

Katherine

Ms. Okun

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### The Learning Community: A New Start to Learning

Before The Learning Community existed, one of its co-founders Ms. Sarah Friedman, a worker at the Family Service Agency was going around Providence working in public schools. According to Ms. Cheryl Luciano, another Family Service Agency member, kids were graduating public high schools without knowing how to read. “Kids were falling through the cracks,” She said in her interview. Additionally, they witnessed teachers not having a voice, an unstable curriculum, and principals not managing schools correctly. That inspired Ms. Sarah, Ms. Meg, and Ms. Luciano to start a school where everyone had a voice. That included teachers, students, and members. Ms. Meg O’Leary worked with Ms. Sarah in 6 other public schools. In Ms. Meg’s interview she says, “there was some bad teaching and some good teaching.” They knew they needed to make a school where everything ran smoothly and had freedom to run things differently.

By 2001, Ms. Meg and Ms. Sarah had decided that they would make a school. Ms. Sarah came to Ms. Luciano and told her they were going to fill out an application to start a charter school.

According to an article by Peter Walters in 2004 of the Providence Journal, they wanted to serve kids from Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Providence. They believed that a strong curriculum of reading, writing, and math would let kids use their voices.

Soon, culture and race came into the part of history. In Ms. Luciano’s interview she claims that as a child her voice was not heard because of her race. In the application, Ms. Meg

and Ms. Sarah wrote that they wanted a school that supported high levels of learning. This included to give kids from different races, ethnicities, and income the education they deserved.

Before the founders of The Learning Community could open the school they had to overcome a few problems. First, the Board of Regents had to approve the school and its application. Also, they had to start recruiting children and families for the school. According to Ms. Luciano and Ms. Sarah in their interviews, they would stand in the sidewalk or in front of stores and get families to sign the application and talk to them about the new school.

Finally, the Board of Regents approved the K-1 charter school.

When the school first opened at the Pawtucket YMCA, they had to rent the rooms. Space was tight and they did not have many resources. Sometimes even the lunch time was an issue.

Ms. Laurie Sena, a founding teacher said she liked that “we were tight, close, like a family,”

Today in 2015, the school has grown to be a K-8 school with 120-person staff and over 500 hundred students. It keeps being the place where everyone has a voice and the liberty to learn as kids, teachers, members, and parents grow as leaders every day.