

Zamira

Mr. Mike

October 6, 2015

### Why Did The Learning Community Start?

In 2004, The Learning Community Charter School was started in Central Falls, Rhode Island. The co-directors of the school are Meg O'Leary and Sarah Friedman. They chose to start this school because they thought that every child deserved to get a fair and good education from some of the best teachers that come from the best schools. They were so devoted to the idea of their school that they wrote their charter application in four weeks! Sarah Friedman says it usually takes 1 to 3 years to write an application. But, they had a deadline. They had to write the application in four weeks.

The school originally opened in the YMCA with only kindergarten and first grade. The number of students they wanted to start with was one hundred and eighty children. But, they ended up with only one hundred. These two amazing women put so much work and so much effort into this school. They were so devoted to the school that, when it was first beginning, Meg and Sarah went into the streets of Central Falls and handed out flyers to any man or woman with children. They explained that they were starting a school in the YMCA. People were confused and had lots of questions because the school wasn't fully started yet. It took a lot of convincing, but they did get the word out to parents, dads and moms. According to the school's Mission Statement, this school was started to build teacher leaders, student leaders and community leaders, as well as helping the Latino community get an education for their children.

The Learning Community wanted their students to become successful in life and they didn't want them to fall behind like the kids highlighted on the Equity Gap chart. It says that 44% of Latino children fell behind or dropped out during the year 2000. But, during the years 2006-2010, the number of children that dropped out or fell to only 33%, which were the years that the LCCS first opened. Also, the number of Latinos that had their bachelor's degree or higher was only 11% during 2006-2010, again the year that LCCS was open. I also read an old Providence Journal newspaper article from when the school first opened. It states that they made this school available to kids in Pawtucket, Providence and Central Falls. The reason they decided to do this was because they wanted the school to keep kids in a stable school situation even if they moved.

To write this story we also had to watch videos and hear some interviews from people who helped start the school. One of the interviews I saw was from Janice O'Donnell, who is the President of the Board of Directors. She has been on the board for ten years helping with this school from the very beginning. She helped the directors get where they are today. Ms. O'Donnell says that she always supported the school. Ms. O'Donnell, Sarah and Meg all say that education should be fair. They agreed that all children should get a fair education even if they are in a low income community.

Another interview I saw was by a mother that was there in the beginning. Her name is Jossie Bentancourt. She is thankful to the school and signed up for LCCS because of her sister's recommendation. She says that she is, "very thankful for the school and how much they taught her son." Also, she talked about her experience in the YMCA and the experiences she and her son had. Bentancourt says that her son didn't know any numbers from 1 to 100 or how to read. But, she says,

“When he came out of the school, he knew all his numbers and he was an excellent reader. He was at the level he needed to be.”

She also reminds us that when the school first opened, there were white shirts for uniforms. Ms. Betancourt also explained that at the YMCA, they did not have a hot lunch at all. The only option the little kindergartners and first graders had were cold sandwiches and milk. But, in the end, she loved the school is thankful for their help. We enjoyed talking to Ms. Bentancourt. She says she will always love the school. She hopes they will open high a school.

One of the last interviews that I saw was with one of the co-directors, Sarah Friedman. We asked her lots of questions about why she started the school and why she continues working at the school. She explained to us that when she was first starting the school, she thought kids should have a fair education and learn everything that is up to date. The teachers should not get handed an old text book from 1980 and have to teach history from that old book. She believes that teachers and students should have the resources they need and books that are up to date. One of the things that Ms. Friedman told us was that kids who had an ethnicity or who were Black were often put in the lower performing classes, but the people who were white got placed in the classes with the better teachers and the better textbooks. She told us that she didn't think it was fair and thought everyone should get a fair education and the same textbooks and same teachers. She also travelled to lots of places to get ideas for her new school. Ms. Sarah thinks that it should be more than that; it should be visual and exciting; it should get kids excited to learn. So she took all those learning strategies from around the world and put them inside The Learning Community.

Which, brings me to my conclusion of why The Learning Community started. LCCS started to help kids get the best education, even if they are in not the best of cities and neighborhoods. Teachers should give kids the best, an education that supports their learning needs, as well as helping families in the Latino community, giving them and their children the best learning experience that their child can have.