

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Strategic Plan

Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts
Spring 2021

Members of the Charter Arts EDI Committee

Lauren Sheldon	Committee Chair & Administration
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Brian Weldner	Core Teacher
Jodi Fowler	Core Teacher
Paul Walsh	Artistic Teacher
Jen Weaver	Artistic Teacher
Stephen Krock	Support Staff
Georgia Bomgardner	Specialized Services
Zephyr Bryant	Student
Marlee Davis	Student
Trinity Jefferson	Student
Don Siler	Family
Ellyn Schindler	Family
Jasmine Woodson	Board of Directors & Community Member
Scott Blair	EDI Consultant & Community Member

Executive Summary

In June 2020, the Board of Directors for the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts (Charter Arts) unanimously passed a *Resolution on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*. While acknowledging the many barriers in our country that impede equity, diversity, and inclusion, the Charter Arts Board and administrative team firmly believe that a more diverse environment and inclusive culture in our school community will lead to better student outcomes artistically, academically, socially, and emotionally. As such, we are committed to creating more equitable and inclusive practices that value and celebrate the diversity of our student body and community we serve.

In the original resolution, the Board of Directors committed to:

1. Ensuring that the fostering, supporting and strengthening of equity and inclusion in the Charter Arts' programs, practices and policies becomes an institutional imperative
2. Continuing to develop our understanding of the inequities that policies, programs and practices may cause
3. Continuing to provide the leadership to make Charter Arts more equitable
4. Allocating and providing the resources needed to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion at Charter Arts and ensuring the development of a Diversity Plan that will serve to ensure the long term sustainability of this effort
5. Developing an organizational action plan through fiscal year 2020-21 that will create achievable and measurable goals and include quarterly reports to the Board on the progress of implementing this resolution

As a next step to support this resolution, the Charter Arts administrative team launched a series of four community focus groups in the fall of 2020. During these meetings, stakeholders, including students, parents, faculty, and staff shared their feedback, ideas, and concerns around four areas of focus: Curriculum & Instruction, Student Support, Hiring Practices, & Community Engagement.

We actively listened to each other share their reflections regarding the following questions:

- How can we make our curriculum more inclusive to include the voices, accomplishments, contributions, history of underrepresented people and/or to make our teaching practices more inclusive of a diverse student body?
- How can we make our community more inclusive of diverse perspectives and experiences? How can we grow as a school community to increase belonging and representation among all members of the student body (and parents, staff, etc.)
- How can we expand our recruitment efforts to encourage more faculty, staff, and visiting artists to apply that reflect our school community? How can we support and retain current diverse and culturally competent faculty? What supports belonging and a safe workplace for diverse faculty, staff, and visiting artists?
- How can we partner with our community to increase access to diverse voices and perspectives? What are we doing with and for the community that fosters mutual understanding and better outcomes for marginalized populations?

At the conclusion of these focus groups, we formed our EDI committee, which included administration, core and artistic faculty, support staff, students, parents, and community members. This committee met

monthly through the winter and spring of 2021 to create this EDI Strategic Plan. We began by analyzing school data including student and employee demographics, student performance data, student discipline data, and EDI survey results. Based on this data analysis, we conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of Charter Arts to identify internal and external forces impacting our EDI efforts now and as we look to the future.

As a committee, using the foundation of our focus group discussions along with the data and SWOT analysis, we identified four focus areas represented in the following plan:

1. Curriculum & Instruction
2. Student Support & School Climate
3. Employee Recruitment, Retention, & Advancement
4. Community Engagement

For each of these four focus areas, we developed overarching goals with specific, actionable, and measurable strategies to help us meet these goals over the next three to five years.

We know this work is paramount to the wellbeing of our students and community. We are committed to intentionally and consistently promoting positive change towards more equitable and inclusive practices in our curriculum, school climate, employee development, and community partnerships. We invite all of our stakeholders and school community members to join us in this work as together we recognize, honor, and celebrate the diverse cultures, identities, and perspectives that truly make us Charter Arts.

Goals & Strategies

Focus Area: Curriculum & Instruction

Goal 1: Create a more diverse and inclusive educational experience for all stakeholders.

Strategy # 1	Update all artistic and core curriculum (scope and sequences) to reflect diverse voices, cultures, and experiences.
Measurement	Progress monitoring of curriculum documents in shared drive.
Accountability	Artistic Directors, Department Chairs, and Co-Principals will provide updates to the EDI committee, Board of Directors, & school community annually.
Timeline	3 years - Each department will select courses to revise years 1-3.

Strategy # 2	Engage in collaborative work and/or action research between teachers and students within departments and student clubs highlighting diversity and equity (e.g. Black History Show, Hispanic Heritage Show, Visiting Artist Lunch & Learn, etc.)
Measurement	Frequency count of projects proposed, projects started, and projects completed with documentation of departments/students involved and topics addressed.
Accountability	Artistic Directors, Department Chairs, and/or designees
Timeline	3 years

Strategy # 3	Institute regular interdisciplinary, peer-to-peer observations for professional growth (e.g., learning from expert peers, observing in other departments). Include external professional development opportunities to support growth.
Measurement	Frequency counts of opportunities, reflection forms.
Accountability	Individual educators, evidence included in Danielson Domain 4 to be discussed annually during evaluation. Principal(s) assign peer partnerships.
Timeline	Annually beginning in 2021-2022

Focus Area: Student Support and School Climate

Goal 2: Cultivate a supportive, proactive, and responsive EDI climate for all stakeholders.

Strategy # 1	Develop an EDI student affinity group council (representatives from BSU, Spanish Club, Asian Pacific Islander Club, GSA, Student Council, etc.) to allow a space for student connections and collaborations and for leadership to hear the concerns and opportunities from our students.
Measurement	School Climate Surveys, student discussion & feedback, etc.
Accountability	Principal(s)
Timeline	Fall 2021 create EDI council, ongoing mid and end of year climate surveys

Strategy # 2	Offer a community engagement series, focused on EDI and/or highlighting a diverse range of speakers and ideas.
Measurement	Surveys at the conclusion of community engagement series and other school climate surveys
Accountability	Principal(s)
Timeline	Annually beginning in 2021-2022

Strategy # 3	Provide faculty and staff (counseling, departmental, etc.) with role-specific training on the subject of inclusivity and cultural humility in and out of the classroom, to better support the needs of our diverse student population.
Measurement	Surveys at conclusion of PD series and other school climate surveys
Accountability	Principal(s)
Timeline	Annually beginning in 2021-2022

Strategy # 4	Offer anti-racism/equity-minded education to all students, with a priority roll-out to 9th grade students and transfer students during new student orientation.
Measurement	Surveys at conclusion of training, school climate surveys
Accountability	Director of Admissions and designee
Timeline	Annually during New Student Orientation beginning in 2021-2022 and additional student programming Years 2 & 3 as needed

Focus Area: Employee Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement

Goal 3: Expand the recruitment, retention, and advancement of underrepresented and culturally competent professionals at Charter Arts.

Strategy # 1	Increase applicant diversity pool by utilizing an applicant management software system to track applicant data.
Measurement	Data from each job search
Accountability	Principal(s) and Superintendent
Timeline	Review annually

Strategy # 2	Hire a human resource specialist to ensure all job postings attract a diverse pool of candidates through broad postings to diverse locations based on analysis of regional demographic data.
Measurement	Data from each job search, analyze 1-3 year hiring trends in the school
Accountability	Superintendent
Timeline	Within two to four years

Strategy # 3	Enhance competitiveness of salary and benefits package to attract new employees and help retain high-achieving employees.
Measurement	Comparison of Charter Arts salaries & benefits package to NASD/BASD and other charter schools (as information permits)
Accountability	Superintendent
Timeline	Annually

Strategy # 4	Require all applicants to submit a Diversity and Inclusion Statement along with their resume and cover letter. Review the hiring process to ensure objectivity throughout the experience.
Measurement	Data from each job application
Accountability	Search committee chairs (Principal(s) or HR specialist once hired)
Timeline	Summer prior to the 2022-23 school year

Focus Area: Community Engagement

Goal 4: Leverage diverse community partnerships to improve the EDI school climate.

Strategy # 1	Continue and expand engagement with diverse partners in the Lehigh Valley and beyond, including for master classes and guest speakers, who also value and prioritize EDI.
Measurement	List of partnerships or opportunities
Accountability	Director of Institutional Advancement, Manager of Media & Communications
Timeline	3 years

Strategy # 2	Increase awareness of current and future community partnerships through effective external communication avenues (e.g., website, social media, local media interviews, etc.)
Measurement	Creation/enhancement of communication tools and mediums
Accountability	Director of Institutional Advancement, Manager of Media & Communications
Timeline	3 years

Strategy # 3	Leverage new and existing partnerships to attract a more diverse Board when Board seats are available.
Measurement	Diversity of our School Board
Accountability	Superintendent and the Board Development Committee
Timeline	Board seats are available.

Strategy # 4	Increase partnerships with local colleges and universities (i.e. HBCU's, etc.) to assist students with college planning and transitions (i.e. through dual enrollment programs once permitted by state law)
Measurement	Develop a clear and concise list of formal partnerships
Accountability	Principal(s) and Superintendent
Timeline	Annually