 50% had graduate degrees.

“At The Learning Community I noticed the language students used in small group and whole group discussions. They were able to hold their own group discussions and to describe their thinking. I want to know more about the strong classroom routines that help create such great classrooms like the ones I saw today.”

Maurin Lawrence, Teacher, Corfu, NY



“The Learning Community is perhaps one of the best examples of public education in the state.”

Angus Davis, RI Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

The Learning Community marked 5 years of organizational success.

Each year our organization grows to support the dreams of our students, families and team members. In 2008-09 The Learning Community:

- Created a new 5th grade to serve our rising 4th grade students
- Launched our first annual giving campaign with support from our new development office
- Had our charter renewed through 2014 by The RI Board Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education
- Expanded our use of distributed leadership strategies with our growing team.




“The Learning Community functions the way prepared and dedicated educators who accept the charge of working within a community of fellow learners should, to guarantee a quality education to all its students. When I teach my university students about how a classroom and a school could function under the best of conditions, created by teachers, administrators, support staff, parents and the community together, I have this kind of school in mind. The Learning Community makes it real.”

*Polly Ulichny, Brown University Education Department;
Learning Community board member*





The Learning Community is a strategic reform partner in Central Falls.



“The Learning Community has had real success with Central Falls’ kids, with data to prove it, scores to prove it... We all opened our hearts to a collaboration that is working towards what’s best for kids.”

Dr. Fran Gallo, Central Falls Superintendent

In August 2008 we launched the Growing Readers Initiative, a long-term partnership with the Central Falls Public Schools to improve reading performance district-wide. This is a rare example nationally of a charter school and a traditional district collaborating to speed reform. The pilot phase of this work showed strong results within six months. By June 2009 86% of participating students in the pilot site were at or above the national benchmark in reading. This reflects 80% improvement since the initial September results. Based on the success of the pilot year, the initiative has expanded district-wide to work with all K-2 teachers in the district and will reach 800 students and over 40 teachers and specialists in 2009-10.



The Learning Community is having a broad impact on urban education.

It is not enough for small centers of excellence to thrive in our urban communities. The Learning Community is transforming from a single charter school into an engine for broader reform by offering systemic, targeted and transformative professional development for educators, schools and districts.

- Our professional development clients have included Sophia Academy, Hull Public Schools, Leominster Public Schools, Tufts University.
- With support from The Rhode Island Foundation we will launch the Tipping Point Cohorts, an innovative way for individual teachers to participate in intensive, grade-level professional development.
- Representatives of the school have informed state-level policymaking including serving on the RI Urban Education Task Force, and the RI Commissioner for Elementary & Secondary Education Search Committee.

“I think what you all are doing is remarkable and it is clear to me that The Learning Community really is a community! I couldn’t race back to my school fast enough to tell everyone what I saw and share all of the ideas that I took back with me.”

Jackie Cambio, ESL teacher, Gladstone Elementary, Cranston, RI





Experts say The Learning Community has built a very solid financial foundation.

In 2008, The Learning Community's financial systems, performance, and position were evaluated by the national Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF), which gave the school its highest rating, saying:

“The Learning Community has demonstrated both conservative and disciplined financial management and has managed to an annual surplus that has grown consistently each year. . . These accumulated surpluses have allowed The Learning Community to build a cash cushion, the stewardship and use of which is a key component of The Learning Community's financial durability and sustainability as it approaches the post-growth phase of its life cycle.”

Finances

Statement of Financial Activity Year Ended June 30, 2009

INCOME

Pupil Allocation	\$ 4,182,767
Federal Formula Funding* & Medicaid Reimbursement	\$562,723
Grants & Gifts	\$187,797
Interest Income	\$41,072
Earned Income	\$40,875

Total \$5,015,234

EXPENSES

Program Services	\$2,716,373
Administration & General	\$625,539
Facilities	\$904,534
Debt Service	\$140,788

Total \$4,387,234

** Federal funds are allocated to public school districts, including charter schools, for a variety of student support services. Allocations are based on student demographics including poverty.*





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DONORS, GRANTORS and PARTNERS 2008-09

Special Thanks

Learning Community Students, Families, and Team Members who make dreams real each and every day.

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The Rhode Island Foundation
Target Take Charge of Education
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U.S. Department of Agriculture/RIDE—Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program
U.S. Department of Education/RIDE—21st Century Community Learning Centers

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Brown University Elementary Education M.A.T. Program
Brown University Swearer Center for Public Service
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Lucy's Salon
Many people who helped build our playground
New Harvest Coffee Roasters
Olive Garden
Progreso Latino
Providence Children's Museum
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Rhode Island Health and Educational Building Corporation
Rhode Island League of Charter Schools
Rhode Island School of Design
Steven Triedman
Superintendent Dr. Fran Gallo
University of Rhode Island School of Nursing
What Cheer? Brigade



**Our future is bright and
our dreams are ambitious.**

“As a third grader my dream is to multiply faster than my dad. To make sure this happens I will not play with my shoelaces, and I will listen to Mrs. Payson a lot. When I grow up my hope is to be a doctor and go to the Olympic Games. I will go to medical school.” - *Stephen, student*



Join Us.

Prove that poverty is not a barrier to success.

Make a broad impact on public education.

Support the voices of students, families and teachers.

**Visit. Ask questions. Join our team. Donate.
Share this report.**

Call us or visit our web site to learn more about
being a part of The Learning Community.

www.thelearningcommunity.com

401-722-9998



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No report can convey the incredible
teaching and learning that happens
in our school each day. Visit us.

