FAMILY GENTRIFICATION, STUDENT DIVERSITY, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF A PARENT-ORGANIZED CHARTER SCHOOL
by
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Family Gentrification, Student Diversity, and Academic Achievement:
A Case Study of a Parent-Organized Charter School

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In this study, I examine the history and effects of a parent-organized charter school in Jersey City, New Jersey in the context of the gentrification of the city. Based on ethnographic, survey, and school- and student-level achievement data, I analyze how the school influences equity and academic achievement. Using the concepts of cultural, economic, and social capital, I provide a comprehensive examination of how public school characteristics can attract or deter families from sending their children to particular schools.

At the charter school, students from most subgroup outperform the state-specific subgroup average. On average, students demonstrate a small amount of growth over time; however, there are wide racial and economic achievement gaps between subgroups. The gaps narrow to some extent in math, but during middle school the gap expand in language arts. Interestingly, free-lunch students in more economically balanced cohorts perform better than free-lunch students in less economically balanced cohorts.

The study has policy implications for both the state of New Jersey and Jersey City. At the state level, policies currently enable economic segregation in charter schools.
Both a lack of busing services and an early application deadline create an advantage for privileged families. Similarly, the policies disadvantage low-income families, who may lack social networks and charter school information. Therefore, this study illustrates the importance of equalizing access to charter schools for all parents.

This study also has implications for the Jersey City. Currently, Jersey City is assisting housing developments and local businesses with tax abatements and other incentives. However, the population Jersey City is attempting to attract will only remain in the city if the quality of the schools improves or school choice options increase. The focal school has successfully integrated families who would otherwise send their children to private school or leave the district. Without quality schools, wealthier families will leave Jersey City and its relatively high taxes for more affordable alternatives with better educational opportunities. Thus, the city’s already small tax base will become even smaller. More importantly, there will be fewer opportunities for low-income children to interact with middle- and high-income children and experience high-quality schools.
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I dedicate this study to the children of Jersey City who all deserve a thorough and efficient education.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

Research on school choice paints a less-than-rosy picture of charter schools as vehicles for desegregation. However, in this study I describe how a group of parents developed and maintained an economically, racially, and ethnically integrated alternative to the homogenous private and public schools in Jersey City, a city experiencing gentrification. In addition to documenting the creation of the charter school, I illustrate how the school’s demographic composition changed over time; explain why the school’s racial and socio-economic balance shifted; and describe the school, state, and family factors that influenced the demographic change. School factors include location, curriculum, parental involvement and recruitment. Recruitment efforts allow the school to market itself. The school’s location may be more or less attractive to parents based on its proximity to home; curricular and parental involvement approaches may appeal to some families more than others. State factors include: finances, lottery dates, and busing. Finally, parent factors include: social networking and school-feature preferences. In the research, I will link these factors to the school’s economic and racial student diversity.

Historically and currently, U.S. schools tend to segregate students based on socio-economic class and race. School segregation reflects de facto housing segregation. Not only does school segregation isolate children from peers of different backgrounds, but research also indicates that low-income urban students are more likely to attend low-performing schools than their wealthier peers. Differences in educational opportunities
contribute to the achievement gap between low- and high-income students. However, low-income students (defined as those eligible for free and reduced-price lunch) who attend middle-income schools (defined as those with less than 50% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch) perform better than their peers in economically segregated schools (Kahlenberg, 2002). One explanation of this pattern is that middle-income schools are less isolated from various forms of economic, social, and cultural capital. Clearly, schools with adequate economic capital can provide students with quality books and facilities (Odden & Picus, 2007). Greater economic capital also allows a school to attract highly qualified teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). In addition to economic capital, social capital contributes to students’ academic performance through the establishment of a supportive school culture in which students and parents work together, and cultural capital enhances the skills and tools required for students’ academic achievement. The economic integration of neighborhoods and schools could redistribute not only economic capital, but also social and cultural capital.

How have school districts fostered economically integrated schools? In some instances, voluntary magnet schools or demographic changes in neighborhoods may cause economic school integration. Over the past three decades, low-income Black and Latino urban neighborhoods have experienced gentrification and attracted middle-class residents. The subsequent influx of wealthier residents to the inner city reduces the economic segregation within neighborhoods and, in theory, establishes more opportunities for social integration in urban institutions, including schools. Unfortunately, research shows that gentrification has little to no effect on the integration of public schools, because most middle-income urban parents choose to send their children to
economically homogenous private or parochial schools. In some cases, middle-income students attend racially and economically integrated schools; however, students can then become stratified into academic tracks, resulting in racial and economic segregation within classrooms (Noguera, Yonemura, & Wing, 2006; Oakes, 2005). Therefore, the integration of a neighborhood often has not resulted in the integration of public schools.

Since the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, municipalities have devised policies to integrate schools by race. Some efforts, like school busing, resulted in white flight—parents either moving out of the district or staying in the district, but enrolling their children in private schools. More recently, many parents have begun to send their children to charter schools. However, public charter schools tend to be more segregated in terms of both race and socio-economic status than traditional public schools (Fuller, Gawlik, Gonzales, & Park, 2004; Orfield, 2006; Stuart Wells, 2002). Therefore, an analysis of the ways in which school choice can lead to school integration would add greatly to the literature on school choice.

Much of the segregation in charter schools results from district-level segregation. Examples in New York City and Newark include KIPP Charter School, Robert Treat Charter School, Academy Charter School, and North Star Charter School. The districts from which each of these schools’ student bodies are drawn are predominantly low income and African American. There are also many predominantly middle-class charter schools located in middle-class communities. Recently, a number of charter schools have opened in gentrified neighborhoods. These charter schools tend to disproportionately attract children from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, despite the lottery enrollment system.
In addition to middle-income families choosing charter schools, middle-class families in gentrified neighborhoods tend to utilize methods that enable the middle-class to monopolize charter schools, including middle-income exclusion, limited access, and racial preference. Amy Stuart Wells showed that middle-income parents use symbolic capital to establish exclusiveness in charter schools. The exclusiveness then appeals to the needs and interests of the upper- and middle-class (2002). Thus, through elite symbolism and tight social networks, middle-income parents take full ownership of charter schools, and their ownership deters low-income families from applying (Stuart Wells, 2002). Not only does this process result in economic segregation, but it also furthers gentrification by attracting more middle-class parents to the neighborhood. Karen Hankins’ research demonstrated that the creation of a charter school in a gentrified neighborhood assists the gentrifying population in forming a place-based community (2007). Therefore, charter schools not only educate children, but they also enhance the neighborhood by making it more desirable and in turn increasing property values.

Choice programs, like charter schools, do not demand economic capital from parents; however, public choice programs require more time and organizational skills than enrolling in a traditional public school. Enrolling a student in a charter school requires that a parent conduct research about various charter schools and apply to the charter school of their choice by the date of the lottery. Middle-class individuals frequently use the skills required for application in both their personal and professional lives. However, low-income parents have had fewer opportunities to develop these skills. Bell, 2005; Buckley & Schneider, 2005; Teske, Fitzpatrick, & Kaplan, 2007). In addition to lacking the necessary time and organizational skills, many low-income parents depend
on geographic proximity, word-of-mouth advice, and school familiarity in determining which school their child will attend (Teske, Fitzpatrick, & Kaplan, 2007). These criteria often exclude charter schools. Lastly, scholars have found that Black students are more likely to attend charter schools if they have a higher percentage of Black students than the more integrated schools the students are leaving (Booker, 2005; Weiher & Tedin, 2002). Therefore, either Black families are more attracted to the curricula and discipline of charter schools than other families in integrated districts, or Black families choose to send their children to charter schools because they are predominantly Black.

Between the fall of 1997 and the spring of 2009, Learning Community Charter School (LCCS) was located in a gentrifying neighborhood of Jersey City, New Jersey. The economic and racial diversity of LCCS distinguishes it from other charter school case studies. Due to the short history of charter schools, scholars have conducted limited research on them. The majority of charter school research focuses on racially and economically segregated schools. Scholars have predominantly examined exclusionary school mechanisms, but in the current research I illustrate some inclusionary school, state, and family factors that increase diversity. Therefore, this study will fill a void in the current charter school research by explaining which specific mechanisms may establish and maintain an economically and racially integrated charter school. First, the study provides a model of the structural, political, procedural, curricular, and economic features a charter school can incorporate to promote diversity. Second, the study explores how an economically diverse charter school influences the economic and racial achievement gap. Lastly, the study illustrates the ways in which the founding of a charter school in a gentrifying district both results from and facilitates the processes of gentrification. Family
gentrification, whereby middle-income parents assist in the processes of gentrification through the development of schools and child-friendly facilities, is a new field and currently there are no studies describing the creation of charter schools in the context of gentrification.

Research Questions

In this dissertation, I study the mechanisms in a charter school located in a gentrified urban neighborhood that enable and hinder the diversity of its student population. This study of Learning Community Charter School has eight purposes. First, the study describes the gentrification and housing re-development of Jersey City since the 1980s. Second, the study describes the founding and development of LCCS and its attempts to maintain an economically and racially integrated school. Third, the study documents the history of LCCS. Fourth, the study investigates how and why families choose LCCS. Fifth, the study examines whether or not the school has been successful in alleviating the achievement gap, and then explains what methods the school has used to alleviate that gap. Sixth, the study explores whether or not the school was once a vehicle for diversity and whether it is becoming less diverse. Seventh, the study examines whether or not the school’s community is inclusive and if its processes enable or hinder inclusivity. Finally, the study describes how its low- and middle-income parents differ in their social and cultural capital, relationships with the school, and preferences for educational practices.
The specific research questions are:

1. How does the gentrification of Jersey City relate to the history of Learning Community Charter School?

2. What is the history of LCCS?

3. How did the founding and development of Learning Community Charter School relate to the social, economic, educational and cultural interests of founding and subsequent parents? Why do parents from different racial, ethnic, and social class backgrounds choose to send their children to LCCS?

4. How has the demographic composition of the LCCS student body reflected to the overall demographics of Jersey City? How has the demographic composition changed? How has the school’s move to a less gentrified neighborhood in 2009 affected it?

5. How has LCCS influenced the racial and social class achievement gap both within the school and among the Jersey City district schools?

6. How have mechanisms in LCCS increased or decreased the diversity of its student population in terms of race and social class? For example, has the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch increased or decreased? Has the number of Black and Hispanic students increased or decreased?

7. Does the school’s autonomy as a charter school allow it to meet the social and academic needs of all the students?

**Definitions**

- Charter school: A public school charted and funded by the state and independent of the local school district in which it resides
- District school: A public school that is part of a local school district and funded by a combination of local and state dollars
- Parochial school: A private religious school either affiliated with a local diocese; independent of it; or funded through a combination of student tuition private contributions, and/or diocese funding
- Independent school: A private non-sectarian school that has a board of trustees and is funded by a combination of student tuition and private donations
- Low-income: Eligible for free or reduced-price lunch as defined by the United States Department of Education
- Middle-income: Ineligible for free or reduced-price lunch as defined by the United States Department of Education
• Economic diversity: Less than 50% of the student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Kahlenberg, 2001)

• Racial diversity: The district’s composition of Asian, Hispanic, Black and White students

• School Autonomy: freedom from district mandates

• Gentrification: A process in which a large number of middle-income individuals and families relocate to historically low-income neighborhoods. Usually this results in increased property value, and the out-migration of lower-income residents

Significance

This study examines whether or not an integrated charter school can narrow the achievement gap between low- and middle-income students. Richard Kahlenberg provided statistical evidence that low-income students perform better academically when attending economically integrated schools (2002, 2006). A recent study further supported this effect (Schwartz, 2010). However, little to no research has explored why low-income students attending economically integrated schools perform better than their peers at economically segregated, low-income schools. In addition to demonstrating why economic integration might be beneficial, this study intends to show whether or not a charter school, with more autonomy than traditional public schools, can sustain economic integration.

A great wealth and variety of research has explained why segregated neighborhoods and schools are detrimental to students. Essentially, educational segregation provides low-income children with different educational experiences and exposure to different forms of cultural capital than their wealthier peers, which, in turn leads to differential socialization. Both high school completion and job placement require
that students have both hard skills (analytical skills, math, reading) and soft skills (collaboration, cooperation, independence). Sociologist George Farkas argued that soft skills help students gain and maintain hard skills (2003). Therefore, good academic standing depends on students’ ability to acquire soft skills. Middle-income students have an advantage, because soft skills are part of their cultural capital, which is cultivated at home (Lareau, 2001). However, most low-income students must acquire soft skills through schooling or other social interactions.

Students’ soft skills can result from their home life or educational experiences. Lareau explained that middle-income parents cultivate soft skills in their children. In contrast, low-income minorities living in segregated communities obtain a different class of soft skills that are often not recognized by mainstream society (Wilson, 1997). Elijah Anderson argued that low-income minorities residing in segregated communities must act “tough” to regain protection and respect from their communities. In addition to family differences, schools in low-income areas socialize students with different forms of soft skills than middle-income schools (Anyon, 1980; Delpit, 1996). The hidden curriculum of predominantly wealthy schools prepares middle- and high-income students (Anyon, 1980) for managerial jobs requiring leadership skills. In contrast, the hidden curriculum at predominately low-income, urban schools, prepares low-income students for low-wage jobs requiring obedience (Anyone, 1980; Bowles and Gintis, 1976). This study examines whether an integrated charter school can play a role in eradicating the hidden curriculum and exposing low-income students to the soft skills and opportunities required for a diverse set of educational and job opportunities.
Exploring the history of LCCS provides an opportunity to understand how a charter school attracts and maintains a diverse study body. This information can inform policy in education, health, and the environment. Theoretically, the economic integration of public services increases the quality of services for low-income people. Middle-income parents with monetary resources choose the schools their children attend, the houses they will buy, and the doctors who will serve them. Some scholars argue that choice in itself advances the quality of services through competition (Chubb and Moe, 1990). This research examines how economic and racial integration might increase the quality of services for low-income families, and evaluates the possibility that integration could also limit their voices. The dilemma of economic integration is how to provide low-income parents with high-quality services, while preventing middle-income families from dominating these services and using them for their own advantage.

Although the focus of this study is an urban charter school, the study will be valuable for both urban and suburban policy. Just as cities are gentrifying, suburbs are diversifying. Therefore, suburbs will begin to experience more opportunities to form economically and racially balanced schools. Currently, urban public schools must learn how to integrate middle-income students and shortly suburban schools will need to learn how to integrate the needs of low-income students, some of whom are eligible for special education and English as a second language programs, into their school communities. Specifically, this study can inform educational policy at both the urban and suburban level. This study investigates how LCCS balances the needs of low- and middle-income students, and if so how. In addition, this study explores a model of how other services in
cities and the suburbs, such health and housing, can fairly and effectively serve a heterogeneous community.
Chapter Two: Literature Review: Mechanisms Promoting Diversity

Theories of social and cultural capital have influenced the research questions and literature review in this study. Social reproduction theorists argue that educational systems reproduce existing inequities in society via a variety of mechanisms including unequal resources; tracking and ability grouping; social-class based curriculum and pedagogy; and family, cultural, social, and economic capital (Sadovnik, 2007, Chapter 1). Many researchers have relied on social reproduction theories to explain the achievement gap between low- and middle-income students (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; McLeod, 1988). The concepts of social and cultural capital are essential aspects of these theories.

Social Capital

Social capital is a system of networks that enables families and individuals to gain access to resources. In education, social capital enriches students’ academic performances through family, friendship networks, social influence, peer influence, and social engagement. Social capital benefits students in various ways. Family social capital refers to the time and energy parents spend interacting with their children, monitoring activities, and enhancing child wellbeing and educational achievement (Coleman, 1990; Parcel & Dufor, 2001, p. 2). Parents can utilize social influence, a form of social capital, by becoming involved at their children’s schools. Teachers and administrators, who actively recruit and engage parents, can increase parental involvement (Epstein, 2001). Stuart Wells argued that enrollment and parental-involvement practices can “shape” who applies and remains enrolled in a charter school (Stuart Wells, 2002, p. 142). Through parental participation, middle-income parents can symbolically “own” the school. Living
in close proximity to a school is one way parents can obtain symbolic ownership of charter schools in diverse neighborhoods.

Sociologists disagree about the effects of social capital on students. Functional sociologists such as Coleman argue that social capital is essential for bringing people together in communities (Coleman, 1988). In contrast, conflict-social reproduction theorists, such as Noguera, argue that social capital provides middle- and higher-income families with advantages over low-income families and reproduces their social positions (Noguera, 2003). In terms of equity, middle- or high-income parents—who have more social capital than low-income parents—have more opportunities to learn about and apply to a school. Therefore, social capital enables access to choices. In some segregated urban schools, both charter and traditional, founders of programs and schools find that exposure to middle-income social capital is essential for the success of low-income children, especially African American students. Examples of programs enhancing students’ middle-income cultural capital include Uncommon Schools, the Harlem Children’s Zone and Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) (Whitman, 2008). In these programs, school leaders create schedules and routines that enhance students’ social capital and enable a climate in which students encourage one another to learn.

When low-income students attend economically integrated schools, the peer influence of middle-income students assists low-income students (Kahlenberg, 2001). Students with strong middle-income capital have the potential to act as institutional guides for low-income students. Therefore, economically integrated schools can potentially provide low-income parents with access to middle-income networks and
knowledge. This form of social capital exposes low-income students to middle and high-income cultural capital and institutional information.

An additional component of social capital is networking. Granovetter (1973) distinguishes between strong and weak ties in a network. Strong ties connect family members and weak ties connect individuals to coworkers, business associates, and school peers. Granovetter (1983) suggested that weak ties play an important role in the social mobility of low-income individuals. Weak ties expose low-income people to both institutional information and the dispositions of people with greater economic resources or more social connections; therefore, these ties provide low-income individuals with a better understanding of how middle-income people function and what cultural capital they use.

Within the student body, social capital influences students’ achievement and sense of belonging. Specifically, a school’s student composition influences students’ academic achievement. Rumberger and Palardy found that “students attending high schools with a 1 standard deviation higher value of school SES had achievement growth rates that were .11 of standard deviation higher” (2005, p. 2014). This relationship may be due to the influence of the middle-income students’ cultural and social capital. Middle-income students may bring high levels of motivation, self-discipline, teamwork skills, and confidence from their homes to the classroom (Farkas, 2003). All these traits are forms of social and cultural capital. These traits help middle-income students succeed academically. The less-advantaged students’ growth in achievement could result from newly internalized traits learned from their middle-income peers. Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch argued that “supportive ties with institutional agents represent a necessary
condition for engagement and advancement in the educational system” (1995, p. 117).

Institutional agents can be teachers and guidance counselors. These agents can assist students by discussing their goals and what steps they need to take to be successful. Another reason for the academic growth could be, as Rumberger and Palardy found, that “parents and students with the power to demand more challenging curriculum and command high expectations have schools with different ‘school cultures’ and ‘academic pressures’” (2005, p. 2022). In contrast, families of students residing in poor inner-city communities with large proportions of disenfranchised adults (due to past incarcerations or illegal immigrant status), are less likely to make demands on their schools. Additionally, families, with less educational attainment may be intimidated by teachers (Lareau, 2000).

Cultural Capital

Parents pass their social position on to their children by teaching them cultural capital—guidelines and practices that dictate how to act in social settings. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, 1983) argued that individuals from different social locations socialize their children according to their social class backgrounds. This socialization provides children with a sense of habitus, an overall social and cultural value system, such as preferences in food, art, books, and movies. Bourdieu described the ways that those with power determine what constitutes a highly valued activity. Building on Bourdieu, in Unequal Childhoods, Lareau showed how social class membership determines how parents organize their families’ lives. Lareau hypothesized that one’s economic position in society is closely tied to differences in the cultural logic of childrearing (Lareau, 2006). As a result, middle-income parents tend to use the method of
concerted cultivation in raising their children; conversely, poor and working class parents tend to use the methods of natural growth. Concerted cultivation requires the parents to organize and plan activities and play dates for their children. In contrast, natural growth places responsibility on children to organize their days and deal with their own conflicts.

Cultural capital can directly influence a child’s academic achievement by providing wealthy students with organizational and study skills. Farkas found a positive correlation between non-cognitive skills and increased academic achievement. He characterized these non-cognitive skills and traits, including completion of homework, class participation, effort, organization, assertiveness, appearance and dress, and a lack of absenteeism (Farkas, 2003, p. 96), as detailed habits and styles. “Non-cognitive” skills differ from cognitive skills measured by test scores (Farkas, 2003, p. 5). Similarly, Bowles and Gintis used the term “non-cognitive” traits and personality traits to characterize: “agreeableness, extroversion, work orientation, emotionality, and helpfulness” (Farkas, 2003, p. 3). In studying how non-cognitive skills are distributed, Reynolds and Turner found that, “overall, non-cognitive skills are significantly higher among girls than boys, foreign born youth compared to native born, those in mother-father families compared to most other family types, and youth in higher SES families as well” (Reynolds & Turner, 2002, p. 17). These skills and habits originate in the manner in which families are structured and organized. Therefore, economic status and family traits can foster certain personality traits and non-cognitive traits that are then either negatively or positively reinforced in the classroom.

Social and cultural capital can also influence a parent’s notion of a well-constructed pedagogy. For the purpose of this research, I will distinguish between two
types of pedagogies: progressive and traditional. Ellen Brantlinger characterized advocates of progressive pedagogy as believing that “students, when in a stimulating environment, naturally construct knowledge and acquire competencies and skills as they are needed or wanted from meaningful phenomena in their surroundings” (1998, p. 432). Thus, the school accommodates the learning style and level of the student. In contrast, in a traditional pedagogy is one where “the task of schooling is the transmission of traditional academic (mono-cultural) content from a knowledgeable person (a teacher) to one who knows less (a student)” (p. 431). This form of pedagogy assumes that the child will adapt to the school setting.

Another further distinction between the two groups of parents involves educational content. Progressive parents advocate for multicultural, child-centered, loosely framed, problem-oriented educational forms, while conservative parents favor a technical or classical curriculum in which knowledge is predefined. Basil Bernstein explained that family capital can support specific class-based pedagogies. For instance, there are social class assumptions regarding the two types of pedagogies. Building on Bernstein, Sadovnik’s research suggests that schools segregated by social class composition are more likely to have different pedagogic practices, with middle-income students receiving more invisible pedagogy and lower-income students more visible pedagogy (Sadovnik, 1995, p. 21). In the case of charter schools, parents’ pedagogical preferences may reflect their social class and determine their choice of whether or not to send their child to the school. These distinctions can result in social class stratification, which can lead to segregated schools.
Choice Literature

Charter schools are autonomous public schools. The autonomy of a charter school requires parents to utilize choice in both researching and applying to the school. This research evaluates the specific mechanisms used by a charter school to maintain socio-economic and racial diversity. The literature review begins by examining other forms of choice and teasing out specific conditions that promote or hinder economic or racial diversity. For example, certain conditions of private choice schools, such as tuition, attract wealthy parents and deter low-income parents from enrollment. Conditions influencing enrollment and attendance at charter schools include the school’s location, parental involvement opportunities, parental access to information, fiscal issues, curricula, and school culture. The autonomy of free schools and other forms of public choice allow them to establish features and programs that are different from the local district public schools. Do these features attract some parents and deter others? If so, why and can school choice promote equity?

A History of the Equity of Choice

The school choice movement began long before magnet schools, vouchers, or charter schools; it began with private academies for the elite and parochial schools for those fortunate enough to receive scholarships or financing. Historically, a family’s choice depended on their economic resources. Some families selected successful public schools through the purchase of houses in catchment areas with high tax bases and quality schools. Other families chose to live in neighborhoods with poorer public school choices, but could afford to send their children to private or parochial schools based on
reputation and cultural preferences. Therefore, choice is not a new concept for parents. Yet, the less wealth a family holds, then the fewer choices the family possesses.

Magnet schools, vouchers, and charter schools have theoretically provided all families with the opportunity to make choices without paying for them. The question many scholars pose is whether low-income families embrace the opportunities of public school choice to the same extent as middle and high-income parents. Before discussing the equity of charter schools, it is important to understand the history of other choice programs. Educational choices include: progressive private schools, free schools, public alternative schools, magnet schools, and charter schools.

**Progressive Private Alternative Schools**

The curricula and pedagogies of U.S. public schools were relatively similar during the nineteenth century and there were not many choices regarding schooling. This was not due to national or state control of schools, because individual local municipalities each controlled schools during that period. Despite the large number of local municipalities, the schools within them did not differ much from one another. Historian Diane Ravitch explained that throughout the nation “the American public school was remarkably similar across regions. Everywhere the goals were few and simple: Children learned not only the basics of readings, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic, but also the basics of good behavior” (Ravitch, 2000, p. 21). Until the twentieth century, in the majority of schools, the teacher was the main transmitter of the traditional knowledge of the “3 R’s.” Schools throughout the country were very similar in terms of both their curricula and pedagogies.
Challenging traditional methods of pedagogy and curricula, educational philosopher John Dewey developed progressive theories in which he argued for students to learn through active involvement and inquiry. In opposition to the traditional “chalk and talk” method, progressive education under John Dewey meant learning through doing. He tested his progressive theories through the creation of the private Laboratory School at the University of Chicago in 1896. Until Dewey’s time, the only choices available at schools were slight differences in content matter and religious orientation. However, Dewey transformed education by adding a new pedagogical choice for both educators and parents. This choice allowed parents, mostly affluent ones, to opt for student-centered progressive schools.

Since the creation of the Laboratory School, educators and parents have replicated Dewey’s practices by creating many alternatives to traditional public schools. At the turn of the century, many followers of Dewey founded progressive alternative schools, most of them private independent schools. In an attempt to maintain Dewey’s democratic intentions, some schools charged tuition often set to a sliding scale. However, schools like City and Country, the Dalton School, and Little Red School House appealed mostly to elites who could both afford them and believed in their methods (Cremin, 1958; Semel and Sadovnik, 1999).

At first, parents did not consider progressive alternative schools elite, rather they viewed them as experimental. Accordingly, only certain parents risked enrolling their children in these schools during their early years. In Caroline Pratt’s book, *I Learn from Children*, she explained, “it took time to become established, to reveal enough solidarity so that parents would risk our unconventional methods as against the familiar patterns of
the public school. The artists and writers were more willing to take a chance” (1948, p. 49). This account indicates that at first parents with alternative lifestyles and careers were most interested in the alternative education that progressive schools offered. This pattern is similar to processes of residential gentrification whereby artists are the first to move into undeveloped neighborhoods. Just like residential gentrification, shortly after the artists and musicians, elite parents became promoters and advocates of progressive pedagogies. In addition to the sliding scale for tuition, the location of progressive schools in un-established neighborhoods also facilitated a diverse enrollment. However, today most of New York City’s oldest progressive schools are located in wealthy neighborhoods and serve New York City’s elite and many like the Dalton are no longer progressive (Semel, 1992).

### Free Schools

The economic backgrounds of progressive students became more diverse in the 1960s. During this time period progressive education evolved. Public school systems began to offer progressive education through free schools (Newmann, 2006). Free or community schools are independent alternatives to public schools. Unlike progressive private schools, their public status meant there was no tuition requirement. Stulberg concluded that:

School founders focused on achieving freedom from the traditional authoritarian nature of public schooling. They embedded a philosophy of education in the understanding that children are naturally curious and driven to learn and the belief that schools should be a place to nurture children’s independence rather than stifle it. (Rofe and Stulberg, 2004, p.14)
There are many types of free schools. Some have less structure than others. For instance, there are examples of radical free schools modeled after Summerhill (Neill, 1996), with no homework or tests.

The geographic location of a free school influenced the socioeconomic and racial background of its student body. Stulberg argued that the majority of students enrolled in the free schools were White rural students (Stulberg, p. 14). However, free schools also enrolled many urban low-income students (Kozol, 1972). Both types of schools in the movement were intent on liberating students; however, Kozol argued that liberation meant different things for educators. In urban free schools serving predominantly Black students, educators worked to overcome oppression by teaching children “hard skills” like reading and math, which the public schools failed to instill. However, the rural free schools, which served predominately White and privileged students, intended to provide children with less authority and more freedom to construct their educations at their own pace. Kozol (1972) argued that poor oppressed children of Black and Hispanic heritage could not afford to lack authority and learn at their own pace. Kozol distinguished between the educational needs of poor Black students and privileged White students:

Many of the young newcomers to the Free Schools refuse to recognize the very considerable degree to which their own risk-taking attitudes and “anti-system,” “anti-skill,” “anti-credential,” confidence is based upon the deep-down knowledge that in a single hour they could put on shoes and cut their hair, fish out an old but still familiar piece of plastic from their pocketbook or wallet, go to Brattle Street or go to Bonwit Teller, buy new clothes and walk into a brand new job. Some of us do not like to let on that we have, in fact, the sense of intellectual and financial backup. The parents of poor children, however, recognize this sort of thing quite clearly. They also recognize, with equal clarity, (a) that their own children do not have protection of this kind, (b) that, without a certain degree of skillful and aggressive adaptation to the real conditions of the system they are fighting, they
will simply not survive, (c) that much of the substance of the white-oriented counter-culture is not of real assistance in that struggle and in that adaptation (Kozol, 1972, p. 37)

Kozol illustrates how providing low-income students of color with total freedom in the classroom can actually harm them academically. Black students do not have the same “intellectual and financial backup” (Kozol, 1972) as the more privileged White students. Therefore, although both rural, White parents and urban, Black parents sought freedom from the public system, they sought the freedom in different ways. (See for example, descriptions of Myles Horton’s Freelander School [Horton, Kohl, and Kohl 1998] and Eliot Wigginton’s Foxfire School [1972]). Thus, the simple construct of “freedom” differed according to parents’ economic and racial backgrounds. In the 1960s, an integrated free school may have experienced some philosophical obstacles. Although parents enjoyed the same freedom from the public system, they passed the freedom down to children differently. Do parents’ understandings of freedom differ by race and class today? Should parents from different backgrounds rely on different methods for academic success?

Today, there are many free schools in both cities and rural communities. One obstacle to free schooling, both historically and currently, is finding adequate financial support. Many free schools have closed due to this barrier. In the early 1970s, Bill Owens, described by Kozol as a militant Black Bostonian, began to fight the state of Massachusetts in court for money to pay for his children’s free school education. Owen’s argument was that the public schools were failing to educate his children. He concluded that it was only fair that the state pay for the education of his children at a free school (Kozol, 1972, p. 119). This logic supports charter school proponents’ argument that
school choice provides an alternative to failing district schools and that competition will
improve the district schools. In New Jersey, funding is an issue for charter schools,
because the state does not allocate the same amount of funding for charter schools as it
does for district public schools.

_The Public Alternative School Movement_

Another policy initiative mirroring the free school movement was the public
alternative school/Open Education movement. Timothy Young compared the Open
Education movement to the philosophy of progressive education because both approaches
assume “children were curious, responsible, and motivated to learn and should be
allowed to develop at their own rates” (Young, 1990, p. 11). The number of public
alternatives in the United Stated grew from 464 in 1973 to about 5,000 in 1975 to 10,000
Young argued that before alternative schools,

> We believed everyone should be taught in the same way using a common
> curriculum. We thought all schools should be alike. We thought that children and
> their parents were incapable of making decisions about what and how they
> learned. (Young, 1990, p. vi)

The large number of parents who have opted out of the public system, either through
private or public choice, illustrates that families seek different opportunities.

A leading force behind community schools in New York City was the Black
nationalist movement. This movement challenged _Brown v. Board of Education’s_ goal of
desegregation (Stulberg, 2004). According to Diane Ravitch, militant leaders like Rhody
McCoy and David Spencer
saw the school not just as a place to transmit skills and literacy, but as the institution, which might generate a new sense of self-worth and community among blacks; where black and Puerto Rican children could receive a positive self-image by contact with adult models of their own background; where parents could gain a sense of dignity by playing a part in their children’s schooling; where jobs and contracts could be consciously used to improve the economy of the surrounding neighborhoods. (2000b, p. 346)

At such a school, the community would take ownership of its school, and the school would be accountable to its community.

Similar to free schools, public alternative schools have served a variety of students with varying needs. Between 1982 and 1988 the number of students characterized by national alternative public school personnel as “low achievers,” “disruptive,” or “turned off or disinterested” increased from 20% to 53% (Young, 1990, p. 20). Therefore, public alternative schools are servicing a particular group of students who are dissatisfied with the regular public schools. Parents of at-risk students are choosing to send their children to an alternative school. In addition, free schools and alternative schools have historically attracted Black families. Similarly, charter schools attract a large population of Black families.

*Magnet Schools*

Until the establishment of magnet schools, the issues of racial diversity and choice operated in conflict with one another. Some Black families chose schools with Black teachers and many White families fled cities for racially homogenous schools. In the 1970s, there was a considerable degree of racial prejudice and racial diversity was not necessarily a desirable educational feature for parents.
In the 1970s, responding to *Brown v. Board of Education*, many districts, either by force or mandate, attempted to desegregate their schools. Desegregation was a slow process and, in many cases, required court intervention. In 1971, in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, the Supreme Court permitted the federal government to force mandatory busing in Charlotte, North Carolina and other cities that had de jure school segregation. The *Swann* decision primarily influenced southern states, although some northern cities also chose busing as a method of desegregation. Forced busing resulted in White flight and racial aggression. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, racial fights between students resulted in the city temporarily closing its high schools (Petterson, 2001, p. 158).

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools experienced integration after a period of collaboration between families and the school district. The district had a short period of integration in the schools in the 1980s. According to Mickelson, the city “accomplished this feat peacefully through the efforts of a broad coalition of black and white citizens in cooperation with the leaders in business, education, and the civic community” (Mickelson, 2003, p. 1518). Similarly, Rossell argued that in lieu of school busing, some districts utilized magnet schools as an incentive for voluntary school desegregation. Similar to free schools, parents had the option to choose schools based on the extracurricular or specialties of the schools (1992). Rossell described magnet schools—public schools with the intention of integrating students from different residential areas—as a carrot policy in contrast to school busing, a stick policy (1992). Magnet schools incorporate the notions of choice into their structure to encourage parents to join racially integrated schools.
Proponents hoped that by establishing well-funded inner-city schools with academic specialties or amenities, suburban families would voluntarily send their children to magnet schools. As a result, the schools would gain economic and racial balance. There are differing opinions as to whether magnet schools succeeded in integrating students. Patterson referred to some magnet schools as, “elitist ‘islands of quality education that failed to enroll many inner-city minorities and that perpetuated school segregation by class as well as by race” (Patterson, 2001, p. 186). The elitism of magnet schools could aid in their ability to integrate students from different backgrounds. Rossell found that “the selectivity, or perceived selectivity, of magnet programs is more important to many parents than the (school’s) specific theme” (1992). Boston, Massachusetts and Hartford, Connecticut provide examples of successful magnet programs that achieved both diversity and academic excellence.

Originally, Boston was an example of a failed system of integration. In Common Ground, Lukas illustrated the difficulties that an Irish American family, an African American family and an affluent white family experienced during school busing. However, Boston’s second school integration program incorporated Russell’s notion of a carrot—an incentive for enrollment. For more than 45 years, the Metropolitan Council on Educational Opportunities Inc (METRO) program has integrated Boston’s schools by sending about 3,300 urban students, who are predominately African American and Hispanic, to attend public schools in 36 suburban districts (Alves and Willie, 1987; Hendie, 1997). Therefore, the suburban schools often acted as magnets for urban students.
Similarly, in Connecticut, the state established inter-district choice, magnet schools, and financial incentives for integration. Kahlenberg described the purpose of Connecticut’s Project Concern:

Hartford's two-way transfer program is meant to overcome the limitations of traditional city-to-suburb transfer programs. As more suburban kids move into Hartford magnets, the Open Choice system is expected to function better because the movement of students into the city will create space in suburban schools (Kahlenberg, 2003).

Similar to alternative schools and free schools, magnet schools attract families based on their specialties. However, unlike freedom and alternative schools, magnet schools intend to maintain either economic or racial integration.

Charter Schools

Charter schools represent the most recent form of public school choice. Since 1991, there has been an extensive debate regarding the educational quality and equity of charter schools. Research has often been inconclusive, because charter school legislation and implementation varies between states. What distinguishes a charter school from a regular district public school is autonomy. In exchange for freedom from state and local control, a charter school must write a proposal outlining its plan to increase student achievement and to gain a charter from the State (Stuart Wells, p. 6). However, charter plans differ greatly from school to school. The plan could include innovative instructional techniques, distinct discipline policies, character education, adjustments in governance, incentives for achievement (like merit pay), or an intimate small-school culture. Depending on the state charter law, charter schools receive different amounts of local and state financial support, autonomy, facilities aid, and oversight.
According to charter school advocates (Stulberg, 2004), the advantage of charter schools is that they have autonomy from the public district and its mandates. However, charter schools are still required to alleviate the achievement gap and teach the state standards. Therefore, unlike free schools and the open school movement, charter schools have a balance of autonomy and accountability. Theoretically, the fact that a parent chose the school could influence the student’s motivation to learn at the school and his degree of at-home support. However, the question is whether choice in the context of a diverse district with numerous cultures, races, religions, economic groups, and ethnicities will result in further segregation. The free school movement demonstrated that the educational philosophies of parents and educators differed according to race. Do specific discipline strategies, pedagogies, curricula, and school cultures attract parents of distinct racial or economic backgrounds? Can economic diversity improve the educational quality of low-income students?

What mechanisms allow a charter school to act as a vehicle for both racial and economic integration? Stuart Wells argued that both state laws and founding parents influence the diversity of a charter school. Her findings showed that certain state charter laws, such as failing to provide transportation and allowing admission requirements, curb any charter school’s chances for diversity (2002, p. 16). State mandates differ according to each state’s charter school laws. Forty states currently have signed charter school laws (http://www.uscharterschools.org). Of these 40 states, 17 specify who should pay for and provide transportation. As of 2005, nine states required the resident school district to pay for transportation, six states required the charter school to pay, and two states allowed the charter school to choose between the district and itself. In addition to the 17 states
specifying who should pay, 11 states require that the charter school describe the school’s student transportation plan in their application (http://www.uscharterschools.org). For additional information about state charter school transportation laws see Appendix G.

New Jersey is one of the 17 states that require charter schools to specify who pays for transportation and one of the 9 states in which the resident school board is required to pay for the transportation (N.J.6A:27-3.1). According to Stuart Wells, New Jersey’s law should favor school integration and attract low-income parents who otherwise could not afford to pay for transportation (2002). However, in many New Jersey cities, districts provide public bus tickets rather than buses. In urban areas, districts find it more affordable to give out public bus tickets than to contract with a public school bus company. However, public buses do not have strict time restraints that ensure students arrive at school in a timely manner and some parents may view public buses as dangerous.

Additionally, Stuart Wells found that some charter school mechanisms deter or exclude low-income parents. Examples of these mechanisms include recruiting a desirable population, establishing an elite image of the school, or requiring a parental participation contract (Stuart Wells, 2002, pp. 146-148). The ability of a charter school to recruit and maintain a diverse population can result in a more integrated population than the public zoned schools and according to scholars like Kahlenberg, can assist in alleviating the racial and economic achievement gap (2004).
The Achievement Gap

In theory, diversity is a positive ideal for education; however, does diversity help Black, Hispanic, and low-income students attain high academic achievement? Current empirical evidence shows both economic and racial achievement gaps in U.S. schools. In 1999, the achievement gap between African American nine-year olds and white nine-year olds was as wide as 35 points for reading and 28 points for math (Haycock, 2009). Socio-economic disparities contribute to the racial achievement gap. The Education Trust asserted that, “According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of all children younger than 18 living in families, 27 percent of Hispanic children and 30 percent of black children live in poverty, compared with about 13 percent of white children” (Achievement Gap, 2004). Race and class are often conflated. Therefore, in addition to a racial achievement gap, there is also an economic achievement gap. The economic achievement gap influences not only low-income students, but also the entire school composition. According to National Center Education Statistics (NCES):

In 2005, the average score on the 4th-grade mathematics assessment decreased as the percentage of students in the school who were eligible for the school lunch program increased. For example, students in the highest poverty public schools (those with more than 75 percent of students eligible for the school lunch program) had an average score of 221, compared with an average score of 255 for students in the lowest poverty public schools (those with 10 percent or less of students eligible). (NCES, 2006)

The NCES data confirm Kahlenberg’s finding that not only is there a correlation between a student’s socio-economic status and achievement, but there is also a demographic effect by which students attending schools with fewer low-poverty peers perform better than students attending a school with a higher percent of low-poverty peers.
However, evidence indicates that the national achievement gap is narrowing; by 2004, the gap in reading dropped from 35 points to 26 points, while the gap in math dropped from 28 points to 23 points (Haycock, 2009). Researchers have argued that the achievement gaps between wealthy and poor students and between White and Black students result from a combination of both in-school and out-of-school factors. Explanations for the achievement gap point to parenting, health disparities, and housing. For instance, Lareau found that parenting styles influence students’ dispositions and academic performance (2002). Additionally, lower income students are generally in poorer health than wealthy students (Rothstein, 2002, p. 37). These health disparities result in high absenteeism and other obstacles to academic achievement. In addition to differences in parenting styles and health, low-income students are more likely to reside in hyper-segregated environments (Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1996). Segregation and high levels of residential mobility have an adverse effect on students’ overall wellbeing and academic achievement.

According to Lareau (2006), middle-income parents utilize the method of cultivated culturation, whereby they prepare children to be inquisitive, motivated, and rational students. In contrast, low-income parents depend on natural growth, which prepares children to be obedient and orderly. In addition to preparing students for specific dispositions, social class also influences the opportunities children have to engage in cultural activities. Lareau found that middle-income parents invest a great deal of time and money in after-school activities including sports, music, dance, and other enrichments. These enrichment activities provide middle-income students with cultural capital and an advantage over their low-income peers. In Home Advantage (1989),
Lareau’s compared how working-class and middle-income parents help their children with school. Results showed that the type of help and number of resources available to parents affects the quality of help. Working-class parents are often intimidated by teachers and were unlikely to challenge them. Working-class parents desire academic excellence, but do not necessarily have the tools to assist their children and do not feel it is their place to intervene in educational matters. However, can working-class parents learn to be more active from middle-class parents? Additionally, Lareau (2006) noted that middle- and working-class parents have different understandings of the role of parents and schools. Working-class parents believe that it is their role to get their children ready for school and then it is the school’s responsibility to educate them; middle-class parents believe it their role to be actively involved in their children’s school and education (Lareau, 1989).

Some research indicates that health disparities may account for up to 25% of the achievement gap between Black and White students (Currie, as cited in Rothstein, 2002). Not only are low-income students less likely to receive quality healthcare, but they are also more likely to have anemia and uncorrected problems with vision and hearing (Rothstein, 2002). In addition to these problems, low-income and minority students residing in cities have higher rates of asthma and diabetes than their middle-income peers. Rothstein observed that “one in every four children in Harlem suffers from asthma, a rate six times as great as that for all children”(Rothstein, 2002, p. 40). Many environmental conditions increase a child’s likelihood of becoming asthmatic, including proximity to high-traffic neighborhoods or industrial plants. Because these areas are less
expensive in a city, low-income children are more likely than their wealthier peers to reside in them.

In addition to the environment causing health problems, children living in low-income neighborhoods experience higher rates of mobility. With the rapid gentrification of urban areas, low-income children renting in “up and coming neighborhoods” are likely to experience rent increases and, as a consequence, housing displacement. Residential mobility accounts for 14% of the achievement gap between Black and White students (Rothstein, 2002, p. 46). Therefore, if students had more stable housing, they would perform better in school. In some cases, displacements can result in homelessness, which is even more burdensome for a child. Another obstacle low-income students encounter when living in hyper-segregated neighborhoods is a high crime rate (Massey and Denton, 1998; Wilson, 1997). The parenting, health, and environment of a child all play a large role in the student’s education. Therefore, low-income children need ample resources and services in order to succeed as students.

In addition to out-of-school factors, the school also plays a role in potentially alleviating the achievement gap. The school factors that influence student achievement the most significantly include leadership, curriculum, class size, teacher quality, school size, professional development, and school culture. Teacher quality has a major influence on student achievement. Many urban districts have difficulty recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. However there are debates as to which programs and policies influence these policies in the most positive manner.
Charter Schools: Narrowing or Expanding the Achievement Gap?

Some scholars claim that charter schools’ autonomy and innovation could potentially alleviate the racial and economic achievement gap. However, the research on charter schools alleviating the achievement gap is mixed. Charter schools vary so greatly across districts and states that researchers find it difficult to conclusively argue that charter schools, as a whole, are capable of diminishing the racial and economic achievement gap. In addition to the variety of charter schools within and across states, there are other obstacles to understanding whether charter schools can improve achievement. The enrollment data used to analyze achievement at charter schools may be misleading. For example, there is no way to account for selection bias and quality test score data is hard to obtain (Miron & Nelson, 2004). In addition, because of the absence of student-level data, except in a small number of states, longitudinal analyses are all but impossible. Therefore, most empirical studies use school-level data, which is far less valid as a means for assessing differences between charter and district public schools (see for example, Miron & Nelson as cited in Bulkley & Wohlsetter, 2004).

Before comparing the achievement scores of charter school students to their public school peers, researchers need to determine if the very nature of a charter school establishes a selection bias. Charter school proponents argue that students entering charter schools are academically below their peers, while opponents argue that they are higher achieving than their peers. These opponents claim that charter schools “cream” the brightest and most motivated students.
Identifying the types of students attending charter schools is an important part of any charter school research. Utilizing national fourth grade data from a 2003 National Center for Education Statistics Study, Carnoy, Joacobsen, Mishel, and Rothstein (2006) found that in urban fringe areas similar to Jersey City, 29% of students in charter schools were low income (as defined by eligibility for free lunch programs) compared to 36% of regular public school students. Racially, 72% of charter school students were Black and low-income compared to 83% of public school students. Therefore, in urban fringe areas, fewer Black students attend charter schools than public schools. However, the picture is different for low-income White students: 16% of charter schools students were White and low-income compared to 17% of public school students. Therefore, the national findings show that in an urban fringe area similar to Jersey City, fewer low-income students and Black students attend charter schools than public schools.

The disproportionate proportion of low-income students attending charter schools could be due to many factors including social networks or preference, whereby highly motivated and engaged parents are attracted to the notion of an autonomous school. This selection bias creates an obstacle for researchers attempting to document a charter school effect. A charter school effect would indicate that the internal mechanisms of the charter school influence a child’s academic performance. Charter school opponents argue that any increases in achievement at a charter school have more to do with the student population than the charter school’s internal mechanisms. In another study, Rothstein et al. (2005) analyzed the demographics of 75% of the nations’ charter school students in 13 states to illustrate that charter school students are more advantaged than public school students. The research showed that “charter school students from racial or ethnic
minority groups are probably at least as advantaged as regular public students from the same racial or ethnic groups and, in many cases, probably more so" (Rothstein et al., 2005, p. 45). Therefore, a selection bias in the types of students attracted and able to apply to a charter school weakens the argument that there is a charter school effect.

Another explanation for charter school students exceeding the achievements of their public school peers are the advantages that may come with either the higher social class of charter school students or the preferences of charter school parents. In some cases, research shows that charter school students have more educational advantages than their public school peers. These advantages include academic readiness and parental support. However, charter school opponents need to distinguish between different types of charter schools. The urban education literature shows that there are a number of successful charter schools serving primarily Black and low-income students that are improving both academic achievement and students’ chances of attending college. For example in No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning, Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom claimed that KIPP’s students are more disadvantaged than students in comparable regular public schools and yet after attending KIPP, the students’ test scores improved at a higher rate than their public school peers (Thernstrom and Thernstrom, 2003). However, Rothstein and colleagues dispute this claim. First, the entering fifth grade KIPP students retake their fourth grade exam in the beginning of fifth grade. Rothstein and colleagues claim that by administering the test at this time, KIPP’s published pre-KIPP scores are not accurate, because they do not account for the summer
setback (Rothstein, 2005, p. 52). Further, the district “teachers told us either that they referred students who were more able than their peers, or that the most motivated and educationally sophisticated parents were those likely to take the initiative to pull children out of the public school and enroll in KIPP at the end of fourth grade” (Rothstein, 2005, p. 58).

The creaming effect is just one problem in measuring the charter school effect. Measurement is another problem. Test results, unless they are assessed at the student level, do not effectively measure progress. Therefore, the scores may indicate the creaming of advanced students, rather than a charter school effect. Miron and Nelson analyzed studies using three criteria: design quality, number of years of student achievement observed, and the range of grade levels for which data was analyzed (2004, p. 166). The authors argued that charter school research is in its infancy and as studies improve in quality and design, achievement results will be more conclusive. Until then, scholars must carefully scrutinize any results whether in favor or against charter schools.

One effective method of assessing a charter school effect is to compare enrolled charter school students to wait-listed students. This method controls for parent motivation, which may differ between charter school parents and public school parents. Hoxby and Rockoff conducted a study of a Chicago charter school in 2004; their treatment group was composed of “lotteried-in” students (those who received placement at the charter school), and the control group was composed of “lotteried-out” students (those who were on the waiting list) (Hoxby & Rockoff, 2004). Among students who

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applied for kindergarten through third grade, there was a positive and statistically significant charter school effect (Hoxby & Rockoff, 2004, p. 26). However, for students who entered the school after fourth grade, there was not a statistically significant positive charter school effect.

Unfortunately there is insufficient data on charter schools, and much of it is relatively new, so there is no definitive evidence on achievement in charter schools compared to public schools. In theory, charter schools have a lot to teach the public schools; however, until state tests are standardized and methods are developed, scholars still do not know much about charter schools in terms of their success in narrowing the achievement gap. This study intends to enhance the literature on how charter schools alleviate the achievement gap. I use student level data from both the district public school and the charter school to track student progress by student background and years attending the school.

The current debate surrounding charter schools involves neo-liberals and charter school critics. Neo-liberals have influenced federal programs such as Arne Duncan’s Race to the Top program, which requires states to expand charter schools; Value Added Models of assessment. In addition to private philanthropists such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation and the Walton Foundation have championed these neo-liberal reforms. The media has used the successes of some charter schools, like Promise Academy and KIPP, as models for the national charter school movement. However, Rothstein, Carnoy, Jacobsen and Mishel (2005); Raymond (2009); Carnoy (2005); Baker (2010b); and Rothstein and Ravitch (2010) have all provided empirical
evidence that charter schools are no better than the traditional public schools in educating low-income students.

Charter Schools: Equal Opportunities or Creaming?

Current research indicates that in general charter schools have higher rates of both racial and economic segregation than public district schools (Fuller, Gawlik, Gonzales, & Park, 2004; Stuart Wells, 2002; Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2010). If this is the case, then charter schools are contributing to the re-segregation of Hispanic and Black students living in economically and racially diverse districts. Similar to public schools, there are a great number of segregated charter schools, because of their establishment in historically segregated cities like Baltimore and Newark. In these cases, the student demographics merely reflect the segregated housing environment and not parents’ preference for segregation. In many cases, de facto housing segregation causes educational segregation.

Currently, there are multiple theories emphasizing the role of race- and class-based preferences in determining the level of school segregation resulting from parental choice. These theories include liberation, neutral ethnocentrism, and outgroup avoidance theory. Liberation theory argues that choice reduces racial segregation in schools by providing families access to schools that are more integrated (Archbald, 2003). Neutral ethnocentrism argues that parents of all races seek out educational environments where their students can be with students of similar backgrounds. Outgroup avoidance theory (Saporito, 2003) explains why a high percent of advantaged families opt out of the
district public schools — choice makes it easier for White or otherwise advantaged parents to avoid schools with high proportions of minorities

As argued above, studies show that school segregation by poverty or race adversely affects student achievement. Kahlenberg, a proponent of economic integration, argues that charters hold the potential to create more economically and racially balanced schools (Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 188). However, the state and local governments must implement interventions to achieve diversity and overcome obstacles like housing segregation.

Since the Supreme Court’s decision in Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District, 05-908, 2007, the racial integration of public schools is no longer on the national agenda. The court decided that racial quotas used to encourage integrated schools are unconstitutional and that racial diversity in public high schools was not a compelling interest that could justify the admission of students based on race. (Stuart Wells et al., 2004). This decision ignored years of research and documentation indicating that racial integration improves the educational quality of schools for students of color (Amicus Curiae Brief in Support of Louisville School District, by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 2004). In his opinion, Justice Kennedy explained different methods school districts can use to achieve the goal of racial diversity:

School boards may pursue the goal of bringing together students of diverse backgrounds and races through other means, including strategic site selection of new schools; drawing attendance zones with general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods; allocating resources for special programs; recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion; and tracking enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race. These mechanisms are race conscious but do not lead to different treatment based on a classification that tells each student he or she is to be defined by race, so it is unlikely any of them would

Therefore, Justice Kennedy argued that race-based public policies need to expand their vision. He continued, arguing that the desired goal of diversity is a compelling interest of a district, but that “race may be one component of that diversity, but other demographic factors, plus special talents and needs, should also be considered” (Opinion of Justice Kennedy, Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District, 05-908). Kennedy’s suggestions support the theories of Kahlenberg, who believes that an educational system based on students’ socio-economic status is more feasible than one based on race. Therefore, he recommended that charter school laws mandate diversity clauses. Kahlenberg noted that “California, Nevada, South Carolina, and North Carolina’s charter laws all require schools to reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the district” (Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 188). Additionally, Kansas’s charter law requires that schools reflect the district’s “socioeconomic composition” (Kahlenberg, 2001, p. 188). Unfortunately, these mandates do not provide positive remedies for already segregated districts. Clearly, state legislative reform may ensure diversity in charter schools for some districts; however, the reform may undermine the objective of charter schools—autonomy from mandates. Therefore, I examine specific school mechanisms that can enhance diversity. Additionally, I explore whether or not specific processes, such as school location, recruitment strategies, and the make-up of the board of trustees marginalize or provide unfair advantages to specific groups.

School Location

In cities, economic and racial housing segregation commonly isolates
neighborhoods from one another (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1996). Therefore, the location of a charter school might influence its student population. Location has also been crucial in the development of progressive independent schools. For example, the Dalton School’s location in the affluent Upper Eastside of Manhattan and the City and Country’s School’s location in the more artsy and bohemian Greenwich Village, may explain why the latter has been able to retain its early progressive flavor, while the former has not (Semel & Sadovnik, 1999, 2008).

Literature on magnet schools suggests a correlation between the location of a magnet school and the school’s racial composition. In Rossell’s study of 20 magnet schools in 1982, the racial composition of the magnet school was correlated with the racial composition of the school’s location. For example 27% of White parents sent their children to magnet schools in a minority location while 53.7% sent their children to magnet schools in White locations (Rossell, 1990, p. 128). Similarly, 72.2% of minority parents sent their children to magnet schools in a minority location, while 46.3% sent their children to schools in White locations (Rossell, 1990, p. 128). This indicates two things: first, the location of a magnet school influences the schools’ racial demographics, and second, compared to White parents, parents of minority children are more likely to send their children to schools located in a neighborhood with a racial composition different from their own.

When founding a charter school, the school’s location is important in determining its racial and economic demographics. For example, in Yancey’s book, Parents Founding Charter Schools: Dilemmas of Empowerment and Decentralization, she found that the most contentious issue in the development of the Community Charter School in
California was locating a site. Diversity was an important component of the school’s philosophy. Therefore, the site committee primarily sought school sites in ethnically diverse areas. However, the committee was not successful and later voted unanimously on a “vacant building in a predominantly European American, upper-income neighborhood, which was a 20-30 minute bus ride from the lower-income communities of color” (Yancey, 2000, p. 146). The site committee’s recommendations ignited an argumentative discussion about the importance of diversity during the interim board discussion. The initial recommendation for the site was blocked. After three follow-up meetings, all four African American parents resigned from the board and severed their involvement in the school (Yancey, 2000, p. 150). The placement of the Community Charter School in a wealthier neighborhood provided the White families with more opportunities to both attend and take ownership of the school.

The site of a school affects enrollment not only by attracting those closest to the school, but also by creating a “community bond.” This bond between those closest to the school can deter other families from joining. Hankins argued that middle-income parents in gentrifying districts do more than just share ownership of charter schools; indeed, she found that these parents take over charter schools. Hankins’ example of the Neighborhood Charter School in Atlanta, Georgia, illustrates that the parents who wrote the charter for the school explicitly intended to serve their gentrified neighborhood.

However, in the case of the Neighborhood Charter School, the Atlanta Public Schools forced parents to broaden their territory. The broadening of the territory contributed to strengthening “the social bonds of the organizers [who] prohibited a full social-territorial rescaling of the neighborhood” (Hankins, 2007, p. 123). In this case, the
founders clearly intended to use the school to keep gentrifying parents in the neighborhoods and attract new parents to purchase property. The creation of an academically successful school increases property values around the school. Indeed, Hankins found that after the school was established and parents began organizing around it, the exodus of middle-income parents slowed and “solidified the transformation of the neighborhood into one that is family friendly to its (middle-class) residents” (Hankins, 2007, p. 125).

The location of a non-district school informs the school’s vision. The similarities between the school sites of Neighborhood Charter School and Community Charter School illustrate the founders’ chosen community for the school. The placement of a school is critical to its mission in alleviating the achievement gap. Thirty years before the charter school movement, freedom school proponents also learned the importance of the school’s placement. Kozol explained that “A Free School which, by accident or intent, ends up in the most expensive, marginal and physically respectable section of a total neighborhood in torment is certainly a great deal more likely to lose sight of its own reason for existence” (Kozol, 1972, p. 50). Thus, Kozol argued that alternative schools in distressed neighborhoods constantly remind them of their educational importance. However, schools in well-to-do areas do not have the reminders of poverty to inspire them.

Recruitment

Geography is just one way in which middle-income parents can obtain symbolic ownership of charter schools in diverse neighborhoods. Stuart Wells argued that enrollment and parent-involvement practices can also “shape” who enrolls and stays in a
charter school (2002, p. 142). Therefore, schools must actively recruit parents from low-income neighborhoods to balance the networking and marketing efforts of middle-income families. In the schools Stuart Wells studied, most had a limited or narrow method of recruitment (Stuart Wells, 2002).

Eckes and Trotter disagree with Stuart Wells and found that the leaders in the varied charter schools they studied had a desired population in mind during recruitment efforts. The principals they studied sought the more disadvantaged students. For instance, “most of the school leaders reported that the impetus for them to start a new school was to actively counter unequal educational opportunities” (Eckes & Trotter, 2007, p. 73). In addition to a mission of diversity or a targeted community, another incentive for recruiting low-income students is the additional federal money low-income students bring to the school. In states where charter schools receive less money than public schools, Title I money is often a necessity to sustain the school’s existence. There has been very little research conducted on the admissions and recruitment processes of charter schools (Eckes & Trotter, 2007, p. 64). Therefore, I focus on this element of charter schools as a key mechanism for the promotion of student diversity.

**Parent Involvement**

Critics of charter schools question charter schools’ parental component. Although parent involvement improves students’ academic achievement (Epstein, 2001; Lareau, 2000), the requirement for charter school parents to sign a contract, they argue is biased against families who lack the time to devote to a school. Many low-income or single parents may not have the time required by charter schools. The establishment of a board of trustees is another way parental involvement can marginalize the voices of some
families. Stuart Wells found that “regardless of social location or stated intentions, most charter schools selected individuals for their governing boards because of the connections, expertise or resources these people could bring to the school” (Stuart Wells, 2002, p. 112). Such selection requirements discriminate against less affluent and connected parents. This may create a biased governing board that favors the needs of middle-income children, such as expensive accelerated classes or tracking, which has an adverse effect on low-income and minority students (Oakes, 2005). In this study I will evaluate how both parent involvement and the composition of the school’s board of trustees influences low-income parents.

**Access to Information**

Another factor influencing equity is low-income parents’ lack of access to admission information (Bell, 2005; Buckley & Schneider, 2005; Teske, Fitzpatrick, & Kaplan, 2007). The methods parents use to learn about charter schools has been researched by Teske, Fitzpatrick, and Kaplan (2007), who found racial and economic differences in the degree to which parents research choice programs. The authors found that social structure and organized social networks clearly advantage parents by providing them with more information about educational choices than parents without such social networks.

Additionally, the social capital of choice parents enable them in navigating the system. According to Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, social capital functions as “social relationships from which an individual is potentially able to derive institutional support, particularly support that includes the delivery of knowledge-based resources” (1995, p.
119). Therefore, parents have the capability to influence one another through school knowledge.

**Charter Schools: Fiscal Disparities**

Throughout the nation, state charter school laws provide differing levels of school funding. In the 40 states with charter schools, some receive the same funding as local district schools, but some receive considerably less funding. The report *Charter School Funding: Inequity’s Next Frontier* compared school funding in traditional schools and charter schools in 16 states and Washington, D.C. The results showed “that charters are significantly under-funded relative to district schools. The report, based on 2002-03 revenues, finds that, on average the funding gap is 22 percent or $1,800 per pupil” (2007). In comparison, charter schools in New Jersey’s Abbott district received, on average, $3,650 (32%) less per pupil than students residing in the district public schools (Bulkley, 2007). These funding disparities place charter schools at a fiscal disadvantage. Therefore, similar to the free schools of the 1970s, charter schools must seek outside resources. Doing so requires spending more time and effort than public schools on fundraising and developing their school’s budget. However, the intention of charter school autonomy was for charter schools to create and establish innovative curriculums and practices. Unfortunately, charter school personnel spend a considerable amount of time searching for funding. In some charter schools, fundraising requires positions for fundraisers and grant-writers. These positions take additional money and time away from instructional positions.
Fundraising in charter schools becomes a necessity, especially in underfunded charter schools. The advantage to fundraising is that it is a great way to increase parental involvement and establish a community. However, fundraising can become another method of alienation by limiting parents without time or money in their contributions to fundraising. High-end fundraising efforts go beyond bake sales and require the connections and capital that only middle-income professionals can offer. The types of fundraising required may further alienate low-income parents from applying.

**Curriculum and Pedagogy**

The autonomy of a charter school allows it to create and develop its own curriculum and pedagogy. According to Bernstein, “curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge” and “pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of the knowledge” (Bernstein, 1971a, 1973b, p. 85). However, because scholars like Dewey challenged both traditional curriculum and pedagogy, what counts as “valid knowledge” and “valid transmission” depends on educational experiences and social class. According to Bowles and Gintis, curriculum and pedagogy assist in the reproduction of social class (1976). The pedagogy of low-income students prepares them for working-class positions; however, pedagogy and curriculum socializes high-income students for high-ranking positions in the job market.

Bernstein, relying on both conflict and structural frameworks, explored how code theories explains why working-class students do not achieve their full potential (Sadovnik, 1995, p. 24). Code theories about differences in curriculum and pedagogy begin to explain the differences in educational outcomes between students from different
economic classes. Bernstein categorizes curriculum as having either a strong
classification (highly differentiated and organized by traditional subjects) or a weak
classification (an integration of the subjects). Progressive scholars advocate that a weakly
classified curriculum makes more sense to a child, because it is holistic.

In addition to curriculum, Bernstein studied different pedagogical practices. He
distinguished between visible (explicit and sequenced) and invisible (implicit) pedagogies
(Sadovnik, 1995). These pedagogical practices have social class contexts. Progressive
practices, which are invisible and implicit, are generally used with middle-income
students, while traditional practices, which are visible, explicit, and sequenced, are most
often used with working-class students. In addition to the practices, education also
includes framing. Sadovnik argued that the “frame refers to the degree of control teacher
and pupil possess over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge
transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship. Strong framing may limit
options between teachers and students; while weak framing implies more freedom”
(Sadovnik, 1995, p. 10).

Theoretically, a teacher using an invisible pedagogical practice with a weak frame
would provide a student with the freedom to develop independent and self-reliant
learning. For example, Freire (1968) empowered students in Brazil by allowing them to
be active participants and not passive recipients of knowledge. However, scholars argue
that freedom confuses low-income children and the confusion may result in a lack of a
thorough comprehension of the topic (Delpit, 1995; Ravitch, 2000). Traditionalists argue
that progressive education does not focus enough on hard skills and content because of
the time spent providing children with freedom and choices. Ravitch depicted
progressive education during the 1950s as supporting “classrooms without textbook, homework, or lesson plans” (Ravitch, 2000, p. 355).

During the Free School Movement, Kozol described the cultural dilemma behind the “empowering” free school curriculum’s use of invisible practices and weak frameworks:

How can the Free School achieve a … down-to-earth, skill-oriented, sequential, credentializing and credentialized curricular experience directly geared in to the real survival needs of colonial children in a competitive and technological society; and simulartensouly evolve, maintain, nourish, and revivify the “un-credentialized,” “un-authorized,” “un-sanctioned,” “non-curricular” consciousness of pain, rage, love and revolution which first infused their school with truth and magic, exhilaration and comradeship. Few schools up to now seem to have been able to do both; some that I know, however, come extremely close. (Kozol, 1972, p. 49)

The dilemma both Ravitch and Kozol allude to is how a progressive or alternative education can adequately equip a student for life. Ravitch argued that textbooks, homework, and lesson plans provide students with the discipline and preparation required for academic success. Similarly, Kozol argued that a free school cannot be empowering if it does not gear education to “the real survival needs of colonial children.” Therefore, a truly effective education for low-income students, referred to by Kozol as “colonial” and Freire as “oppressed,” requires cultural relevance, student-centeredness and explicitness. Research indicates that this combination is rare. There seems to be a relationship between authority and the curriculum. The more authority the students have, the less explicit the curriculum becomes.

The lack of an explicit and visible code in progressive education influenced Ravitch and Delpit to argue that progressive education is disadvantageous to low-income
minorities. Ravitch concluded that, “poor children in classrooms where teachers ‘facilitated’ instead of teaching were at a terrific disadvantage as compared to privileged children who came from homes where educated parents read to them, took them to museums, surrounded them with books, and supplied whatever school was not teaching” (2000, p. 393). Similarly, Delpit found that White progressive educators confused African American students who did not have the benefit of knowing what the codes of progressive pedagogy meant. Similarly, Bernstein argued that invisible pedagogic practices, such as the progressive practices of the “middle income” include social class assumptions, which disadvantage low-income students (Sadovnik, 1995, p. 16).

According to Kozol, educators from White rural freedom schools differed from educators in Black urban freedom schools on the issue of power. Essentially, White advocates of the free school movement believed that students should be equal to the teachers; however, Black advocates of free schools believed that Black students should feel motivated to earn power through credentials. Whereas White advocates wanted children to imagine a society without power structures, Black advocates wanted children to be prepared to work within in the existing structure by learning the cultural codes and values of the middle class. Similarly, today an assortment of charter schools in urban areas serving low-income children from minorities families believe that nothing should be left implicit, but rather that the curriculum and discipline policy should be explicit (Whitman, 2008). These scholars and reformers argue for new paternalism, whereby teachers make middle-income values and norms explicit for low-income students. Character education and the eradication of the “street” culture lies at the core of new paternalism. Whitman’s examples of new paternalism include the forementioned, KIPP
Academy, and SEED School, University Park, and the American Indian Public Charter School. Some of Whitman’s habits of effective paternalistic urban schools include: “[7.] Reject the culture of the streets; 15. Don’t demand much from parents; [18.] Keep the school small” (2008, p. 259).

The question examined in this study, however, is can the curriculum attract both low-income and middle-income parents? Lessons learned from the magnet school literature indicate that the most successful elementary magnet schools that attracted White families were, “nontraditional programs that stressed the need for children to follow their own interests and to proceed through the learning process at their own pace” (Royster, Baltzell, & Simmons, 1979, p. 91). However, this study did not differentiate between social class and race. Further research would need to investigate whether the White parents were also middle-income. Additionally, Rossell explained that gifted and talented magnets were also successful with White families (1990).

**Culture and School Size**

Lastly, an additional influence on the quality and effectiveness of a charter school is its capability to influence the culture of a school. School culture is a result of the size of the school, the quality of the staff, the collaboration of staff members, and students’ interactions with teachers and other students. Lee and Loeb’s research showed that “small schools (enrolling fewer than 400 students) perform better academically than medium-sized or larger schools” (2000). The size of the school influences student achievement “directly and indirectly, through its effect on teachers’ attitudes” (2000).
Max Weber’s argument that the smaller the size of an organization, the higher the preponderance of human interactions (Weber, 1947).

The types of activities and level of involvement of the student body also influences school culture. In The Adolescent Society, Coleman questioned whether “it is possible to learn how to control the adolescent community and to use it to further the ends of education” (1961, p. 12). One of his main findings was that extracurricular activities act as a good avenue to channel students’ energies to perform better academically. Coleman argued that, “modern adolescents are not content with a passive role. They exhibit this discontent by their involvement in positive activities, activities which they can call their own: athletics, school newspapers, drama clubs, social affairs, and dates” (1961, p. 315). Research shows that many urban public schools have eliminated extracurricular activities, pep rallies, school elections, and dances. Instead, these schools focus their time and money on two priorities: literacy and mathematics. These limitations may not only damage the morale of a school, but may also hinder its academic achievement.

Students with minimal proficiency in math and literacy need confidence and additional roles throughout the school may instill that confidence. Coleman warned that “lack of authority carries with it lack of responsibilities; demands for obedience generate disobedience as well.” (1961, p. 316). Essentially, Coleman referred to the fact that students without institutional responsibilities and power may establish responsibility and power on their own through rebellion. Thus, schools should foster the energies and ambitions of their students through formal activities and programs. Agreeing with Coleman, Quiroz argued, “activity participation and sponsorship are embedded within the
cultural and organizational life of high school” (2000, p. 250). The culture of a school relies on its activities to flourish.

Quiroz compared a wealthy suburban school to a poor urban school. Activities at the schools had distinct purposes. Students in the suburban school participated in activities to increase the chance of college admission and students at the urban school “emphasized the rewards of participation as intrinsic to the activity” (2000, p. 252). Another difference between the two schools was the participation rates. The suburban school’s rate was nearly twice that of the urban one. Essentially, there were fewer urban teachers, as well as fewer resources to support urban activities, and after school programs were deemed unsafe in urban neighborhoods for both teachers and students. The suburban school exhibited activity norms through “such rituals of activity participation as daily announcements, pep rallies, bulletin displays and trophy cases” (Quiroz, 2002, p. 267); in comparison there was a lack of activity norms at the urban school.

Quiroz cited Maehr and Fryons (1989)’s finding that “students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or students, who are racial/ethnic minorities are more influenced by school culture” (as cited in Quiroz, 2000, p. 270). In agreement, Quiroz described the unfairness of low-income urban schools offering so few activities despite their benefits. Quiroz argued that:

Ostensibly, metropolitan (urban) students could have benefited most from positive effects of extracurricular participation but had fewer opportunities to do so….Participation in extracurricular activities has been argued to reduce dropout rates and to increase attachment to school, educational and occupation goal attainment, and self esteem….For some student populations, (activities) may provide opportunities for the development of much needed social capital. (Quiroz, 2002, pp. 271-273)
Not only do activities provide increased self-esteem for students at risk of failing, but activities also function as an incentive for academic success. Many activities have minimum GPA requirements and conduct expectations. Students interested and engaged in activities may perform in order to continue their participation.

**Gentrification and Schools**

Charter schools’ autonomy and freedom from mandates “enables educators and parents to work together more closely” (Darling-Hammond & Montgomery as cited in Dingerson, Miner, Peterson, & Walters, 2008, p. 93). However, providing parents with more opportunities to influence the development of a school may enable middle-income parents to use the school to further gentrify the neighborhood. Just as the increase in galleries and cultural establishments advances gentrification, the “colonization” of schools by middle-income families facilitates gentrification (Butler & Robson, 2003).

London, Butler and Robson found that “education markets are now rivaling those in housing and employment as determinants of the nature, extent, and stability of middle-class gentrification in inner city localities” (2003, p. 157). For example, in Telegraph Hill, the primary school is socially mixed, but “the ethos have been transformed into a middle-class one—with a socially inclusive rhetoric” (Butler & Robson, 2003, p. 159). Consequently, low-income students may be displaces, as was the case in Battlesea where less than 15% of students are now eligible for free school meals; the cause of this displacement is that “the area is becoming much more selective” (Butler & Robson, 2003, p. 150).
Butler and Robson’s nuanced use of education as a determinant of middle-class gentrification makes it an evolving field. The most pertinent current question is whether the middle-class colonization of schools in gentrifying neighborhoods further promote gentrification or will benefit low-income students. Smith used the term gentrification in a negative manner as he presented the image of “hostile landscapes (regenerated), cleansed, re-infused with middle class sensibility; real estate values soar; yuppies consume (1996, p. 13). Thus, Smith’s characterization applied to the case study of LCCS would predict that the infusion of middle-income norms into a school would regenerate, cleanse, and displace low-income students by ensuring that real estate values increase and therefore low-income families can no longer afford to live in the city.

However, Freeman, who depicted gentrification as more complicated, argued that gentrification has some positive effects for low-income neighborhoods. Freeman’s optimism would potentially portray the creation of this charter school in a more positive light. Freeman concluded that “as the complexion of the neighborhood lightens, amenities and services will improve, and this was viewed as an accepted law of urban living” (2006, p. 98). Therefore, a charter school established by middle-income parents may provide a high-quality education to low-income students who would otherwise not have access to one. However, as amenities improve, a neighborhood may further gentrification, resulting in the displacement of its poorer residents.
Chapter Three: Methods

Case Study Design

Many researchers support the use of case studies as an appropriate research design (Robson, 2002; Yin, 2009). Yin explained that the use of case studies allows the researcher to understand a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009, p. 18). In this dissertation I investigate “a contemporary set of events” (Yin, 2009, p. 13)—the socio-economic and racial integration of a charter school. The use of a case study design allows the researcher to investigate the complexities of a set of contemporary events. Thus, the design of a case study “copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Therefore, in order to untangle the complexities of this particular issue, the case study approach relies upon many sources of data (interviews, surveys, data analysis, and participant observation).

Unlike a fixed design, a case study approach incorporates flexibility in its research design, because researchers “typically [anticipate] that the design will emerge and develop during data collection” (Robson, 2002, p. 164). This flexibility mirrors a grounded-theory approach, in which researchers adjust methods as they conduct their research according to the acquisition of new knowledge. For instance, during participant observation, I recorded observations of interactions and activities and the observations revealed unpredicted themes and concepts.

In the literature review, I detailed examples of mechanisms that either enhanced or hindered the economic and racial diversity of schools’ student populations. Each
reviewed study described the ways in which some of the factors were influential. In this case study I investigate how all eleven of these factors influenced the diversity of LCCS. The factors from the literature review include the achievement gap, equal opportunity access versus creaming, school location, recruitment of students, parent involvement, access to information, finances, curriculum and pedagogy, culture and school size, gentrification, and student diversity (economic and racial). Table 3.1 highlights how I measured or evaluated the factors influencing economic and racial diversity in each of the six research questions.

Table 3.1. Research Questions’ Evaluation of School Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>The Achievement Gap</th>
<th>Equal Opportunities or Creaming?</th>
<th>School Location</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Parent Involvement</th>
<th>Access to Information</th>
<th>Finances</th>
<th>Curriculum and Pedagogy</th>
<th>Culture and Size</th>
<th>Gentrification</th>
<th>Student Diversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does the gentrification of Jersey City relate to the history of LCCS?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the founding and development of LCCS relate to the social, economic, educational, and cultural interests of founding and subsequent parents? Why do parents from different race, ethnic, and social class backgrounds choose to send or not send their children to LCCS?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has the demographic composition of LCCS students related to the overall demographics of Jersey City?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How has LCCS affected the racial and social class achievement gap, both within the school and between Jersey City district</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How have the mechanisms within LCCS increased or decreased the diversity of its student population in terms of race and social class? For example, has the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch increased or decreased? Has the number of black and Hispanic students increased or decreased?</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does LCCS’s autonomy as a charter school allow it to meet the social and academic needs of all students? How does the diversity of a charter school influence the academic and social needs of students?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In answering the research questions, I rely on a collection of sources ranging from qualitative interviews to quantitative survey data (Yin, 2009, p.100). Mixing or combining research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language is considered “mixed methods research” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). This approach allows the study “to address more complicated research questions and collect a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be accomplished with a single method alone (Yin, 2009, p. 63). The complexity of the research questions required that the study rely on various sources of data from both quantitative (statistical analysis and surveys) and qualitative (interviews and archival data) data analysis.

**Data Collection**

Case study design can include an array of different methodological tools (Yin, 2009). In this case study, I used a collection of qualitative and quantitative tools. Qualitative tools included participant observation, interviews, and archival data.
Quantitative tools included analyzing state, city, district, and school-level data contained in surveys, census, and student data. I collected and sorted this data in relation to concepts from the conceptual framework: social capital, cultural capital, gentrification, and diversity. Social capital includes social influence, social engagement with institutional agents, family social capital, and networking. Indicators of social capital include differences in parenting styles, school culture, and academic achievement. Similarly, the concept of cultural capital assisted in the analysis of cultural differences and similarities between and amongst parents at LCCS. For the purposes of this study, the forms of cultural capital include a family’s cultural logic of child rearing, non-cognitive traits, and cultural preferences for curriculum. A key concept that influences both the establishment of and changes in enrollment is gentrification. Gentrification explains the physical, economic, and political changes within a historically impoverished neighborhood. Lastly, I measured diversity by geographic, socio-economic, and racial differences in the student enrollment and teachers’ backgrounds. For a more in-depth description of the various concepts and how they align with the research sources, see Appendix A: Aligning the Conceptual Framework to Sources.

**Participant Observation**

To accurately understand the school, I used participant observation methods. Participant observation has traditionally been associated with the Chicago School of sociology and anthropology (Robson, 2002, p. 310). Participant observation requires keeping detailed field notes after each observation. In contrast with direct observation, I was a participant observer who became a member of the observed group (Robson, 2004, p. 314). I conducted bi-weekly, full-day observations of LCCS’s classrooms and
administrative offices, and attended school functions such as field trips and community events for one school year. Additionally, I taught fourth grade in the school during the second and third year of fieldwork. I spent equal amounts of time observing each grade level during the four quarters of the first school year. Examples of school events I attended include a Liberty State Park family picnic, the June-a-Palloza Fundraiser, the Fundraiser at the Beacon, board of trustee meetings, school performances, recruitment events, open houses, P.T.A. meetings, field trips, guest presentations in classrooms, parent-teacher nights, and student concerts. While observing these activities or events, I assisted teachers and parents with activities.

Some scholars have criticized the participant component of participant observation as a “soft” science; however Robson argues that “when working with people, scientific aims can be pursued by explaining the meaning of the experiences of the observed through the experiences of the observers” (2004, p. 314). For instance, observing a bake sale provides limited access to the planning and implementation of a fundraising event. However, assisting in the planning of the same bake sale gives the researcher entrée to dialogue that would otherwise be unattainable.

Some reasons for using participant observation include documenting interactions, actions, and behavior (Mason, 1996 as cited in Robson 2002, p. 189). Through participant observation, I documented behaviors and actions that illustrated school culture, student peer effects, and parent interactions. School culture is demonstrated through both dialogues and the pedagogical, administrative, and community activities that foster dialogue. For example, the design of cooperative learning activities, interactive professional learning communities, and parent volunteering all contribute to the depth
and number of human interactions. Interactions among and between students illustrate
students’ social capital through peer social influence. Interactions between teachers and
students illustrate school social capital. Parents’ interactions within the school illustrate
family social capital. Additionally, curricular and pedagogical activities illustrate cultural
capital and cultural preferences, and community events provide examples of parents’
cultural preferences through their cultural capital.

I began the study as a researcher and then my role evolved as I took a position as
a fourth grade teacher. Both roles had their attributes and limitations. As a researcher, it
took a great deal of time to gain the respect and trust of both the school’s parents and
teachers. As a teacher, I instantly gained the trust of my colleagues and the parents.
However, with access to new information, I had to question which data to include in the
study based upon how I received it. There were times parents shared their opinions of the
school’s curriculum during parent-teacher conferences and I felt that the nature of the
conference required me to exclude that information from my research.

The longer I spent at the school, the more I was able to form a fuller picture of the
school culture. However, the longer I spent at the school, the more I found that I became
more critical of the school in terms of policy decisions. From the perspective of a
researcher, I spent a great deal of time shadowing the principal and she provided me with
great insight into the reasoning behind decisions. In contrast, as a teacher I spent more
time with teachers and found myself in a position of feeling less clear about the reasoning
of policy decisions. A contributing factor in this shift was the change in leadership.
Additionally, as a teacher, I was able to listen to the voices of other teachers more, but I found fewer opportunities to talk with parents. During my first year as a researcher, I spent a lot of time talking with parents before school performances. When my role changed, I found that I did not have as much time to talk with parents, because I had the responsibility of supervising twenty children.

Stakeholder Interviews

Participant observation was one method to develop adequate and informative questions. Robson argued that observation “is commonly used in an exploratory phase, typically in an unstructured form, to seek to find out what is going on in a situation as a precursor to subsequent testing out” (Robson, 2002, p. 312). In addition to using the observations to inform the interview protocol, participant observation provided an opportunity to gain teachers’ and parents’ trust. After a number of months, I conducted interviews. Amanda Lewis, the author of Race in the Schoolyard influenced this technique. Lewis waited a number of months before conducting teacher interviews in her case study (Lewis, 2005).

The interviews complemented the other methods used in the research. Unlike participant observation and data analysis, the interviews allowed subjects to describe phenomenon using examples from personal experience. Therefore, interviews provide “perceived causal inferences and explanations” from key actors in the case study (Yin, 2009, p. 102). Interview subjects include four key stakeholders in the schools: founding parents, board of trustee members, teachers, and administrations. I conducted 15 interviews: two founding parents who applied for the charter, an assistant principal, the coordinator of student records, the coordinator of administration, and 12 teachers. I
contacted the subjects by e-mail and in person to schedule mutually convenient times for interviews.

Case study interviews can be in-depth, focused, or structured (Robson, 2002; Yin, 2009). I used a focused interview protocol because this model allows the interviewer to ask a certain set of questions in a conversational manner and within a prescribed span of time (Yin, 2009, p. 107). The interview questions were open-ended to ensure flexibility, depth, positive rapport with the interviewee, and true assessment of respondent’s opinions and unexpected answers (Robson, 2004, p. 276). However, limitations to open-ended questions may include losing track of time during interviews and difficulty during analysis (Robson, 2004, p. 276). Therefore, I kept track of time and politely led interviewees through the questions at a moderate speed. The interviews took place in an empty office at the school and were recorded on an i-pod to ensure an accurate rendition of the interview (Robson, 2004, p. 290; Yin, 2009, p. 109); they were then transcribed and coded. Codes were constructed inductively and deductively from summaries of the various mechanisms that were cross-analyzed with concepts from the conceptual framework. See Appendices B-D for detailed information on interview protocols.

I evaluated the concepts of both social and cultural capital during the interviews. The educational philosophies of founding parents, administrators, teachers, and board members provided examples of their cultural preferences and capital. The interviews also illustrate each stakeholder’s personal cultural capital. The stakeholders discussed the non-cognitive skills, organization, social networking, professionalism, and motivation required to establish and maintain an academically challenging school. Additionally, teachers described how they found out about the school (social capital), their curriculum
philosophy (cultural capital), and their relationships with both parents and colleagues (social capital).

**Parent Surveys**

Additional stakeholders in this case study include parents. In an effort to include as many parents’ voices as possible, I gave paper copies of parent surveys to all LCCS parents. In general, surveys vary in form and implementation. However, most surveys use a fixed, quantitative design and collect a small amount of data in a standardized form (Robson, 2004, p. 230). The parent survey for this case study is quantitative and includes 34 questions. If questions are ambiguous or incomprehensible, then the internal validity of a survey becomes threatened (Robson, 2004, p. 231). In order to strengthen the internal validity of the survey, I piloted it to a group of ten parents. The parents did not complete the survey, but rather provided feedback to ensure the questions were clear and understandable.

The format of the survey includes questions that rely on different forms of measurement. Part I of the survey (questions 1-21, with the exception of questions 7 and 19) includes questions with nominal measurements. The numbers in nominal responses have no numeral value, but act as placeholders for the response (Trochim, 2001, p. 114). For example, in question 1, “Did your child attend preschool?” “Yes” is not valued higher than “No.” Examples of questions with ordinal measurements—those with attributes that can be ranked—include questions 19 (number of times volunteered); 24 (number of children at home); 25 (current grade level of children); 29 (family’s gross income); and 31 and 32 (highest level of education). The last form of measurement used in the survey instrument is interval measurement, in which the distance between
attributes has meaning (Trochim, 2002, p. 104). Likert scale questions are interval measures. A Likert scale is a uni-dimensional scaling method (Trochim, 2002, p. 145). Therefore, the constructs measured must be clear and concise.

To ensure construct validity in the survey, I operationalized constructs from the conceptual framework to ensure they were concrete and measurable; therefore, I “translate[d] a concept of construct into a functioning and operating reality” (Trochim, 2002, p. 65). I operationalized a number of concepts including progressive pedagogy, curriculum, discipline, location, and affordability.

To ensure that parents finished the survey, I used all multiple choice or Likert-scaled answers with the exception of one fill-in-the-blank question. The placement of the questions was strategic. Sensitive questions about race and salary were placed at the end of the survey to develop rapport and trust with the respondents (Troctim, 2002, p. 124). Similarly, the first questions in the survey were simple and used as warm-ups to ensure parents felt comfortable with the survey. To ensure confidentiality, I gave all survey respondents blank envelopes for their finished surveys.

A selection bias in the types of parents who volunteer may threaten the survey’s external validity. In dealing with this obstacle, I invited all LCCS parents to participate in the survey. I notified the parents of the survey in person during parent-teacher conferences. This technique was inspired by Annette Lareau, who cautioned against sending home letters to contact low-income parents (2000, p. 211). Instead, Lareau called low-income parents to request their participation. Formal letters can be intimidating and in some cases low-income parents cannot read. Instead of administering confidential surveys on a piece of university letterhead through the mail, I administered 200 parent
surveys in person during two 7-hour parent-teacher conferences in the spring semesters of 2009 and 2010. Additionally, I left surveys with the secretary with a sign advertising the surveys for parents who did not attend the parent night. Similar to Lareau’s incentive model in *Unequal Childhoods* (2004), incentives to complete the survey included homemade cookies and eligibility for a raffle ticket for $50 to be used at the restaurant of the winner’s choice. Lastly, I hired students from the school to distribute the surveys. Parents may feel more comfortable filling out a survey handed to them by a LCCS student rather than a researcher. See Appendices E and F for detailed information on the survey and a description of the alignment between the survey instrument and key concepts.

I entered the survey data into STATA and performed cross tabulations and regressions using data on key concepts. Some of the key concepts from the conceptual framework included family’s logic of child rearing, symbolic ownership, social capital, and cultural preferences for curriculum. Family’s child-rearing logic (cultural capital) helped me to understand if LCCS attracts parents with different backgrounds and different parenting philosophies and practices. I measured parents’ symbolic ownership of the school quantitatively by the number of times parents have participated in school activities. Family social capital and networking will explain to what degree parents depended on their networking skills to learn about the school. Finally, I measured cultural capital via parents’ cultural preferences for curriculum and pedagogy.
Document and Archival Information

In addition to collecting data through observations, interviews, and surveys, I used the school’s archival documents to illustrate both the history and mechanisms of the schools. Yin explained that, “for case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (2009, p. 103). The school’s archival documents include: board of trustee minutes and annual reports. A common approach to documentary analysis is content analysis, which is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts (Krippendorff as cited in Robson, 2002, p. 350). I sorted content by themes: economic, racial, or geographic diversity. Some of the content was manifest (physically present) while other content was latent (required inferences) (Robson, 2002, p. 354). In addition, I created a data set based on both the waiting list and transfer applications. These documents were analyzed by the following variables: applicant’s zip code, school the student is currently attending by type, school the student is transferring to by type, and reason for transfer.

Data Analysis

Jersey City Census and Development

In addition to analyzing LCCS archives, I analyzed census and development archives for Jersey City included census statistics about the demographics, economics, and industries in Jersey City; newspaper articles, blogs, and publications about the development of Jersey City neighborhoods; and addresses from the LCCS waitlist for the past six years. Similar to the LCCS archive content analysis, all data was sorted and categorized according to themes of gentrification.
Student-Level Data

I created a data set using student-level data from cohorts of third graders through eighth graders. The student level data included the following variables: cohort, coded name, sex, race, socio-economic status, year of transfer in, year of transfer out, years of tests, classification, and New Jersey State exam results (language arts and math). I analyzed the data in STATA using both cross-tabulations and regressions. Due to the small size of each cohort, I controlled for students transferring out and in and special education students.

Analysis

The combination of sources (participant observations, interviews, surveys and documents) increased the study’s validity via triangulation. According to Bruce Berg triangulation combines several lines of sight and allows “researchers (to) obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements” (Berg, 2004). In addition, “data from direct observation contrasts with and can often usefully complement, information obtained by virtually any other technique” (Robson, 2002, p. 310). Therefore, triangulation relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result increasing its accuracy.

I coded the teacher and administrator interviews and categorized them according to themes from the conceptual framework (social capital, cultural capital, gentrification, diversity). Additionally, I analyzed the student level data and parent surveys using STATA.
Implications

The results of this research will provide Jersey City and other urban fringe gentrifying cities with information on how to encourage economic integration through charter schools. The in-depth analysis of the school provides a blueprint for other school districts to use as a model. Although the study is of an urban charter school, the model will be invaluable to most scholars and policy makers focusing on urban and suburban areas, because as cities gentrify, suburbs continue to diversify. Therefore, the suburbs will begin to experience some of the same issues as gentrified cities. Just as urban public schools are learning how to integrate middle-income students, suburban schools need to learn how to integrate the needs of low-income students, some of whom are eligible for special education and English as a second language programs. Therefore, I investigated how LCCS balances both low-income and middle-income students’ needs. This study will inform educational policy at both the urban and suburban levels. In addition, the study can act as a model for how other services, such as health and housing, in cities and the suburbs, can attract a balanced demographic population.
Chapter Four: Jersey City Housing and Education: A Historical Overview

During the nineteenth century, Jersey City experienced high rates of immigration, industrialization, and prosperity. However, during the middle of the twentieth century, the urban landscape transformed Jersey City into a city with high levels of poverty, which led to urban blight and the flight of the middle class. This flight transformed Jersey City into a high-poverty city without an adequate tax base to support its residents and schools; consequently, the quality of education declined.

In addition to Jersey City lacking the resources to adequately fund its schools at the last part of the twentieth century, its public school students were predominantly low-income minority students. Poverty can hinder a child’s ability to perform to his or her full potential. Often intertwined with poverty are health issues, stress, and a lack of school preparation (Anyon, 2005; Rothstein, 2002). Additionally, low-income students attending schools with predominantly low-income peers perform at lower levels than students in more economically balanced schools. With 19% of Jersey City residents living below the poverty level between 1979 and 2006, Jersey City’s educational system had both the financial challenge of levying money to support its schools and the academic responsibility of thoroughly educating all its students.

Immigration, Industry, and Individuality

The Dependence on Railroads (1834-1960s)

Today, from Manhattan’s West Side, Jersey City is identifiable by the large Colgate clock, a reminder of the city’s industrial past. The clock monumentalizes the waterfront’s industrial history. In 1820, the Colgate Company established one of the first of many factories in Jersey City. The availability of large parcels of land, coupled with
the close proximity to New York City, made Jersey City a geographically ideal candidate for many companies. The Colgate Company in particular took advantage of the available land, and over the course of 150 years built 50 buildings across 26 acres of land (Durante, 1986, p. 15). Additionally, Jersey City’s location was ideal for transporting both goods and coal between bustling New York City and the rest of the country.

The growth of factories, the availability of space, and the proximity to New York City Harbor equipped Jersey City to evolve into a renowned railroad colossus. In 1834, Jersey City laid its first tracks and industries soon followed. Both the railroad and industries attracted new residents. The Irish were the first of many waves of immigrants to settle in Jersey City (Durante, 1986, p. 2). The first Irish immigrants arrived in Jersey City in 1847. By 1860, “fewer than 40 percent of all adult males in Jersey City were native born (Durante, 1986, p. 4). Many new Irish immigrants found jobs either building railroads or working in industry. The history of Jersey City is similar to that of many American cities—industrialization established economic opportunities, which in turn attracted both hard-working immigrants and elite prosperous entrepreneurs.

Jersey City was the largest railroad terminus in the country by 1875 (Hayes, 1984, p. 5). Factories depended on the railroad tracks for the transportation of goods and the railroad tracks relied on the factories for their profits. Not only did multiple railroad companies choose Jersey City as a terminus, but each company also consumed a large urban acreage. For instance, in 1897, the property of the nine major railroads serving Jersey City consumed more than one-third of the city’s terrain, extending far to the west of the water’s edge; the massive acreage of docks, sidings, and yards occupied more urban space than many smaller cities in their entirety. (Fisher, 2009 p. 30)
Thus, Jersey City became a railroad empire, and railroad tracks and factories industrialized its landscape.

Two Systems of Education: Choice

As Jersey City became industrialized, its population became more ethnically diverse. The mass arrival of immigrants from Ireland, and later Italy, played a role in the city’s educational system. During the nineteenth century, Protestants controlled most urban public educational systems in northeast cities (Tyack, 1974), including Jersey City. With the arrival of Irish immigrants Catholic interests challenged Protestant educational rule. The Catholic residents did not want their children educated in public schools ruled by the Protestant elite. Therefore, by 1851 Jersey City had two school systems: one public and one private. The private schools were mostly parochial schools that attracted new Irish immigrants, while the public schools catered to Protestant families (Petrick, 1995). The two school systems established ethnic, religious, and racial school segregation.

As early as 1853, 34% of the 11,000 school-age Jersey City children attended non-public schools (Petrick, 1991, p. 132). The use of parochial schools as an alternative to the public schools continues to the present. In 1978, 32% of Jersey City’s school-age children attended parochial schools (Thomas, 1979, p. 3). Ravitch, a renowned educational historian, explained that in cities, “where there was a great religious diversity, there was no impulse towards establishing communal schools for all” (2000b, p. 7). Thus, there was no shared investment in public schools. Rather, parochial schools enabled segregation.
As early as 1853, Jersey City’s parents had established a culture of educational choice in Jersey City. At first, the parents who left the publically funded schools were not those with the most wealth, but rather those who sought an education that emphasized their cultural and religious values. The Protestant-rulled government supported the parents’ choice to “opt-out” of the public system. Petrick described that:

In their hour of need, [The Public Schools] rented Washington Hall to the Catholics for a parochial school. The terms must have been cheap, for the parish was desperately poor. This was the first act in a symbiotic relationship between the two sets of public schools—one Protestant, one Catholic. The Catholic school, denied status and funding by the city and the state, could not have survived without informal help from outside the immigrant community. (1995, p. 132)

Therefore, the public system not only supported the parochial system, but also to a certain degree funded its establishment. Without the assistance of the public school system, the parochial schools, and thus the immigrant population they served, may not have persevered.

Catholic parents chose an alternative to the public schools because they “wished for a school to transmit the language and culture of their homeland” (Petrick, 1995, p. 330). Similarly, the Protestant elites sought a common educational experience that transmitted their dominant culture (Tyack, 1974, p. 84). Therefore, the Irish, and later Italians, were able to establish a series of Catholic schools in Jersey City. Thus began the earliest form of educational segregation. Nationally, cities with religious diversity, such as New York City, lacked established communal schools (Ravitch, 2000). Instead, those cities began with multiple religious educational opportunities.

Urban Blight, Academic Decline (1930s-1980s)

Jersey City’s landscape changed dramatically between the 1930s and 1980s. Federal programs facilitated the building of major highways that cut through
neighborhoods like sharp knives, tearing apart communities. Jersey City endured what
many northeast cities experienced in the 1950s—the creation of new suburbs and the
expansion of highways (Jackson, 1985). In addition to the highways, Jersey City received
a great deal of federal funding from President Roosevelt’s Works Progress
Administration to construct and develop the city. The construction projects included an
additional building for the Jersey City Medical Center, the A. Harry Moore School for the
Handicapped, Roosevelt Stadium, and numerous public housing projects. The public
housing projects were a component of the city’s slum clearance project.

Despite the city’s effort to maintain its population, Jersey City lost a large
proportion of its middle-class population due to the poor state of urban housing and
national trends toward suburbanization. Consequently, the city experienced urban blight
and educational decline. The development of the Holland Tunnel, the world’s largest
underground vehicle tunnel at the time (Gabrielan, 2003, p. 26), in 1927, and the 1929
construction of 13 miles of expressway leading to Elizabeth, New Jersey (Jackson, 1985,
p. 166), directed middle-class families toward new suburban developments, causing a
major middle-class flight. These developments transformed Jersey City from a major
industrial destination to solely a means to other locations.

Beginning in the 1930s, highways supplanted railroad tracks and cars replaced
trains. Unfortunately, Jersey City’s entire economy was dependent on the railroad
industry’s nine railroad companies and the factories were reliant on the tracks for the
transportation of their goods. Accordingly, Jersey City lost its primary economic
resource. In 1968, former Jersey City Mayor Thomas Whelan summarized the situation:

New York has problems, but New York has never lost its position as the world’s
financial capital. Detroit has problems, but Detroit has never lost its cars.
Pittsburgh has problems, but it never lost its steel. But Jersey City may be the only city in the country whose basic financial support—railroads—has been almost wiped out. (Jersey Journal, 1968)

Mayor Whelan keenly observed the direct cause of Jersey City’s downfall and the future cause of other American industrial cities’ decline. However, Mayor Whelan was incorrect in arguing that Jersey City was the only city affected by its devotion to one industry. Jersey City was just the first of many cities to be victimized by deindustrialization and technological advancements. These advancements assisted in making old industries extinct; consequently, the cities that housed them now lack purpose and an economic base. For example, in the following decades, globalization would hinder industries in many American cities. Indeed, global competition resulted Detroit losing a great deal of its cars and Pittsburg losing its steel.

Jersey City’s urban decline directly affected housing quality. As wealthier families left their large brownstones in the downtown area, landlords created tenements for eager immigrants seeking housing. An observer from the Whittier House Social Settlement located near the waterfront described that “less than fifty years ago, these buildings stood as a sign of prosperity,” but then “the large rooms [were] divided,…one room for kitchen, dining room and sleeping room” (Durante, 1983, p. 13). Occupants of tenements were often required to use communal toilets, many of which were on the ground floor with limited light and heat (Herzog, 1951). However, in 1941 many residents living in subpar housing could apply to live in public assisted housing, such as Lafayette Gardens, a low-income publically supported housing project, or four other public housing projects allotted for veterans or their survivors. The city chose five locations for the new public houses from a group of 30 possible sites (Jersey Journal,

Jersey City’s wealthier residents used the new highways to escape the poor housing and urban blight. By the 1950s, “the city lost more than 17,000 people” (Durante, 1983, p. 8) and between 1960 and 1969, the out-migration was as high as 50,000 people (Master Plan, 1982, p. 17). Business owners soon followed, causing a mass exodus of economic capital in the form of both middle-income residents and businesses. As factories followed newly paved highways to the Midwest, and later the South, Jersey City’s economic structure was badly damaged. Between 1960 and 1980, Jersey City lost over 45% of its manufacturing jobs. Many left for modern facilities in the Midwest (Gray, 1988). Additionally, Jersey City’s middle-income jobs dissipated because

> When the blue collar jobs left, like American Can, Colgate, Maxwell House Coffee in Hoboken…the people left…And what kept Jersey City together were…all the blue collar neighborhoods…I mean other than this little section right here…once that fell apart, so went the parochial schools and the private schools…And um.. Jersey City (Interview with lifelong Jersey City resident and LCCS teacher on June 22, 2010).

This flight left Jersey City’s neighborhoods economically and racially segregated from those in the suburbs. American suburbanization, supported by federal policies, emptied the city of its middle-income consumers of real estate, products, and restaurants. In addition to the loss of valuable consumers, the city lost significant revenue, in the form of property, income, and sales taxes. The loss of industry led to the demise of economic
opportunities and the mass exodus of the middle-income population (Abrahamson, 2004; Sassen, 2000).

Similar to other America cities of the 1960s, the racial climate in Jersey City became adversarial. In August 1964, a few months after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, a fight between two African American women resulted in incidents of police brutality and what many characterize as the Jersey City Riot. The riot—small in comparison to those in other northeast cities—coupled with the Newark Riots of 1967, drove out many of the last remaining White middle-income residents.

A long term resident described the summers of the 1960s:

We always left Jersey City in the summer...thank God....we rented a house in Belmar, and you know, we were very blue collar...people left the city in the summer....Because it was presenting itself as a problem, you know? A lot of unrest... it was just not a good place to be in the late '60s...so we had lived over by, you know, Saint Patrick’s area. My parents moved here which was still pretty white...pretty stable. This area went, I’m going to say in the mid ‘70s...and we saw the decline of the City. It was not a place...at that point real estate was undervalued and I mean you could get a good house for the price, but it was not attracting business. It was not attracting anything and, um, people then commuted to the suburbs for jobs. That’s when the Journal Square shopping area and movie theaters went. (Interview with Teacher 13, June 22, 2010)

The establishment of additional public housing projects resulted in the creation of highly concentrated areas of poverty. Additionally, the residents of the housing projects were predominantly Black and Hispanic. For instance, in 1973, 60% of Curries Woods Public Housing residents were White and 38% were Black. However, by 1979, fewer than 10% of its residents were White and as high as 38% of its residents were Black. Similarly, the number of single-parent households increased from 28% in 1973 to 71% in 1979. (Source profiles of housing projects). Consequently, underclass communities that were both economically and racially segregated emerged (Massey and Denton, 1993). Many
scholars referred to the mass exodus from declining American cities as “white flight” because as the middle-income, mostly White population, moved out of the city, those left were predominately low skilled African Americans and Hispanic residents. Thus, not only was there a large out-migration of White middle class families, but there was also a large in-migration of impoverished Puerto Ricans and African-Americans from the South who replaced the White middle class (Petrick, 1995, p. 169).

By 1985, the wards of Jersey City were highly segregated by race. In the Heights, 81.6% of residents were White compared to Bergen-Lafayette, in which just 10.5% of the residents were White. Similarly, in Bergen Lafayette, 83.3% of the residents were Black compared to 0.7% of the Heights’ residents. The most racially balanced ward was the downtown, with 40% White, 25.9% Black and 7% Asian residents (Jersey City Ward Profiles, 1989). Figure 4.1 illustrates the racial segregation between wards in 1985.

Figure 4.1. Racial Segregation in 1985, by Wards

Source: Jersey City Ward Profiles, 1985

In Jersey City the creation of racially and economically segregated communities was the result of “the decline of manufacturing, the suburbanization of employment, and the rise of [the] low-wage service sector [which] eliminated high-paying jobs for unskilled men” (Wilson, 1987, p. 20). As a consequence, many of the residents of Jersey
City were impoverished. In 1970, 19% of the population lived below the poverty level. Additionally, by 1978, the city deemed more than 30% of the housing stock below standards (Master Plan, 1982). In 1984, one out of seven Jersey City residents were unemployed. Due to the loss of industry, Jersey City and the surrounding area lacked the proper infrastructure to provide employment for Jersey City residents. The loss of economic capital took a toll on Jersey City’s urban systems in the early 1980s. By 1983, Jersey City Medical Center, the state’s largest public hospital, was $18 million in debt and seeking protection in federal bankruptcy court. In 1989, Jersey City ceded control of its school system to the state due to fiscal and academic mismanagement (Rettig, 1992; Sullivan, 1983; Tractenberg, et al. 2002).

The demise of the railroads coupled with factory closings adversely affected Jersey City’s economy and its ability to levy tax revenue. “From 1940 to 1962, [Jersey City] experienced a tax loss of 1.3 million dollars based upon an estimated loss of twelve million dollars in assessments.” (Hayes, 1984, p.157) The loss of middle-income residents and industries decreased the city’s ability to collect tax revenue and accordingly provided the city with less money to devote to social services. The less money Jersey City, as a municipality, had for social services, the greater need there was for services. Over time Jersey City became more impoverished; by 1985, “census data found that 30.5% of households in this city were headed by females” (DaBrowski, 1992, p. 4). The city also had a high incidence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). According to the Center for Disease Control (1989), Jersey City had the second highest per capita AIDS rate in the country. Of these cases, over 60% were among intravenous
drug users (DaBrowski, 1992, p. 4). Therefore, many of Jersey City’s residents were in need of government support.

_Urban Decline of the Downtown Area_

The area of Jersey City most affected by decline was the downtown area. Historically, this area had contained a mix of both industry and residences. The industries inhabited the waterfront, while the residential neighborhoods were west of the waterfront’s industrial areas on the Hudson River and east of the industries on the Hackensack River. Many of what are now deemed “historical neighborhoods” are located in the downtown area. Grand nineteenth century brownstones surround both Hamilton and Van Vorst Park. However, the downtown area’s proximity to a former industrial site and rail yards led to its decline. Figure 4.2 shows the historic industrial waterfront in yellow and the historic downtown in pink. Both the 1997-2009 LCCS location in the downtown ward and its location since 2009 in the West Side are included on the map. Figure 4.2. Ward Map
By the end of the 1970s, the downtown area, which once had a profitable waterfront, was nothing more than 3,230 acres of abandoned and derelict railroad lots and abandoned factories. The deserted space attracted crime. Some criminals stole copper from the unused pipes and others squatted illegally in old factories. The unsavory nature of the downtown area in the late 1970s and into the 1980s resulted in residential flight. Between 1980 and 1985, the downtown area experienced a 10.7% increase in the number of vacant housing units (Jersey City Ward Profiles, 1985).

As in several other Northeastern cities, Jersey City’s decline, especially in the downtown area, resulted in many cases of arson. According to the Jersey City Fire Department, arson more than doubled in 1970s (Hanley, 1979). Arson was prevalent in the downtown, east Greenville and Bergen-Lafayette wards (Jersey City Ward Profiles, 1985). With arson came an increase in problems. As Massey and Denton described, “once a few buildings have burned, neighborhoods no longer attract stable households and become a magnet for other social problems, such as rats, litter, drugs, crime, and delinquency” (1993, p. 134). In 1979, York Street in the downtown area experienced a large number of fires and the media noted that “vacant lots interspersed among the buildings are dotted with scattered bricks and planks, discarded trash and the stripped hulks of a few vandalized cars” (Hanley, 1979). Hence, the downtown ward experienced serious urban decline.
By 2000, Jersey City had experienced a shift in both its racial and economic condition. The City’s middle-income population expanded; while’s its racial and ethnic diversity increased. Both public and private redevelopment altered the demographics of many blocks and in some cases entire census areas. The largest shifts occurred in Greenville, Bergen-Lafayette and the downtown areas. These shifts had the potential to attract more middle-income parents into the public schools and result in more economically and racially balanced schools.

Cities across the world have experienced varying degrees of gentrification—a phenomenon fostered by governments and corporations, but despised by some local residents. According to Smith, gentrification is a process in which “hostile landscapes are regenerated, cleansed, re-infused with middle class sensibility; real estate values soar; yuppies consume; elite gentility is democratized through mass-produced styles of distinction” (Smith, 1996, p. 13). Since the mid-1970s, Jersey City has experienced all of these elements of gentrification.

Inherent in the process of gentrification is “displacement.” When Glass first coined the term gentrification in 1964, she argued that “once this process of gentrification
starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class
occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed” (Glass,
1964). Census data show that after a ward experiences gentrification, the displacement or
“redistribution” of low-income residents occurs in other wards. For nearly 25 years,
Jersey City’s population had essentially the same proportion of people living below the
poverty level, 19%. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, a disproportionate percent of these
families lived in the downtown ward; between 1990 and 2000 this population shifted to
other wards. Figure 4.3 illustrates this movement:

Figure 4.3. Economic Segregation, % Living below Poverty Level in 1980 and 2000

Source: Jersey City Ward Profiles, 1989 and Census 2000

I distinguish between three major gentrification efforts: individuals and artists,
private housing developments, and public housing. All three efforts greatly influenced
Jersey City’s urban landscape in terms of housing quality, population, cultural activities,
and economic value.

In the 1970s, the value of many historic brownstones and row-houses in the
downtown area was at its lowest level and crime was at its highest level. Many creative
and hopeful individuals moved to Jersey City with the intention of purchasing historic homes and renovating them to increase their market value and livability. The Van Vorst Park area of the downtown was one of the first areas to attract gentrifiers. Gentrifiers engaged in “demolition parties,” in which they would all pitch in to rent heavy-duty machinery, and would assist one another with their houses (Informal discussion with a Van Vorst Park resident, April 17, 2008). The 1982 Jersey City Master Plan referred to “a process popularly known as ‘gentrification’” and argued, “it is appropriate for the City to encourage private rehabilitation to the maximum extent. A useful way to accomplish this through the Zoning Ordinance is to provide for incentives for desired types of development” (p. 76).

Many of the new residents were artists. In 1988, an organized community of artists founded 111 First Street in the Lorillard Building, located in a deserted warehouse district of downtown Jersey City, as residential and work lofts. They identified themselves as “developers of culture” and in addition to the re-development of an abandoned warehouse, they also developed a studio art tour (http://www.111first.com/about/). According to the community’s website, they brought

\[\text{Hudson County Art Supply, established in 2005, located in downtown Jersey City, photograph taken on July 17, 2010}\]
the district back from blight and crime. In the late 1980s, the artists included visual artists, musicians, composers, recording studios, filmmakers, actors, craftspeople, custom cabinetmakers, art galleries, designers, art-furniture makers, graphic artists, and stained-glass artisans, as well as yoga and therapeutic massage professionals.

Just as the gentrifying artists displaced crime and blight, Lloyd Goldman, their landlord who had earlier demolished the building to use the space for residential development, displaced them in January of 2005. In February 2007, the international company Office of Metropolitan Architecture released its plans to develop a modern 52-story tower in place of the demolished building. Below are photographs of the current site. The photograph on the left illustrates what the building looked like in the late 1980s. The middle photograph, facing east, illustrates how the warehouse district is evolving. On the right is the old powerhouse; currently this area is undergoing renovation as a mixed-use art center. The tall tower is Trump Towers.

![Left: the land where 111 First Street once stood. Middle: The current view from 111 First Street, The Powerhouse and Trump Towers. Right: The front view of the Powerhouse and Trump Towers. Photographs taken October 17, 2010](image)

Trump Towers represents the second form of gentrification: private development. Private development occurred with the assistance of city government. For example,
“select developers and investors received much of the local government tax breaks and payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT), so taxes are paid up front at a reduced rate for a number of years” (Wharton, 2008, p. 5). In the early 1980s, a number of corporate developers began to undertake “urban pioneering.” Smith argued that the corporate developers of cities “pioneer(ed) first on the gold coast between safe neighborhoods on one side where property values were high and the disinvested slums on the other side where opportunity is higher” (Smith, 1993, p. 23). In Jersey City, the waterfront, located west of the Hudson River and running along the Jersey City coast, became the gold coast. Historically, the waterfront was a predominantly industrial area because of both the factories and the presence of all 13 railroad companies, whose property ended along the waterfront.

In the first years of revitalization, Samuel LeFrak established a new community, Newport City on the Waterfront, whose socio-economic class differed so drastically from the surrounding area that his business partner Melvin Simons built a shopping mall between the new community of wealthy elites and the historically crime-ridden downtown community (Chambers, 2006). The location of the shopping mall brought investment to the area, while at the same time shielding Newport City from the crime-ridden Hamilton Park area.
Above are photographs of Newport City. The photograph on the left shows the Newport Mall parking lot, which acts as a boundary between Newport City and Hamilton Park. The tall buildings behind the parking lot are both residential and business towers, including the towers of Newport City. The second photograph is of Newport City’s shopping strip. The public space in front of the stores hosts community events, such as the one in the photograph, and an outside ice skating rink in the winter. The next photo is of Newport City’s town square; around the square are restaurants, cafes, Phoenix University and a harbor. The final photograph shows the gentrified harbor.

Despite the small size of the original Newport community, the investors believed it would have a large-scale effect on Jersey City. The theory behind the development was that money would trickle down to the poor. This type of policy was common in the Reagan years. The project “involved private-sector investment coupled with the largest-ever $40 million Urban Development Action Grant for new residential and commercial development on land formerly used for industrial and military functions” (Lawless, 2002, p. 1332). Mayor Gerald McCann said “this is a good project, with good developers.” He added, “federal officials knew that the Harbor (Newport) City project would have a dramatic impact on Jersey City and would stimulate the kind of job creation and economic development for which the program was designed” (Depalma, 1983). The residential developments along the waterfront quickly increased the property value of the land. Between 1990 and 2000, the median gross rent in two census tracts along the waterfront rose from $882 to $1686 and $659 to $1649 (United States Census data). This sharp increase was due to both the addition of residential housing in a formerly derelict
neighborhood and the presence of luxury housing with amenities like doormen, parking, and views of New York City.

Just south of Newport City, Peter Mocco bought 70-plus acres of land, which became Liberty Harbor, from the Jersey City Employees’ Retirement Fund in 1985 for only $880,000 (Kaulessar, 2003). “At the time, it was a series of abandoned, ramshackle shacks, and some industrial-type building. I saw that properly developed this site would join the Paulus Hook and Van Vorst historic districts and fill in a very critical land mass providing access to the waterfront.” (Kaulessar, 2003) The intention of the new development was not for it to integrate into the downtown area, but rather, “Liberty Harbor, when completed, will be almost a small city, with a project population of over 20,000 people. Mocco [the developer] said it will be patrolled by armed security” (Kaulessar, 2003).

Mocco argued that the new community would attract residents because the it felt suburban, but had urban amenities. He argued that, “after two generations of Suburban Sprawl…people knew there had to be something better and started returning to the cities. What they are very clearly looking for are places that are friendly, with human scale and built in socialability, where the streets are pleasant and entertaining to walk. (Martin, 2007). The development of Liberty Harbor did not proceed without a fight. Residents living in the three blocks between Grand and Canal fought against eminent domain, a battle they eventually lost. Below is an photograph of some of Mocco’s recently built townhouses, located in Liberty Harbor.
Other large-scale developments followed: Society Hill, Port Liberte, the Beacon, Canco Lofts, and Dixon Mills. Developers built Society Hill and Port Liberte on former brownfields near the waterfront. Both developments are gated communities. Port Liberte is located at the southern tip of Jersey City and protected by the Hudson River and the Liberty National Golf Course. The development has security gates. Some of the properties have attached moorings on the canal that cuts through the development. Additionally, the houses have views of Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty.

The Beacon, Canco Lofts, and Dixon Mills are all examples of redeveloped residential communities. In the 1980s, the Beacon building closed after the old Jersey City Hospital went bankrupt. Similarly, the Canco Lofts and Dixon Mills, former manufacturing plants, became redeveloped residential communities. Due to their
locations—each development is more than a mile from the nearest PATH train stop—all three developments have their own buses that pick residents up from the Path Station. Both Canco Lofts and The Beacon are located in predominantly low-income neighborhoods, which have historically been crime-ridden. The Beacon sits next to one of Jersey City’s largest public housing developments, Montgomery Gardens. Similarly, Canco Lofts is located between a highway and an abandoned warehouse district in the Journal Square area.

Just as large corporate developments changed Jersey City’s urban landscape, public housing in Jersey City went through many changes. These changes followed a national trend of demolishing historically crime-ridden high-rise public housing towers and replacing them with low-rise moderate to low-income housing. Through grants, the federal government’s HOPE program has financially assisted cities in this process.

Curries Woods was the city’s most notoriously crime-ridden public housing community. Richard Price’s 1992 novel, *Clockers*, was based on Curries Woods. In November 2001, the government notified 127 families that they would have to leave their home at Curries Woods for 18 months during the conversion into 200 brownstone units (Fink, 2002). The changes in the development did not guarantee that every family would
receive housing. Housing would be available to those in good standing. This type of a change “cleansed” the neighborhood of undesirable residents (cite). The A. Harry Moore projects were also torn down and re-developed as mixed-income townhouses. Additionally, there are plans to redevelop the Montgomery Projects, which are currently adjacent to the Beacon development.

Photographs of Curries Woods, taken on July 21, 2010

The photographs above show the “New” Curries Woods. The colorful sign looks more like a country club sign than the entrance to a public housing complex. The architecture of the houses looks similar to privately sold townhouses in Jersey City. The developer, Edwin W. Bidigare, explained that “there should be no difference between public housing and market-rate housing” (Canal, 2001, p. B1) because they are building the townhouses in the same style as the market-rate homes in the gated community of Society Hill on Route 440. The street signs are hopeful, with names like “Hope Lane,” “Ruby Brown Terrace,” and “Peace Ave.” The photograph to the right shows the large red towers that are the last reminders of the earlier high-rise community.
In addition to re-developing three of the largest public housing developments in Jersey City, the city also built new affordable housing in areas that were historically industrial brownfields. In 2007, Jersey City removed 372,396 tons of contaminated soil, in contrast with just 39,430 tons two years earlier (http://www.rtk.net). This highlights the large amount of industrial waste, that is just recently being cleaned up. These new developments include mostly mixed-income housing and are intended to create socially integrated neighborhoods. The design of the buildings makes the neighborhoods desirable to both public housing and market-value tenants. Below are images of Lafayette Village, a mixed-income neighborhood located in the Bergen section of Jersey City.
In addition to a residential decline in the 1980s, the city experienced a loss of 10,000 manufacturing jobs between 1975 and 1998 (Pristin, T, 1997). Consequently, the Jersey City economy transformed from a manufacturing economy to a service economy. This transformation can be seen in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1. Changes in Occupations between 1980 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1980 (88,230 employees)</th>
<th>2005 (110,272 employees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>17% (15,065)</td>
<td>35% (38,477)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>34% (29,913)</td>
<td>27% (30,090)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>14% (12,119)</td>
<td>18% (20,234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>10% (8,508)</td>
<td>12% (13,717)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>25% (22,410)</td>
<td>7% (7,749)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Housing and Populations 1980 and 2005
Since 1980, Jersey City has increased the number of employed adults by 22,042. This indicates that the Jersey City economy has begun to find its niche in the global economy. An examination of Table 4.1 shows that the increase in positions is due to the addition of 23,412 management positions since 1980. The other occupations that changed were operations jobs, which dropped from 22,410 to 7,749 in 2005. The decline in these positions was due to the closure of many industrial plants in the mid-1980s.

The other significant change shown in the table is the increase in service positions from 12,119 in 1980, to 20,234 in 2005. The rise in service positions correlates with the increase in finance corporations moving to the waterfront. By 1989, Merrill Lynch and Company had moved from New York to Jersey City’s “Gold Coast” (Hoff, 1989). Tax abatements and other efforts by state and local government ensured that Jersey City attracted many high-end corporations. The arrival of Merrill Lynch and other finance corporations increased the number of management and service positions in Jersey City.

In a post-industrial economy, cities need to redefine themselves to survive economically. Saskia Sassen explained that cities can no longer survive as insular entities; instead, cities must connect to the global economy. Global cities rely on the service economy. The service economy includes both high-end positions at the top (finance, insurance, and real estate [FIRE]) and low-end positions at the bottom (waiters, busboys, and taxi drivers). In 2005, Jersey City had 15,643 employees in finance, insurance, and real estate (Census, 2005). In addition to the FIRE industries, Jersey City also transformed its image and gained many cultural assets, such as the Jersey City
Museum, galleries, and many new restaurants. By 2005, 7,980 employees in Jersey City had cultural positions. This category was not included in the 1980 Census.

_Devlopment and Demographics_

The housing developments have led to an increase in Jersey City’s population. In 1930, the population of Jersey City peaked at 316,000 and then declined steadily to a low of 223,500 in 1980 (Petrick, 1995, p. 220). However, since 1980, the population has increased to 241,789 (Census.gov). In this time period, five of the six wards have experienced a population increase—with the downtown ward’s increase being as high as 1.25%. However, in Bergen, there was a 0.92% population loss. Table 4.2 illustrates the population changes between 1980 and 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wards</th>
<th>Population Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greenville</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Square</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heights</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergen</td>
<td>0.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey City</td>
<td>1.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Data

One demographic that did not change between 1980 and 2006 was the poverty level. Despite the federal, private, and state money invested in Jersey City, the poverty level remained at 19% between 1980 and 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau). Currently, the Health and Human Service Poverty thresholds are: $10,400 for a single person; $14,000
for a family of two; $17,600 for a family of three and $21,200 for a family of four (Federal Register, 2008, pp. 3971-3972). Jersey City’s poverty level is more than double the state and national average.

In 1980, Jersey City underwent extreme economic segregation and a large proportion of impoverished residents were living in a few wards. For example, in 1980, Greenville and the Heights had the lowest percentages of residents below the poverty level with 14.3% and 14.1% respectively. In contrast, the downtown and Bergen wards had 29% and 22.6% of their residents in poverty, respectively (Jersey City Ward Profiles, 1989). However, in 1980, Greenville had the highest median income and the downtown ward had the lowest (Jersey City Ward Profiles). Greenville and the Heights continue to have the lowest percentage of people living below the poverty rate, but the downtown ward transformed from having 29% of its residents living below poverty in 1980 to 19% in 2000. With the current redevelopment and housing changes, this number should decline in the 2010 census. Figure 4.3 illustrates the downtown ward’s economic changes.

Figure 4.3. Comparison of Jersey City Poverty Levels by Ward
Additionally, the median income of each ward has changed. Each ward increased between 1980 and 2000 in terms of its 1979 median income amount. However the median income for the downtown ward almost doubled, rising from $10,000 to $18,000. The other wards increased between $1,000 and $5,000. Figure 4.4 illustrates the changes in median income.

Figure 4.4. Median Income: Comparisons by Ward

Jersey City’s racial make-up has also changed. Jersey City’s White population declined from 57% in 1980 to 34% in 2006. The Asian population rose from 4% to 16.2% in the same time period. In addition to the rise in the percent of Asians, Hispanics in Jersey City increased from 19% to 28.3% of the population. African Americans make up roughly the same percent in 2006 (28%) as they did in 1980 (27%).

Gentrification in Jersey City has resulted in the creation of many high-end residential neighborhoods, mostly in the downtown ward. These housing developments have increased the median income of the downtown ward and as a consequence the low-income population has spread to other wards. These changes have had a profound impact
on the educational landscape of the city, which must be understood in the context of its educational history.
Chapter Five: Jersey City’s Educational History

Educational Decline (1960s-1970s)

The Jersey City public school system’s demographics changed just as Jersey City’s population changed. Historically, the White Protestant elite predominantly attended public the Jersey City schools. However, by the 1970s the public school students were primarily Black and Hispanic. For example “blacks and other races comprised 22% of Jersey City’s total population and 60% of all students enrolled in the public schools in 1970” (Thomas, 1979, p. 3). Similarly, by 1977, 76% of all Jersey City public school students were either Black or from other minority groups (Thomas, 1979, p. 3). By the beginning of the 1980s, the Jersey City public schools underwent extreme racial isolation and segregation.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the Catholic Schools began to cater to middle-income Jersey City residents. This illustrated a demographic shift from the nineteenth century when Catholic schools primarily educated low-income Irish immigrants. In the 1960s, “the city’s white residents many of Irish, Italian, or Polish descent sent their kids to Catholic Schools” (Yaffè, 2007, p. 12). One explanation for why these families sent their children to the Catholic Schools was expressed by a long-term Jersey City resident who explained that “a lot of blue collar, middle class kids’ parents had wanted to really keep them out of the public schools because they were troublesome. They didn’t want their kids getting involved in gangs and that kind of thing. So they were willing to pay up and sent their kids to parochial schools” (Interview, June 24, 2010).
In addition to changes in demographics, families began to perceive Catholic schools as educationally superior alternatives to the Jersey City public schools. At the turn of the twentieth century, parochial school children were required to pass an admission test to transfer into the Jersey City public schools. However, by 1960, Catholic secondary schools required public school students to pass an entrance exam to enter the Catholic secondary schools (Petrick, 1995, p. 331). The Catholic schools attracted new families, and as a result reduced the public school population. Thus, the parochial schools creamed the Jersey City public school system of its motivated students and families. In 1970, 32% of Jersey City’s school-age population attended parochial schools and by 1978, 34% of Jersey City’s school age-children attended parochial schools (Thomas, 1979, p.3). Therefore, Jersey City’s parochial schools continued to cream the City of a large percent of its students for a long-period of time.

Not only did the Jersey City public schools encounter economic and racial segregation, but also they lacked financial and academic resources. In February of 1970, Attorney Harold Ruvoldt filed a lawsuit claiming that Jersey City’s funding was inequitable, which resulted in the schools lacking adequate resources to fund their programs. Not only did the Jersey City public school receive less funding than wealthier districts, but their tax rate was disproportionately higher. For example, in 1972 Jersey City’s equalized school tax rate was 2.82%, while in Edison the equalized tax rate was as low as 1.16% (*Robinson v. Cahill* Decision).

In addition to inadequate funding, the district’s achievement scores were consistently among the worst in New Jersey, according to a statewide basic skills test that was administered in the late 1970s. Jersey City parents criticized the school district for
the low scores. “The educators, countered, by blaming the family and the environment.”

(Thomas, 1979, p.15) Jersey City’s divided educational system of failing public schools and adequate parochial schools meant those with resources obtained a parochial education and those who lacked resources were left trapped in failing public schools. Figure 5.1 illustrates the federal, state, and local reforms that impacted Jersey City’s educational system.

Figure 5.1. Timeline of Jersey City Educational Reforms
The History Of Educational Policies Influencing Jersey City Public Schools

District State Federal

1970

Robinson v. Cahill (1970)
The plaintiff Kenneth Robinson was a Jersey City public school student.

T & E Law (1975)
Required the State to create another source of school revenue. In 1976, the state income tax was introduced.

1980

A series of 12 school finance cases resulting in the designation of 31 special needs districts. Jersey City and the other Abbott districts received additional state funding for Pre-K and Whole-School reform programs.

1990

State Takeover (1989)
Jersey City became the first district in America to lose administrative and educational control of its schools to the state.

2000

C.E.I.A.N. creates core curriculum standards (1996)

Charter Schools approved (1997)

No Child Left Behind (2001)
Requires that all students meet state proficiency by 2014. Schools are monitored yearly by Adequate Yearly Progress.

2010

District regains control

Voters support elected school board (2008)
Responding to the financial and academic educational issues in Jersey City, resident and attorney Harold Ruvoldt sued the state in 1970. Prior to the litigation, the mayor had threatened to keep the schools closed unless the state found the remainder of the necessary school funding. Ruvoldt found this a good opportunity to sue the state using the argument that an education is a fundamental right and one’s residence should not determine one’s educational quality. In preparing his case, Ruvoldt sought a plaintiff. Ideally, Ruvoldt wanted a smart, but underperforming White plaintiff to show that the state was discriminating on the basis of wealth—not just race. “Ruvoldt soon concluded, however, that few talented white children remained stuck in Jersey City’s worst schools; if you were smart and white, someone found you a way out.” (Yaffe, 2007, p. 21)

Therefore, Ruvoldt chose Kenneth Robinson, a Black sixth grader at School 22 with an enrollment of 2,000 students, many of whom were poor and minority-group members (Yaffe, 2007, p. 21). Kenneth Robinson and other Jersey City students received an education inferior to that received by their peers in the suburbs. Although New Jersey did not collect test data until the mid-1970s, national tests assessed Jersey City students. On the national tests, 43% of Jersey City’s students scored two-and-one-half years behind their peers (Yaffe, 2007, p. 22).

The plaintiffs in Robinson v. Cahill, the first major school finances case in New Jersey, were students of Jersey City’s underfunded and poorly managed public school

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2 See Yaffe’s Other People’s Children for an in-depth analysis of the Robinson and Abbott decisions.

3 Robinson v. Cahill, 118 N.J. Super. 223(1972) and 119 N.J. Super. 40 (1972)
system. *Robinson v. Cahill* caused the court system to interpret the *Thorough and Efficient Clause* of the state’s 1875 Constitution. The case was argued using the contention that the finance systems in New Jersey disregarded notions of educational and taxpayer equity. The New Jersey Supreme Court decided that taxpayers did not have a constitutional right to tax equality; yet, all children had a constitutional right to a thorough and efficient education. The *Robinson* case mandated that the legislature adopt a constitutionally viable funding system. Accordingly, the legislature responded with the Public School Education Act of 1975 and the state’s first income tax in 1976 (Tractenberg, Liss, & Sadovnik, 2005). Although this new tax provided more revenue for education, it still did not provide all New Jersey students with their constitutional right to a thorough and efficient education. In particular, during the 1984-85 school year, both the poor (not-yet named) Abbott districts and non-Abbott districts “were spending well below the state average for regular education spending, whereas the middle-wealth districts were spending approximately the state average and high wealth districts were spending well above the state average for regular education” (Ritter & Lauver, 2003, p. 585).

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Robinson* and other poor urban children in New Jersey’s poorest districts. The ruling resulted in the creation of the T&E Law of 1975. The law required another method for the collection of state revenue. Therefore, New Jersey established an income tax. Unfortunately, the T&E Law did not alleviate the fiscal or academic disparities between poor urban districts and wealthy suburban districts. Ironically, “while a majority of other smaller, richer, and less problematic districts in the State have benefited from the 1975 act, Jersey City has not;
the City actually regressed in relation to the rest of the State” (Thomas, 1979, p. 19). Despite the efforts of Ruvoldt and the Robinson Supreme Court decision, academic achievement in the late 1970s was extremely poor in the Jersey City Public Schools. In 1978, 71.7% of Jersey City Public School High School students were not achieving a minimum score on New Jersey’s College Basic Reading Comprehension Test; in comparison, 30.4% of Roman Catholic parochial students did not achieve the minimum score (Thomas, 1979, p. 32). In elementary algebra, 87.3% of Jersey City Public High School students were not proficient compared to 45.3% of Roman Catholic Jersey City High School students. Therefore, in 1980, two systems of education remained in Jersey City.

By the end of the 1980s, the Jersey City public schools were a public enterprise that had reached a state of managerial bankruptcy (Rettig, 1992, p. 2). This fiscal mismanagement resulted in the first state takeover of a district’s educational system in the history of the United States. With the T&E Law of 1975, came an increase in state oversight and monitoring (Rettig, 1992, p.5). In addition to increased oversight, the state received greater legal powers in 1988 when Governor Kean signed into law the “State Takeover Legislation” (Rettig, 1992, p. 5). After more than 100 days of testimony and over 21,000 pages of transcripts, Administrative Law Judge Ken Springer stated that the Jersey City’s School Board had, “so lost its way that it cannot be counted on to lead the children to educational quality” (McCarroll v. Board of Education of Jersey City 13 N.J.A.R. 1, 1989).

One reason that Jersey City “lost its way” was of the use of nepotism and political patronage. According to an interview in Michael Rettig’s Report, The Case of the State
Takeover of the Jersey City, New Jersey Public Schools, “It’s the same old story. Where can the politicians get the most jobs for the people? One of the places is the schools” (p. 172). In a post-industrial economy, Jersey City politicians used the school system to provide unqualified residents with jobs. Accordingly, the state takeover took place on October 4, 1989. For the most part, the state takeover proved to be problematic (Tractenberg, Liss, & Sadovnik, 2005). Jersey City finally began the process of returning schools to local control in 2007 with the establishment of a local school board (Mascrenhas and Calefati, 2010).

Since 1975, a system called District Factor Groups has categorized and ranked New Jersey’s 611 school districts. District Factor Groups (DFGs) rank districts along a spectrum from A & B to I & J. The A & B districts were property-poor, with high tax rates while the I & J districts were property wealthy with low tax rates, due to revenue via high property values. To best understand how low-income districts differed in terms of educational quality and resources, Kozol created portraits in his book, Savage Inequalities (1992). In one of these portraits, Kozol described an A & B district, Jersey City, in 1989 as having an elementary school that required students to rent their own musical instruments, due to a lack of school supplies, and held music class in the basement. Meanwhile, Milburn schools, in a wealthy district, had one-on-one lessons, music rooms, music suites, and honors music programs. Unfortunately, the lack of resources resulted in the rejection of 650 of 680 willing students at the Jersey City elementary school enrollment in a music instrument class. Similarly, Jersey City students were allocated just $2.62 for art supplies and took computer classes in closets, while Princeton school students, in another I & J district, “work in comfortable computer areas
equipped with some 200 IBMS, as well as with a hookup to Dow Jones to study stock transactions” (Kozol, 1991, p. 158).

State Reforms of the 1990s

In addition to the state takeover, two additional major reforms occurred in New Jersey during the 1990s: Abbott reforms and charter schools. The insignificant changes resulting from the Robinson decision motivated activists, educators, and lawyers to file a second class-action suit, Abbott v. Burke. 4 In June of 1990, the justices of the Supreme Court decided in Abbott v. Burke that, “our constitutional mandate does not allow us to consign poorer children permanently to an inferior education on the theory that they cannot afford a better one or that they would not benefit from it” (Abbott v. Burke, 1990). The Court asserted that economic limitations should not determine educational opportunities and posited that, “the children of poorer urban districts are as capable as all others; that their deficiencies stem from their socioeconomic status; and that through effective education and changes in that socioeconomic status, they can perform as well as others” (Abbott v. Burke, 1990, p. 386). The justices’ sense of social justice and fairness prescribed a remedy for New Jersey’s educational policy—due to the absence of the legislature’s solution.

To ensure that all children who had been previously limited by their neighborhood’s destitution received a thorough and efficient education, the Court mandated that, “the State must assure that their educational expenditures per pupil are substantially equivalent to those of the more affluent suburban districts, and that, in

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addition, their special disadvantages must be addressed” (*Abbott v. Burke*, 1990). The Court’s remedy dictated that in order for educational opportunities to exist, students residing in the poorest A & B districts needed resources equivalent to those residing in the wealthy I & J districts. In addition to providing students with more resources for traditionally academic standards-based education, the *Abbott* decision also mandated the provision of preschool education and supplemental programs to address the needs of the high-poverty community.

Abbott districts have a large percentage of minorities. The court acknowledges that historically these groups have experienced discrimination and without certain remedies, these groups will continue to experience racial isolation. In *Abbott*, the Court recognized the negative effects of economic and racial segregation on children’s educational opportunities. The Court’s intention in its ruling was that the additional monies spent in the Abbott districts would alleviate the achievement gap. The Court identified specific factors necessary to be considered an *Abbott* special needs district: classification by the Department of Education as urban and assignment to the lowest categories on the Department of Education's District Factor Group (DFG) scale. Jersey City became one of the first 29 Abbott districts.

In response to the *Abbott* decision, the legislature enacted the Quality Education Act of 1990 (QEA). The special needs districts received an additional $900 million in state aid for the first two years (Lauver, Ritter, & Goertz, 2001, p. 282). QEA followed a foundation formula with a set per-pupil amount. The state then paid an amount inverse to each district’s wealth, determined by a combination of property tax bases and total personal income of residents (Reock, 1996, p. 7). In addition to the foundation formula,
there was also categorical program aid available for special education students and at-risk pupils determined by eligibility for free school lunch, bilingual education, and county vocational program aid. The total state aid increased by nearly 22% in 1991-1992 due to the implementation of QEA (Reock, 1996, p. 21). In the third Abbott decision, the QEA of 1990 was struck down because it did not respond specifically to the needs of the original 28 special needs districts (Goertz & Malek, 1999, p. 16).

Responding to the Court’s mandate, the legislature developed the Public School Reform Act of 1992. This act allocated $115,000,000 of state aid to the 30 court-designated Abbott districts in such a way that each district received 9.42% more in foundation aid than during the 1992-1993 school year (Reock, 1996, p. 11). This was the first of many efforts to reach parity between the Abbott districts and I & J districts in New Jersey.

In response to the Abbott decision in 1997, the legislature developed the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA). CEIFA was similar to the above two formulas because it had a foundation funding formula (New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association §18A:7F-1 et seq). However, CEIFA included two additional categories that adjusted for both Abbott parity aid and supplemental program aid. These two forms of aid are directly targeted at reducing educational inequalities between the poor Abbott districts and the wealthy suburban I & J districts. These categories were not formally in CEIFA, but rather were added to the State Appropriations Act in a footnote in 1997-1998.

CEIFA’s foundation aid differs from QEA in that the Core Curriculum Standards Aid (CCSA) takes into consideration the cost of providing a thorough and efficient
education (N.J.S.A. §18A:7F-11). The Commissioner of Education determines the T&E amount each year; both enrollment and grade level are taken into consideration when determining a district’s amount. CEIFA’s last implementation was in the 2001-2002 school year and mandated whole school reform. Whole school reform requires that the districts use research-based curriculum. An additional component of the Abbott reforms was universal preschool.

For the current 31 special needs Abbott districts, the fiscal disparities between the wealthier and poorer districts have decreased. In 1989-90, the state average per-pupil expenditure was $5,698; in Abbott districts it was $ 5,003; in the DFG I & J districts it was $6,555. By 2002-04, the state average per-pupil expenditure was $9,849; in Abbott districts was $10,377; in the DFG I & J districts it was $10,552 (Tractenberg, Liss, & Sadovnik, 2005).

**Effects on Jersey City**

*Abbott* brought additional funds and programs to Jersey City and the other 30 court-designated districts. Many of the programs were whole school reform packages. The court required the state to establish a plan to restructure schools in the Abbott districts. The New Jersey Department of Education introduced whole school reform (WSR) to the court and explained that, “its broad purpose is to guide a sweeping reform of education in which the program, staffing, operations and financing of each individual school will be rebuilt from the ‘ground up’ using research proven programs and strategies” (Muirhd, Tyler, & Hamilton, 2001). The most chosen WSR packages included: Accelerated Schools, Success for All/Roots and Wings, Communities for
Learning, and Comer.\textsuperscript{5} Muirhead, Tyler, and Hamilton evaluated WSR three years after its implementation in 30 Abbott districts. Their findings show that the SMT members “rated district support highest in the area of curriculum alignment and lowest in the area of providing performance and demographic data for decision making” (2001, p. 38). The analysis of student-level data had the potential to inform Jersey City about specific programs for its most at-risk students.

Achievement since the Abbott intervention has decreased the gap between Abbott and non-Abbott students. At the fourth grade level, the gap in math scores declined from 31 to 19 points between 1999 and 2007. Additionally, the gap in reading scores for fourth graders decreased from 22 points to 15 points between 2001 and 2007. (Education Law Center, Abbott Myth #6). Other evidence indicating that Jersey City’s public schools have improved since the \textit{Abbott} decision include the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) report and Jersey City’s return to local control.

On July 5, 2000, the New Jersey State Board of Education approved a resolution to give the Jersey City School Board control of governance and finance (DeSando, 2000). Before regaining local control, Jersey City passed its QSAC evaluation in 2007. QSAC is a “statutorily-mandated system of school district performance assessment” (IELP’s Report QSAC, 2007).\textsuperscript{6} The report assesses five areas of a school district: instruction and program, personnel, fiscal management, operations management, and governance. On

\textsuperscript{5} The New Jersey Department of Education selected 13 WSR models that Abbott school personnel (SMT) could choose: Accelerated Schools, America’s Choice, Coalition of Essential Schools, Communities for Learning, Co-NECT, Micro society, Modern Red Schoolhouse, PAIDEIA, School Development Program (Comer), Success for All/Root and Wings, Talented Development, Ventures in Education and an Alternative Program Design (home grown model).

\textsuperscript{6} For more information on QSAC see IELP’s Report QSAC: A Guide for School Official and the Public, 2007: http://ielp.rutgers.edu/projects/qjac
July 24, 2007, Education Commissioner Lucille Davy recommended that governance and financial functions of the Jersey City districts be returned to district control based on QSAC’s review of the district (DOE Releases QSAC Reviews). Jersey City met 89% of the performance indicators in governance and 92% in fiscal management. However, the city only met 57% of the indicators in instruction and program, 58% in personnel, and 74% in operations management. On April 17, 2008, after 19 years of state control, the Jersey City Public Schools returned to local control.

Additionally, in 2008, Governor Corzine and the legislature passed a new funding formula. This formula removed the Abbott designations and remedies. In 2009, the state asked the New Jersey Supreme Court to determine the constitutionality of the new funding formula, in light of the Abbott v. Burke rulings. The court remanded the case to a lower-trial court, which made recommendations to the New Jersey Supreme Court in the Spring of 2009. The court upheld the formula in the School Finance Reform Act (SFRA), thereby, ending the special Abbott designation for Jersey City and the other 30 Abbott districts.

Currently, student achievement in Jersey City has slightly improved when compared to the state average. The six charts below illustrate that achievement improved in language arts and math at the fourth, eighth, and eleventh grade levels between 2002 and 2006. The improvement in this time frame could be explained by the Abbott reforms, state takeover, and the new influx of middle-income families. However, the state-city gap increased between 2006 and 2008, which could be explained by reductions in state aid, the end of Abbott programs, and the increase in charter school enrollment. Figures 5.2 – 5.7 illustrate the gap between the progress the Jersey City schools have made in
comparison to the state and the improvements still needed to reach parity with the state average.

Figure 5.2. Jersey City Language Arts (ASK4) from 2002-2008

In fourth grade language arts, the gap between Jersey City and the state narrowed slightly between 2002 and 2008. However, by the 2008 school year, the gap expanded to 25.6% from 19.3% in 2002.

Figure 5.3. Jersey City Math (NJ ASK 4) from 2002-2008
The fourth grade math score gap began narrowing from 23.1% in 2002 to 15.7% in 2007. However, it increased to 18% in 2008.

Figure 5.4. Jersey City Language Arts (GEPA/ASK 8) from 2001-2008

The eighth grade language arts gap between Jersey City and the state narrowed from 24.6% to 20.6% between 2001 and 2008.
Figure 5.5. Jersey City Math (GEPA/ASK 8) from 2001–2008

The eighth grade math gap expanded from 19% to 21.9% between 2001 and 2008.

Figure 5.6. Jersey City Language Arts (NJ HSPA) from 2001-2008

The eleventh grade language arts gap narrowed slightly from 22.6% to 20.3% between 2001 and 2008.
Figure 5.7. Jersey City Math (NJ HSPA) from 2001-2008

Source for all data: New Jersey Department of Education, Historic Report Card Data

The eleventh grade math gap narrowed slightly from 29.7% to 26.2% between 2001 and 2008.

*Opting out of the Public Schools*

Historically, many Jersey City families opted out of the public school system because of religious difference; however, currently, many families opt out because of the low academic performance. In the 1990s, Catholic schools in Jersey City, like the rest of the country, began to face financial troubles. In Jersey City, the changing demographics were partially responsible for the decline in parochial school attendance. Additionally, new alternatives, mostly non-parochial private schools began to emerge. Stevens Cooperative, a progressive private school opened in Hoboken in 1949. In 1979, Mustard Seed School, a parochial school with a more progressive approach than most, opened in Hoboken to “address the educational needs of the urban community, to stimulate and
broaden the experiences of city children, and to educate students in an intercultural, interdenominational Christian setting. Mustard Seed School has an intentional mission to the urban poor” (Mustard Seed School website). In 1988, The Cornerstone, a private school, with a progressive pedagogy and philosophy, opened in Jersey City. In 1993, the Play and Learn Nursery School, a parent-organized playgroup evolved into Primary Prep, a parent-organized private school. The school’s website describes its student population as diverse and states that the curriculum is designed “to keep the children interested in the education process by making the daily lessons fun and interactive” (Primary Prep Website).

In addition to parent-organized schools, developers have used private schools as a means to attract wealthy families to Jersey City. In 1992, the Lefrak Corporation recruited The Cornerstone School to move into its newly constructed tower condominium by the waterfront. Lefrak’s intention was to use the school as a magnet for new families. Lefrak even subsidized tuition for residents in its buildings. Lefrak argued, “every community needs a local school” (Garbarine, 2003). In 2003, Stevens Cooperative replaced The Cornerstone, when the latter became bankrupt.

Whether parochial or private, many of Jersey City’s middle- and upper-class families choose alternatives to the district schools. Table 5.1 compares the percentage of students who opt out of the public school system in Jersey City and other large Abbott districts. Jersey City’s percentage of students who attend private schools is much higher than that of Elizabeth, Newark, and Camden. In the early grades, Elizabeth has a similarly high percentage of students in private schools. However, Jersey City’s private school enrollment numbers remain relatively high in the upper grades, between 30% and
17%. In contrast, Elizabeth’s private school enrollment drops from 25% private in preschool to 6% in kindergarten.

Table 5.1. Levels of Opting out of Public Schools: Comparison of Urban Districts and Jersey City

*Source: 2000 Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Public preschool</th>
<th>Private preschool</th>
<th>Public kindergarten</th>
<th>Private kindergarten</th>
<th>Public grade 1-4</th>
<th>Private grade 1-4</th>
<th>Public 5-8</th>
<th>Private 5-8</th>
<th>Public 9-12</th>
<th>Private 9-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>69,949</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>5,107</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>4,481</td>
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<td></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
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<td>2,365</td>
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<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jersey City</td>
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<td>3,596</td>
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<td>1,634</td>
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<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>255,403</td>
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<td>564</td>
<td>3,677</td>
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<td>10,468</td>
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<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to Jersey City families opting out of the public schools, they are also opting out of the district schools and enrolling into public charter schools. Jersey City, like many other Abbott districts, expanded its public district by including charter schools in 1997 in response to Governor Whitman signing the New Jersey Charter School bill into
legislation in 1996. The majority of the charter schools in New Jersey are located in Abbott districts. Similar to other U.S. states, New Jersey established charter schools in the mid-1990s. Currently, more than 4,250 charter schools serve more than 1.2 million students in 40 states and the District of Columbia (The Center for Educational Reform).

According to the Charter School Program Act (NJSA 18A:36A),

The legislature finds and declares that the establishment of charter schools as part of this State's program of public education can assist in promoting comprehensive educational reform by providing a mechanism for the implementation of a variety of educational approaches, which may not be available in the traditional public school classroom.

By 1997, the state approved three charters in Jersey City, which opened in the fall of 1997 (Department of Education website, Charter Schools). Therefore, by 1997 two of the state’s 13 charter schools were located in Jersey City (New Jersey Charter Schools).

Three Jersey City charter schools opened in 1997: Jersey City Community, LCCS, and Soaring Heights. Just five years later, Jersey City’s charter school population increased to nine schools that educated nearly 2,500 students. During the 2008-09 school year, nearly 10% of the Jersey City public school population attended charter schools (Department of Education).

There is an inverse relationship between the burgeoning charter school population and the declining district population. In Figure 5.8, the blue line illustrates the district population decline between 1998 and 2009. The district’s population declined by 16%, while the charter school population increased by 360% in the same period. Figure 5.8 illustrates how Jersey City’s charter school population has increased as the district population has declined.
The charter school population will continue to expand. In 2009, an additional Jersey City charter school, Ethical Community Charter School, opened. There are two additional Jersey City charter schools approved to open in the 2011-2012 school year. Similar to Stevens Cooperative private school, which is located in a condominium building on the waterfront, the Math and Engineering charter school will move to the Beacon residential community. Figure 5.9 highlights the sharp rise in the Jersey City charter school population.
Despite the many efforts to gentrify and revitalize the housing stock of Jersey City, the city’s public district schools lack economic integration. The emergence of housing integration and the high percent of students opting out of the public district schools results in the district schools losing the chance for economic integration. Racially, the percentages of students of different races opting out of the Jersey City public system in 2000 mirrored the racial achievement gap; among first through eighth graders, 40% of Jersey City’s Asian students, 28% of White students, 15% of Black students, and 14% of Hispanic students attended private or parochial school. Figure 5.10 illustrates the Jersey City public school opt-out rate by race.
The difference in the percentage of White and Asian students opting out of the public schools influences the district’s challenge to become more racially integrated. Similarly, the Greenville ward has a much higher opt-out rate than the other five wards. Its rate is 11% higher than the Heights. Figure 5.11 highlights the public opt-out rate by neighborhood.
The highest rate of opt-out in Greenville was among the Asian and White population. Forty percent of White Greenville first through eighth grade students opted out and 66% of Asian Greenville first through eighth grade students opted out, compared with 17% of Greenville African American first through eighth grade students and 21% of Hispanic first through eighth grade students. Figure 5.12 highlights Greenville’s opt-out rate by race.
Many of the abandoned railroad yards and industries were located in Greenville; consequently the ward had the most potential for redevelopment and gentrification. The development of Country Village in 1958, Society Hill in the 1990s, and Porte Liberte in the 1990s changed the demographic landscape of Greenville. An influx of middle-income and high-income families have moved to Greenville; however, they have not entered the district public schools. Greenville’s high district school opt-out rate is a result of the district’s numerous gated communities and their low-performing and highly segregated district school options.

A consequence of both housing segregation and students opting out of the public schools is de facto school segregation. The Jersey City public schools are racially segregated, especially in the Bergen neighborhood. The Heights has the highest percentage of White students, with more than 30% of its student population being White. In contrast, Bergen has the highest population of Black students with over 70% of its population being Black. The Heights also has the highest percentage of Hispanic
students, with nearly 50% of its school population being Hispanic. Figure 5.12 shows the racial compositions of Jersey City’s public schools.

Figure 5.13. Racial Composition of Public Schools, 2000 by Ward

Jersey City’s public schools are highly segregated in terms of both race and class. The segregation is a consequence of both the city’s de-facto housing segregation and public school opt-out, whereby families with means choose to send their children to private schools instead of their zoned school. Theoretically, charter schools in gentrifying cities hold the potential of attracting families who typically opt-out of the public system. Depending on a charter school’s structure, such as its recruitment strategies, it could become an example of a diverse school or a hyper-segregated school if families from the same background are all attracted to it. Current charter school literature highlights the latter example (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2010; Stuart Wells, 2002). This research intends to investigate how a charter school can attract and retain a diverse population.


**Characteristics of School Diversity**

The diversity of an urban public school depends on the level of integration and diversity of the school’s catchment area. The zoning of a public school depends on school districting policies. Urban neighborhoods are typically homogenous in terms of class and sometimes race. However, in Jersey City recent gentrification and urban development throughout the city provide an opportunity for children of different backgrounds to attend school together.

**Racial Balance**

Jersey City is one of the most racially diverse cities in the country, with a population that is 27.7% Hispanic, 25.6% White, 24.5% Black, 19.6% Asian, and 1.6% two or more races (http://www.city-data.com/city/Jersey-City-New-Jersey.html). However, its diverse population is not distributed evenly across the various neighborhoods. Instead, within wards and neighborhoods there is a high degree of racial and economic segregation. Thus, Jersey City has the potential through school choice, which avoids neighborhood catchment areas, to have the most economically, racially, and culturally balanced schools in the nation.

Defining the terms racial segregation, integration, and diversity is a daunting task, especially in the context of a truly diverse city in which the proportions of Asian, Black, White, and Hispanic residents are nearly equal. Historically, the school segregation criterion defined school segregation in terms of the proportion of Black and White students attending a school. In 1964, The Office of Civil Rights characterized segregation as the percent of Black students attending a school (Rossell, 1990). However, today racial
integration encompasses more racial and ethnic groups. Global cities are attracting members of many new immigrant groups, many of whom are of Hispanic heritage. In 1990, the U.S. census added the category “Hispanic” to its survey. Current indexes of racial segregation measure the percent of students who are racial minorities. For instance, according to Frankenberg’s segregation categories, a school is: a predominantly minority school when more than 50% of students are minority group members, an intensely segregated minority school when 90-100% of students are minority students, and an intensely segregated White schools when 90-100% of students are White. (Frankenberg, et al., 2010, p. 4)

Nationally, Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians make up less than 20% of the population. However, in Jersey City, these three groups make up 75% of its urban population. Thus, statistically speaking, Jersey City’s public schools should be predominantly minority, if they are to represent the city’s overall population. Due to the rich racial diversity of Jersey City, a racially balanced school would represent each racial group equally. In Jersey City, I would characterize a racially balanced school as one in which there is an equal proportion of all four racial groups represented. Census data in Jersey City show that Asian and White students opt-out of the public schools at a much higher rate than Black and Hispanic students. Therefore, the percent of Asian students at a school increases its racial balance. Next, I distinguish between minority segregation and a racially balanced school that reflects Jersey City’s racial landscape.

Despite the city’s overall racial balance, many of the schools in the city’s six wards are extremely racially segregated and unbalanced. Figure 5.14 illustrates public school segregation in six of the city’s wards. Greenville and Bergen have the highest
percent of intense minority segregation. The one non-intensely segregated school in
Bergen is actually an un-zoned honors magnet middle school that attracts students from
across the city. In contrast, the other four districts have far fewer schools characterized as
intensely minority segregated. Essentially, the other districts have a larger White
population. In Journal Square and the West Side wards, there is a large Arabic
community. This community could account for the higher population of Whites attending
public schools. Figure 5.14 illustrates the percent of intense minority segregation in
Jersey City’s six wards.

Figure 5.14. Percent of Public Schools with Intense Minority Segregation (90% or more minorities)

Frankenberg’s definition of intense minority segregation is a helpful indicator of
school segregation, when school segregation is defined as a small White population;
however, the indicator does not assist in measuring how racially balanced a school is in terms of enrolling a proportion of most of the city’s racial groups. For instance, all five of Greenville’s public schools are included in the above map as examples of intense minority segregation. However, when looking at each school by its racial breakdown, there is evidence that the schools in Greenville have a balance of Hispanic and Black students, but are lacking Asian and White students. Figure 5.15 highlights the racial breakdown of the Greenville public schools.

Figure 5.15. Racial Breakdown of Greenville Public Schools, 2000

Ward A: Greenville

Similarly, three of the five schools in the Heights are defined as not being intensely segregated because 10% of their population is White; however, looking at the racial breakdown of individual schools reveals that the Hispanic population is over-represented.
Hispanics make up between 47% and 77% of each of these schools. Figure 5.16 highlights the intense Hispanic segregation in the Heights.

Figure 5.16. Racial Breakdown of Heights’ Public Schools, 2000

Ward D: Heights

There are a number of public schools in Jersey City that allow students who live outside the elementary school neighborhood catchment area to attend. These include McNair High School, Academy I middle school, and P.S. 16, an unzoned elementary school that, due to its low enrollment, accepts students from other zones. All of these schools are racially balanced. McNair High School is racially balanced because of its mandated racial quota. However, P.S. 16 and Academy I are not mandated, but rather have reputations for having high academic performance and thus attract families from all backgrounds. These examples highlight that when students are arranged based on criteria
other than their addresses, a school can become more racially balanced. Figure 5.17 highlights the racial composition of Jersey City’s three most racially balanced schools.

Figure 5.17. Racial Composition of Racially Balanced Jersey City Public Schools

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, Enrollment Jersey City 2009

*Socio-economic Diversity*

Research shows that low-income students attending economically balanced schools perform better than their counterparts at economically poor schools. Kahlenberg grouped schools into different categories: “very low poverty school (0-10 percent of students receiving free or reduced-priced meals); economically mixed schools (26-50 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price meals); and high poverty school (having at least 50 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price meals)” (Kahlenberg, 2006). For the purpose of this study, an economically balanced school is defined as one in which approximately 50% of students are eligible for free lunch.
In Jersey City, 36 of 38 public schools are high-poverty schools. The two economically mixed schools are P.S. 16, an un-zoned elementary school and McNair High School, an academic magnet school. The district average for percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch is 75%. Therefore, despite Jersey City’s gentrification, the public schools are extremely economically segregated. According to research, economically segregated schools are typically lower performing.

Another indicator of socio-economic class is educational attainment. In the current economy, class cannot be defined solely by income. According to Butler and Robson, “the single best indicator of gentrification [is] the possession of a university degree and usually a higher degree and/or professional qualification” (2003). Jersey City’s adults have a range of educational attainment levels. Table 5.2 presents the 2005-2009 American Community Survey educational levels for the Jersey City population age 25 years and older.

Table 5.2. Jersey City Educational Attainment, 2005-2009 American Community Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No High School</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 1963, Coleman argued that the single most important indicator of student success is family background. Children from married families tend to perform better than their peers from unmarried or divorced families. Coleman and Schneider argued that:

Families have a defined set of resources. Examples of resources are time, money, the number of parents in the household, and the parents' education. Resources may also be an aspect of the community in which the family lives, such as how well neighbors know each other. (Schneider & Coleman, 1993, p. 13)

Currently there is a diversity of family backgrounds in Jersey City. There is also a relationship between poverty and single-parent households.

Jersey City remains a city with two school systems: one for the poor and one for the rich. With the decline of parochial schools and the increase in middle-class families, Jersey City’s public schools have the potential to economically and racially integrate their student bodies. However, this potential depends on the public schools’ ability to attract middle-class parents. In the next chapter, I discuss the founding of one public charter school, Learning Community Charter School, and its subsequently ability to attract an economically and racially diverse student population.
Chapter Six: The Founding of LCCS

The Roots of a School

“I'm not an educator. I'm a parent, and I'm doing this for the community,” said Libby McDonald, founder of LCCS (Glovin, 1997)

The gentrification of Jersey City began to include middle-class families at the end of the 1990s. Just as the first wave of gentrifiers—the artists and musicians—took ownership of Jersey City through the place-based establishment of galleries, restaurants, and arthouses, family gentrifiers began to take ownership as well. These families obtained symbolic ownership through the establishment of childcare facilities, playgroups, and childcare options that suited their middle-class values. As families grew, so did opportunities for their children. Around the time the downtown neighborhood developed cafes and restaurants to cater to the new middle-class population, middle-class families began researching school options. To many middle-class parents, the public school options were not satisfactory. Consequently, many middle-class families left Jersey City after their eldest child reached five years old (Informal discussion with a parent). Of the parents who stayed, many considered private options. In the late 1990s, middle-class families continued researching their public options. One LCCS founding parent described visiting a public school in the late 1990s:

I remember taking my son to P.S. 37 on Erie Street, downtown Jersey City, to check it out for kindergarten… my first thought when I got there was simply, the school was too big…he was a small kid…we walked in and met the Principal, who I liked…. He was a white guy… he was gruff and he had this kind of “Oh you middle-class people, we don’t care about you, either come here or don’t, but don’t try to interview me”…then we went to the kindergarten classroom, we talked to the teachers and we asked them a bit about teaching strategies…one said that they were mandated to an instructional program and we asked, “how do you do it?”
and she said, “to tell you the truth we are mandated to do it, but they didn’t train us how” (Founding parent 2).

The founding parents’ perceptions of the public schools ranged from low-quality curriculum to large schools lacking a sense of community. The previous quote also illustrates the fact that big districts often implement programs and curriculums without adequate training or support. The founding parent continued to explain that many gentrifying families found the public school unsatisfactory:

The creation of the school was partly a result…and I don’t speak for the ethnic immigrant, I speak for the…working class, middle-class White people, mainly…who moved into Jersey City over the last 20 years…I think there are lots of people like us who were just unwillingly to go near the public schools…it was that simple…they were just badly run and the reputation of the schools was pretty negative (Founding parent 2).

The negative perception of the public system motivated families to do something. Before investigating the development of charter schools, parents asked the district for support in starting an alternative school within the district:

Somebody actually approached the district. Would they be interested in creating an alternative school within the district? Or did they have anything that would give people smaller classrooms…more of a hands-on feel? More differentiated instruction?…developmentally appropriate? (Founding parent 2)

However, the district refused. Given the lack of district support, families searched for other options. They sought autonomy from a district with historically low-achieving schools overridden with bureaucracy.

In 1995, a group of families founded the Garden Preschool Cooperative (GPC) on Grove Street. The school was located above a church on Grove Street and had its own garden. The Garden Preschool’s curriculum is hands-on and progressive. According to the website:
The school was envisioned as an alternative for parents who sought an enhanced level of involvement in the education of their young children and who believed a cooperative community would provide an ideal setting for early childhood education. The program at GPC is based on the well-researched and well-proven educational philosophy of developmentally-appropriate practice. GPC faculty employs the developmental-interactive approach to teaching students as pioneered by the Bank Street Graduate School of Education in New York. (www.gardenpreschool.org)

In addition to its progressive approach, the preschool encouraged parent involvement through its “parent of the day” program. Every 18 days, parents were responsible to be a parent of the day. Their duties included: bringing and preparing healthy communal snacks, reading stories at story time, and assisting the teachers. The classroom pedagogy relied on the progressive Bank Street models. Students learned through playing and doing. Around the time that parents founded GPC they continued to seek opportunities for elementary and secondary education that aligned with the GPC model.

Organizing, Mobilizing and Founding a School

“Family capital, in turn, builds community capital and its related assets” (Briar-Lawson, Lawson, Hennon, & Jones, 2001, p. 252)

Just like the establishment and founding of GPC, the founding of LCCS involved a time commitment and collaboration between many parents. In the beginning, parents had informal discussions during play dates and play groups. For example, in the late 1990s at Grace Church near Hamilton Park, a playgroup met and its parents had impromptu conversations in which parents “would talk about their experience with older kids in the public schools…They would talk about their experience visiting the public schools…They’d talk about the local private schools…. Made us feel like ‘Uh oh! We’re going to have to do something!’” (Founding parent 2). Middle-class parents had the time
and opportunity to discuss the quality of the schools and exchange stories and experiences, which enhanced their perspectives of the public schools. Family capital coupled with social capital provided middle-class parents with the opportunity to collect information and the potential to use the information to found a school.

The New Jersey charter school law of 1995 and the progress of family gentrification in downtown Jersey City provided unsatisfied parents with an alternative. Through the tools of social networking and the soft skills of organization, middle-income parents were able to write and found one of New Jersey’s first charter schools, Learning Community Charter School (LCCS). The initial team of parent founders resulted from two playgroups, one near historic Hamilton Park and the other near historic Van Vorst Park. The houses and residences around the two parks include Victorian row houses and brownstones. At the time, the neighborhoods were beginning to gentrify and by 2006, many considered them Jersey City’s most desirable neighborhoods. Accordingly, the founding parents were also agents of downtown gentrification.

The initial planning of the school required a great deal of middle-income cultural capital, such as soft skills, including: collaboration, listening, discussing, planning, preparation, organization, and meeting (Farkas, 1995). By February 1995, a highly organized and motivated Van Vorst parent hosted a meeting in her brownstone on Van Vorst Park. A New York Times article described the founder and the first meeting:

Libby McDonald is an unusually creative woman, an Ivy League-educated writer and filmmaker, married to a lawyer, with a four-year-old daughter, Matilda, who is beginning to read and speaks Russian with her nanny and dad. In 1995, McDonald decided to start a charter. She spent months researching, took inspiration from [Deborah Meier’s successful Central Park East schools in East Harlem] school and on a February night invited over a few friends to discuss the
idea. ‘Forty showed up—that’s how hungry people were,’ she says. Over the next two years, she put in many 40-60 hour weeks, all voluntary, laying the groundwork. When parents needed $2,000 to advertise for a director, they held a potluck dinner. Seventy people donated much of the summer of 1997, turning part of the local Boys and Girls Club into the Learning Community School (Winerip, 1998).

The founding of LCCS required the donation of time, effort, money, and leadership from not only Libby, but also many other dedicated parent founders. The first meeting was the catalyst for the founding of the school. One founder described the meeting:

Through word of mouth, parents attended the meeting and were divided into sub-committees to create a school. The parents were predominantly middle class and new to the neighborhood. Much of the work required the middle class skills of networking, researching, and understanding a bureaucracy (Founding Parent 1, 2008).

The founding parents utilized their education and the flexibility of their jobs. The founding of the charter school also involved a great deal of donations from families.

“I know that we were going to have to do a lot of fund-raising,” said Libby McDonald founder of the school. Louise Costykyan, treasurer for the school, added that it needs donations of office supplies and furniture this year. “We’re planning an annual fund-raising drive in September and different events around the holiday,” McDonald said. (Moore, 1997)

Fundraising was a necessity in the early years. Many founding parents received networking, organizing, and research skills from past or current professional experience. According to one founding parent, “creating a charter school is all about being proactive and organized. People do a lot of work, not just yuppies from Wall Street, but people with a lot of time to devote to the cause” (Founding parent 1, 2008). Once the initial setup was established, a large number of parents from diverse backgrounds assisted in “painting, building shelves, and people did what had to be done” (Founding parent 1, 2008).
One of the first obstacles in the founding of the school was locating an affordable building to house the new school. LCCS’s first home was a former coal bunker at One Canal Street, which was a reminder of the city’s industrial past. An architect remodeled the coal bunker for the Boys and Girls Club, which serviced a number of low-income children, and Learning Community Charter School rented space in their facility.

One founding parent recalled, “we were desperate and in fact panicked; we had a charter. Jersey City was filled with empty buildings and it seemed like such a shame to have a school that needed a building and so few buildings which fit our needs. When we discovered the Boys and Girls Club, we jumped at the opportunity” (Founding parent 2, 2009). Not only did the space provide the school with intimacy, but it was affordable and met the school’s financial needs. The Boys and Girls Club’s location was ideal for families who lived in the neighborhood. Along Grove Street, an observer could see a parade of families walking their young children to school. Once at school, the parade continued and most of the parents headed to the PATH train for their morning commute to Manhattan.

LCCS opened its doors at One Canal to 90 kindergarten through second grade students in September 1997. Each year, the student population expanded by an additional grade and grew. In the beginning, LCCS was just one of three Jersey City charter schools. As the school expanded, the space required many renovations to build more classrooms. The school worked in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club to raise funds:

By working together, however, the club and the school found funding to add new classroom both can use, initially $250,000 from the city’s Community Development Block Grant, $75,000 each from the Charles Hayden Foundation
and the Turrell Foundation, and $30,000 from parent fund-raising and private contributions (Turner, 2000)

Over the years, the school’s expansion spilled outside of the coal bunker and by the end of 2009, the school housed five classrooms in temporary trailers.

*Founders’ Educational Philosophy*

In 1997, the first year New Jersey authorized the opening of charter schools, the Star Ledger, a local newspaper, surveyed 259 charter school parents. Parents ranked their reason for applying to charter schools. “The high standards of the charter school were ‘very important’ to 90.3% of the 259 parents” and “nearly 74 percent of those surveyed said the small size of the charter school was ‘very important to them’” (Moore, 1997). About three-quarters of the responding parents said they chose a charter school for programs close to their philosophy of education and life (Moore, 1997).

One LCCS parent said, “The best thing is the parents have a say… you can participate with suggestions” (Moore, 1997). Another LCCS parent said that she liked “the diversity of the charter school better than a private school, where the children are often from the same cultural and economic background” (Moore, 1997). According to one of the founding parents, diversity was always a part of the plan for the school. The founding parent said, “diversity was part of some people’s vision; definitely part of my vision” (Founding parent 1, 2008).

When LCCS opened its doors, the first 98 students represented a diverse student body. About “half of the middle class founding parents took the risk and admitted their children to the new school” (Founding parent 1, 2008). One of the founding teachers described LCCS’s early demographics: “Garden Preschool was the feeder school… we
got families that were very artsy, the kids had a lot of world experience, and we were able to, sort of, bring the community into them, and the community back to… there was this melding of community and school” (Teacher 14, 2010). The Garden Preschool parents were accustomed to parental involvement and the founding of a school. They were willing to be hands-on and assist in both the physical building of the school and in the classroom.

During the first year of LCCS, the members of the board of trustees were from geographically different parts of Jersey City (Board Notes, March 13, 1997). Additionally, the faculty was racially diverse. For instance, “of 14 Administrative and teaching positions at our school, 5 or 35% are held by members of ethnic or racial minority groups” (Annual Report, 1997-1998). However, in the 2010-2011 school year the makeup of teachers was as follows: 24/28 teachers were White, 1/28 were Asian and 3/28 were African American. Similarly, of the eight support and administrative staff two are African American, one is Asian, and five are white.

From early on, the teachers and administrators worked to recruit students from different backgrounds. Recruitment was an essential component of maintaining diversity:

In gentrifying downtown, we didn’t want to push out the children that had lived there. So, we wanted to reach out to the parents…. And there was a lot of community outreach…. Michael did go around to the local churches to discuss the school…our vision…what we wanted for every child in Jersey City…. And we got a really good reply. We had a lot of parents that saw that vision, too, and welcomed…. embraced the children. (Founding Teacher 14)

In addition to the recruitment efforts succeeding, LCCS families and parents were inviting to students from different backgrounds. The school celebrated its diverse population.
One interviewed founding parent cited Deborrah Meier’s Central Park East Elementary School as a model for LCCS. Inspired by the small school movement in NYC, a number of the parents read books about its success and even called Meier to discuss details of Central Park East, an un-zoned public school in Manhattan known for its diversity and progressive child-centered curriculum. Meier founded Central Park East in 1974; the “population [was] roughly equivalent to a cross sampling of New York City. The majority of students [were] African-American and Latino, most [were] low income or poor” (Meier, 1995). Meier described the philosophy of Central Park East:

Our kind of classroom was not stocked with ditto fill-in sheets but literally full of stuff: books of every sort, paints as well as paintings, plants, animals, broken radios to repair—things. The curriculum we sought was both conceptual and tangible. We wanted children to fall in love as we had with stories of the past, including their own; we wanted a school that would evoke a sense of wonder. (Meier, 1995, p. 20)

The founders used Central Park East as a model, in terms of its size, diversity, and curricular focus. One parent said “we based the curriculum upon the notion of small classes, community, an active learning environment, integrating the arts, and meeting the needs of various learning styles.” (Founding Parent 1, 2008) At the time, the press and even some residents perceived LCCS as the “yuppie” charter school. In the New York Times, a reporter distinguished between the first two Jersey City charter schools:

There is one started by white yuppies and one by the Urban League. There are charters that stress basics, and there is the Learning Community charter, which uses the Bank Street model and has a Principal who warns parents that there will be little homework and no textbooks (Winerip, 1998).
An interview with a low-income immigrant parent confirmed the “yuppie” image of LCCS. In visiting the school a Polish immigrant and single mother who worked as a housekeeper said:

It was more yuppyish than we expected—there was this Chinese yup walking around with her nose in the air, she said of one parent. But I kept quiet; I didn’t say anything. I figure maybe this is an opportunity for [my daughter] to be around a better class of people, a mother and a father and both working. Maybe we have to do this for [her]—she has to know how to associate with rich people (Winerip, 1998).

Many families took a risk when applying to LCCS. For some, including many of the low-income families, the progressive curriculum was foreign to them:

Drawn by the promise of a better education, Harley, Edward and Diego and their families signed up for a new school that promised to offer a radically different approach to classroom teaching: no grades, no textbooks and hands-on learning through art projects, field trips and community involvement (Hu, 2008).

The families who were attracted to the school’s different approach assisted in establishing the school culture:

We attracted kids’ families who were interested in something different. I think they were attracted a lot to the small class sizes. Some more knowing parents were attracted to progressive, child-centered learning. So, they were kind of the guinea pigs. It was a success; it was a more intimate environment (Teacher 12, 2009).

Progressive Pedagogy

In the beginning, LCCS had a prominent progressive pedagogy. There was an enormous building block room in which children could learn through using building blocks. A founding teacher commented on the space and said, “We were very progressive at that point” (Teacher 13, 2009). For former Garden Preschool students the transition
was easy. Similar to Garden Preschool, students spent a great deal of time in creative play (Winerip, 1998). Similarly, the classrooms were often noisy, but teachers did not raise their voices. Additionally, the teaching style was indirect. According to a reporter who observed a kindergarten class, “Witting reads to them a lot, and they are constantly looking through books, but the education process is subtle, indirect” (Winerip, 1998).

Inspired by Meier’s Central Park East Elementary School, the curriculum incorporated small classes, a sense of community, active learning environments, integration of the arts, and various learning styles. The notion of community service began in the younger grades and became more intense as the children grew older. Currently, the middle school children participate in community service placements during the spring term. In addition, various disciplines are integrated into the curriculum. This requires a certain degree of interaction among the grade teachers and between the specialty teachers. Human interactions foster a school culture.

In the beginning, the school attempted to ensure that the teachers’ skills and knowledge aligned with the curriculum. Therefore, the school recruited teacher candidates from teaching institutions whose educational methods and pedagogy aligned with the school. These institutions included Teachers College, Columbia, NYU, Hunter College, Montclair State, William Paterson College, The New School, Jersey City State College, and Bank Street College (Annual Report 1997-98, p. 11). “When we first started,” one teacher noted, “most teachers were from Columbia and Bank Street. Most of them were from Bank Street, which has a very progressive curriculum” (Teacher 13, 2009). Additionally, many teachers I interviewed during the spring of 2009 explained that they did their student teaching at progressive and successful Manhattan public schools.
The founding teachers’ philosophies of education aligned with the philosophies of their universities and LCCS.

A founding teacher described her educational philosophy:

As I gained experience I have tried to incorporate many different learning styles. So I realize that certain learners are visual, more tactile. So, I try incorporating all of that so that I can reach more children. I have opened up a lot more to the fact that people can exhibit or illustrate their learning in more than one way. For example, I remember putting on plays at Stevens and when I was just beginning I would get irritated when things weren’t going as I thought they would. Now as I gain more experience, my expectation is different for all children. Getting on a stage might be a different accomplishment. I knew when they got home they sang up a blue streak. They may not be moving their mouths. I am more accepting of differences. I am more interested in process and not product. (Teacher 12, 2009)

The founding teacher described the essence of LCCS as focusing on the process of learning. During classroom observations, many teachers asked students to explain their learning and how they got to an answer. Additionally, teachers made accommodations for students’ differences. At child study meetings, teachers worked with parents and specialists to discuss appropriate and effective accommodations.

At LCCS, small class sizes coupled with the small school size ensured that all students received individualized attention. In an interview, former principal, Susan Grierson noted the benefits of small class sizes:

I think the small classes and individual attention were irreplaceable, because some of these kids would have fallen through the cracks. You can’t sit in a classroom here and hide (Hu, 2008).

Grierson, an experienced Brooklyn principal, worked at LCCS for eight years. She had a great rapport with both low-income and middle-income families. Additionally, she was a fluent in Spanish, which allowed her to communicate with many Spanish speaking
parents. She knew the names of all 320 students. In the morning, Grierson would greet families and students. Throughout the day, she would talk with students and over the years, she built a rapport with students. When dealing with discipline issues or concerns she understood the whole child. Additionally, she had a good way of dealing with parents, especially entitled ones. She would allow parents to have their opinions heard, but she would not establish policy if she felt it would jeopardize the educational quality of the school. For example, during the 2007-08 school year, a group of middle-income parents questioned the school homework policy. One parent said, “it was an invasion of your home” (informal discussion with parents, October 2008). Susan listened to their arguments and proposed that they survey the rest of the families. The surveys were primarily in favor of homework. Susan explained that she could not make a policy decision that only a few parents supported.

The thematic and integrated units required staff members to collaborate to plan and implement a large number of field trips and culminating projects. Scholars argue that the small size of a school results in increased interactions and a positive learning community. The small size of LCCS, coupled with its decentralized governance, allowed the school to utilize the teachers’ and parents’ social and cultural capital. For instance, family functions and fundraisers resulted from parents using their social capital to receive donations for raffles and events. The increase in social and cultural capital allowed the school to create a community and maintain its finances. Additionally, the curriculum was very hands-on. At the end of each unit, there were culminating projects in which students present their learning. A founding teacher described LCCS’s original style of learning:
Parents were on board with the type of teaching Learning Community had… the progressive, let’s not use a book, let’s be creative… and we had the type of child that suited that kind of learning (Founding teacher 14).

The curriculum relied on inquiry and constructivism. Through active learning, students become involved in their topic or area of concentration. Each grade partakes in thematic units in which the students not only read and learn about the themes, but also are actively involved through project learning. Table 6.1 presents examples of project learning at LCCS.

Table 6.1. LCCS’s Project Learning Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Field Trips</th>
<th>Culminating Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>Our Community China Study</td>
<td>Neighborhood walk Chinatown during Chinese New Year</td>
<td>Build a diorama of the community Lemonade stand to support Chinese pandas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>Restaurants Frog Cycle</td>
<td>Neighborhood Walk of restaurants; Restaurant Distribution Center; Madame Claude’s Restaurant</td>
<td>Create a restaurant Student-narrated frog dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>Where does food come from? Water Cycle Solar System</td>
<td>Farms Water plant</td>
<td>Created a school farmer’s market Water cycle play Solar system games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>Habitats Lenape Indians</td>
<td>Walks in the woods</td>
<td>Animal dances; painting of animals; newsletter about habitats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The active involvement allowed the students to not only learn about these topics, but to also experience them.

The growth of the school coupled with pressure from the standards movement pushed LCCS to move away from its original progressive pedagogy. In the last few years, the school has become more traditional in terms of pedagogy and culture. There are five reasons the school became more traditional from 1997-2009: the relationship between progressive pedagogy and diversity; school growth; fewer teachers with progressive backgrounds; the standards movement; and the creation of a middle school responsible for preparing student for competitive specialized high schools.

**Progressive Education and Diversity**

Over time, some teachers and administrators began to notice that the inquiry-based learning and constructivist approaches of progressive education did not align well with the needs of all students. A founding teacher explained: “TERC presents itself as great for your high flyers…but for the kids that just don’t get it….Who don’t have that much language…it doesn’t work” (Founding Teacher 14). TERC is the same math program used in District 2 in Manhattan. The program has received criticism from Ravitch and other scholars for its lack of structure. "Constructivist programs such as
TERC [used in District 2] and Everyday Mathematics [used in many cities] emphasize multiple solutions to problems. However, students who do not have a firm grasp of basic arithmetic are seldom able to find their own solutions” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 42). An additional obstacle for the TERC program is its assessments. At a forum convened to air their grievances, District 2 parents complained that they had to hire tutors because their children were not learning basic skills. Ravitch explained that, "the mathematicians warned that students who lacked computational skills were not prepared to succeed in mathematics courses in high school or college” (Ravitch, 2010, p.75). The assessments are very simplistic and do not align well with the state exams. Thus, the curriculum requires supplementation.

In addition to TERC, other components of LCCS’s curriculum were found to be too subtle and difficult for low-income students to understand. One of the founding teachers explained that:

Susan had seen as the school grew, you are dealing with a population of kids from the inner city who needed more academics. We were trying to do a progressive philosophy in an inner city kind of environment and I do think that you need a lot of parental support and home support to make that curriculum thrive and we found we were facing some difficulties…. Inner city kids who come from diverse backgrounds and the learning environment didn’t fit their needs. (Teacher 13, May 2009).

The founding teachers’ observation has received support from many scholars, including Lisa Delpit. According to Delpit, progressive pedagogy is difficult for low-income students to decode (1995). They find the lack of structure confusing. In a discussion with an administrator, the administrator explained that some upper-middle-class parents questioned the curriculum and lobbied for a more progressive approach, including ending homework. However, the administrator explained the importance of having structure to
allow children to be successful in any activity. She also argued that low-income children have trouble in truly open spaces (informal discussion with administrator, July 15, 2009).

**Growth**

In the early years, the founding teachers had the freedom to establish their own curricula and influence school policy. A founding teacher describes her first year in 1997:

I set up my own class, ordered my own materials, pictures and I was given a blank slate. You are fortunate in your lifetime to be given [absolute freedom]. I was allowed 100% freedom. (Teacher 13, May 2009)

Additionally, another founding teacher identified the transition in decision making:

I think it has shifted... I think our administration does a good job at trying to get everyone’s input. But just by virtue of how we have grown... you know, not every small decision can be made by a group of 55 of us... now, you know, in that way, I think it has changed, but when push comes to shove, if there’s something that staff feels strongly about... or a grade level feels strongly about I really think the admin is still open to listening to our input (Interview with Teacher 7, May 2009).

The number of staff members made it difficult to have an inclusive decision-making process. Therefore, over time some staff members felt that more tasks and obligations were implemented from the top down. In contrast, in the early years all policies were a result of collaboration.

**Testing**

During the first four years of LCCS’s history, the school was mainly accountable to the parents and students. However, in 2001 the national No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation made all public schools more accountable to the state and federal governments based on the use of state standards and state achievement tests. A founding teacher discussed how the school changed due to the state test:
Well, I think LCCS maybe has become more traditional in the years. I think maybe because of testing. I think a lot more is expected of the kindergarten students in terms of reading. And just in general the skill level. Little less exploratory. Maybe I shouldn’t be saying this. Because Susan will kill me. (Teacher 10, May 2009)

NCLB influenced not just the grades taking the tests, but as the previous teacher explained, the movement influenced all grades down to kindergarten. The expectations in kindergarten became higher and more rigorous. Another founding teacher explained that:

NCLB came to play and impacted our standards and how we had to address some of the academic standards that were not fitting. However, I think we still hold the thematic approach to learning in the lower school. We still hold that philosophy. (Interview with Teacher 7, May 2009)

The timing of NCLB and the expansion of the middle school created a divide in the school. While the lower school tailored their thematic units to the standards, the middle school used the standards to develop their curriculum. Additionally, at that point, the middle school classes compartmentalized from one another. A founding teacher explained:

That same year was the expansion to fifth grade, and there was great unsettlement on behalf of the teachers…. Because the school community was looking to the teachers to bridge the jump to this model that really was developed for early childhood and lower school…. It really didn’t apply in terms of, should we, compartmentalize… should there be more teachers teaching compartmentalized subjects (Teacher 9, May 2009).

The classroom created in the middle school aligned with both the standards movement and the need to prepare students for more traditional high school experiences. However, with the format came the loss of a community culture between students and their teachers. At the fifth grade level, the instruction became more teacher-centered. During an informal discussion with a fifth grade teacher, she explained that at the middle school
level students need to learn how to take notes and study. These skills are essential for high school. At the middle school level students change classes for math, social studies, reading, writing, and science. This differs from the kindergarten through fourth grade self-contained classrooms. Another difference between the elementary and middle school level is that middle school students sit in rows more often than groups. This supports the increase in independent work at the middle school level.

*Fewer Progressive Teachers*

As the school grew, the number of staff members grew as well. The expansion made it more difficult to have roundtable staff meetings and discussions.

> We can’t have these full staff meetings, or these round table discussions…. It’s just…. People don’t find it relevant to sit and talk to a first grade teacher if they teach eighth grade science… you know what I mean? And so, it did change things, I think, at that time…. for me, so much, because I was always lower school, it didn’t really change my experience that much… but I do think the tone of the school did change…I do think that the tone of the school has changed in terms of the staff… people aren’t willing to go that extra mile now… I don’t know why that is… if it’s just people coming in from different places now… and just the way it’s kind of pulled together (Teacher 9, May 2009).

The size of the faculty made it difficult to have community discussions. Additionally, communal planning made less sense, because the expansion of the school into middle school resulted in teachers’ subject matters having less in common. Additionally, as the staff grew, the administration hired fewer teachers with progressive backgrounds. Instead, many of the teachers came from more traditional schools in both Jersey City and New York City.

> We have grown. The school was supposed to be a K-5 and now it is K-8…. It was a young staff. You [had] 22-year-olds coming right out of college. There has been a lot of turnover. A lot of new teachers have different philosophies. When we first started most teachers were from Columbia and Bank Street. Most of them were from Bank Street, which has a very progressive curriculum. Our principal
who was here at the time really [worked hard to make] a hands-on curriculum (Teacher 13, May 2009).

The change in administration resulted in a change in its teaching staff. Administration recruited and hired fewer progressive teachers, especially in the middle school grades.

Many of the younger and less progressive teachers requested a change in the school’s policy for how students should address them. They favored last names instead of first names. Before the 2008 change, students called teachers by their first names. Some of the middle school teachers felt that this tradition challenged their authority.

*The Decision to Move*

Principal Grierson proposed purchasing a building in the Lincoln Park neighborhood during the fall of the 2008-09 school year. Principal Grierson’s decision was based upon three concerns: increasing the school’s diversity, increasing enrollment and more financial revenue. At the board meeting, Grierson explained that:

The plan will be to apply to buy Caritas Academy. We are like kids in a candy store, there is a real gym, office, library… it is the perfect opportunity. It does not seem possible to stay at One Canal. It is the perfect opportunity to expand. Right now, we became this club in this neighborhood. 531 students, it is a big leap and the downside is not everyone can know each other in the same way… yet the upside is that there will be three teachers per grade and more collaboration …currently students act as siblings with so few in a grade there will be more ways to arrange students with a third classroom (Board Meeting, September 9, 2008).

The Boys and Girls Club housed LCCS for eleven years, and as LCCS expanded, the Boys and Girls Club became a less suitable location. Part of LCCS’s charm was its quirky and intimate setting. The former renovated coal bunker lacked “school-like” qualities. In lieu of an auditorium students met for performances in the “game room” and
all the students sat on the floor and adults sat on about 30 chairs or stood tightly around
the performance; in lieu of a cafeteria, students ate with their teachers in their classrooms;
students’ jackets were hooked outside of the classrooms. The layout of the school
separated some of the grades. One fourth grade class was on the first floor and the other
was on the second floor. The nurse’s office was so small only two people could fit inside.
On the second floor, some of the classrooms were two rooms connected by a thick stone
wall that could not be removed. This meant that students could sit on one side of the
stone wall and read while the teacher worked with students on the other side. On the
third floor, an elevator opened into the social studies teacher’s classroom. Outside, the
school housed the second, seventh, and eighth grade classrooms in trailers.

The reference to LCCS becoming a “downtown club” during an interview with a
founding teacher was in response to a demographic shift toward more middle- and upper-
class families. While in the eighth grade class of 2009 67% of students received free
lunch, the incoming kindergarten class had only a couple of students eligible for free
lunch. The administration felt that the school’s location attracted a homogenous
population. During the board meeting in which Grierson proposed the move, a teacher
shared her enthusiasm, “I would like to say that the central location will rebalance
demographics—especially without transportation” (Teacher at board meeting, September
9, 2008). During teacher interviews and discussions, many teachers agreed with this
sentiment and felt that the school was not as diverse as it had once been.

With the support of the teachers and the board, LCCS moved out of the Boys and
Girls Club in the downtown area and up the hill to the Lincoln Park area in the fall of
2009. The school moved into a former all-girls Catholic school. Symbolically, the move
illustrated the fall of Jersey City’s parochial schools and how the charter movement rose in its place. In the same year, another charter school, Ethical Community Charter School, moved into another parochial school in the Journal Square neighborhood, adjacent to LCCS’s new location on Kennedy Boulevard. When asked why the LCCS moved to Kennedy Boulevard, the Assistant Principal explained:

    We wanted to move the school closer to more of the heart of the city and a more diverse neighborhood racially and economically which will attract more families. What is happening is that families are very reluctant to send their kids to a school that is three miles away. What we are hoping is that the school will become more representative of the neighborhood itself. It was doing so in the downtown area, but the downtown area was being gentrified so what we want this school to do is be representative of the Jersey City neighborhood, as a whole, versus just one section… is it more centrally located (Assistant Principal, June 2009).

    The biggest concern most parents had with the move was how they would transport their children to and from school. Therefore, downtown families organized two private bus routes from the downtown area. The cost of the riding the bus during the 2009-10 school year was $1350 a year for a roundtrip bus ride. The cost rose to $2,000 for the 2010-11 school year. A committee of parent volunteers oversees the private bus route. Due to parents’ loyalty in the school, only two sets of families left the school after the move. One family could not transport their children to the new location and the other family chose to enroll their children in the district-zoned school.

    In the summer before the move, many LCCS families showed their enthusiasm and support by assisting with the move. Parents spent hot August evenings moving boxes and furniture, building dry-erase boards and sorting books in the library. About fifty percent of LCCS families assisted in the move. During informal discussion with parents
they were all excited that LCCS had the opportunity to grow and have its own library and auditorium.

2495 Kennedy Boulevard: Growing Pains

I do have some anxiety about [the] expansion of school and I hope that we can retain all of the elements that I find important like collaboration, small class size. A sense of community that I know we will have. That is something that I know we will have wherever we go. I think I would like to see more assemblies and sometimes we forget to do that. We will have a place to assemble. That will help us to feel more unified (Teacher 12, 2009)

The move from One Canal to 2495 JFK Blvd resulted in many challenges and obstacles. In addition to the move, the school experienced other changes, including: two additional administrative positions, seven new teachers, a new facility, and 100 additional students and their families. In addition, due to financial constraints during the expansion, class sizes rose from 18 to 20 students.

The new layout of the facility provided the school with the biggest disruption in terms of the school’s routines and traditions. At One Canal, most classrooms had bathrooms and all students ate in their classrooms. With the move into a former Catholic high school, the school was organized in an extremely traditional manner for secondary level students. Each floor had bathrooms and the school had an auditorium and cafeteria. The traditional facility led the school to become increasingly more traditional.

At One Canal, many teachers did not have a need for hall passes. Most teachers had bathrooms inside the classroom or in a close proximity. Accordingly, only a few teachers used bathroom passes and asked students to sign out of the classroom. The addition of bathrooms outside the classrooms provided students with more unsupervised time. During the fall of 2009, problems occurred in the girl’s bathrooms. Students wrote
rude words and curses on the bathroom stalls. Culturally, this was very different from the norms of the old building. Another contributing factor could be the additional 100 students added to the school.

The establishment of a cafeteria changed students’ lunchtime experience. Before the move, students ate with their 17 peers and teacher in their classrooms. Students had 30 minutes to eat lunch and a culture was established in which children could converse with their peers and teachers. In contrast, lunchtime at LCCS is now 20 minutes long, and 120 students eat in the same room while proctored by three adults. In 20 minutes, students have to wait in line to receive their lunch, in contrast with having their lunches delivered to their classrooms. Currently, the majority of discipline issues occur during lunchtime and often all 120 students are punished for the behavior of a few. The punishment is silent lunch. This is in stark contrast to One Canal, where a teacher could identify an individual student who was misbehaving and discuss the issues with him or her. Below an outspoken first grader compares her experience at Garden Preschool to LCCS:

In GPC we usually would not get in trouble. If we were in trouble we were put in time out, they wouldn’t scream at you. Lunch was calmer than at LCCS, they didn’t yell at you and you could have conversations and a lot more time to eat. There was a no nuts tables and a nuts tables, so there were two different tables. LCCS has lots of different tables. You kinda feel bad because some people who weren’t talking still get silent lunch. At LCCS, I only have 18 minutes to eat lunch. I can eat my sandwich and maybe if I am lucky I can eat the apple sauce. A few times I come home with three things left in my lunch box. If I go to the bathroom, I lose a lot of time. I like recess a lot because it gets your energy out—except for the parts when I get screamed at. At lunch they yell and at recess when you get confused they yell. They have two kinds of whistle blows one to line up and one to sit down and you get confused when you think it is to sit down, but it really means to sit in lines. The punishment is the whole grade has to sit out. Not fair to the people who were listening (First grade student comparing GPC to LCCS).
Due to the increased number of students at LCCS, the lunch and recess climate has changed. The experience is far less nurturing than it was at One Canal.

In addition to the move, both the principal and the assistant principal left the school between the 2008 and 2009 school years to be administrators at schools closer to their families. Both replacements lacked administrative experience and had fewer than four years of teaching experience. A veteran teacher described the changes during the 2009 school year:

Janet had big shoes to fill. Susan had over 20 years of experience. The school went through growing pains all at once. During the 2009 school year, the school was like an awkward teenager following in the footsteps of a successful older sibling. While Susan talks with students, Janet talks at students. Susan knew many of the students and their parents for many years. So when dealing with a seventh grader she had known for many years, she understood his history. Now with the expansion of additional students, administrators are not familiar with everyone. So it will take time for her to establish a rapport with students and their families (Teacher 15, April 2010).

Additionally, the culture of collaboration between grade teams changed after the move. Due to the additional classes, the school schedule became more complex and as a result there were less common preps for grade teams and where Tuesday afternoons were once an opportunity for teams to meet and plan their curriculums, the current administration uses these days for external professional development.

Initially, parents complained about the lack of parking for drop-off and pick-up and recess safety. However, these complaints seem to have dissipated. Despite the chaos of the move and the arrival of one hundred additional students, LCCS parents were extremely flexible and relaxed. As a classroom teacher, I receive more complaints about the curriculum not being challenging enough than complaints about the school’s location.
Conclusion

Over the course of 14 years, LCCS evolved from a small progressive school without textbooks or homework into a large school with a burgeoning population. The school’s original progressive philosophy faded. However, whereas LCCS once only guaranteed 324 students seats, over 500 students are currently accepted. The originally small school spearheaded by community capital is now a more traditional administration-led school. The atmosphere is less collaborative because of an increase in the number of traditional teachers and a change in the facility’s layout disrupted the school’s tradition.
Chapter Seven: In Search of a School: Diversity of Educational Values

Introduction

Many scholars argue that school choice promotes segregation. The Civil Rights Project at UCLA has argued that the charter school movement contributes to the resegregation of students through both the creation of charter schools in hypersegregated cities with a disproportionate number of minority students and those in which whites are overrepresented (Frankeberg et al., 2010). If families choose charter schools based on their personal educational values, then charter school populations could further segregate children from different backgrounds.

In this section I investigate why and how LCCS attracts families from racially and economically diverse backgrounds. Parental preference and educational values dictate where families choose to send their children. Are there shared educational values at LCCS? If so, how do the shared educational values enable or hinder diversity? Additionally, what forms of social and cultural capital does a diverse charter potentially hold?

Educational Values

There are collections of people who exhibit value consistency, but who constitute no functional community at all. Parents of children attending certain schools of choice, whether in the public or the private sector, often constitute such a collection. In some cities, there are elementary schools that exhibit a particular educational philosophy such as open classrooms or basic education, and attract parents from various residential areas who agree with that philosophy. (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 9)

Families with similar preferences seek schools, public or private, that align to their particular preferences. Most forms of choice include private schools. With the
exception of a few scholarships, these schools remain homogenous due to tuition. Public choice programs attract families in a similar manner to private schools. An inquiry into how and why parents select choice programs may reveal why charter schools are further segregating students.

LCCS attracts students from all six wards; the student body is distributed as follows: 45% downtown, 13% Heights, 15% Greenville, 10% Journal Square, 6% Bergen, and 10% West Side (2010 Parent Survey). Despite the school’s racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic differences, the families have all made the same decision in applying to LCCS. The development of the parent survey intended to identify shared educational values among the respondents. Research indicates that families from different racial, educational, and economic backgrounds differ in their educational values (Moe, 1995; Witte, Bailey, & Thorn, 1993). By surveying only LCCS families, the data will isolate LCCS parents’ educational values.

A great deal of research has measured the factors that are the most influential to academic achievement. In 1966, *The Coleman Report* highlighted the importance of both family effects and peer effects. Both effects are more culturally oriented than institutional. Quiroz explained that the “organizational context refers to the ways in which the school is managed or the formal guidelines and policies that are enacted on a daily basis” and “school culture refers to the sense of shared experiences, observations, priorities, and assessments of how the school operates and the results” (Quiroz, 2000, p. 254). Institutional or organizational factors are within the authority of a school to influence. Organizational factors include: teacher quality, school size, class size, school culture, and resources. However, cultural factors, such as school culture, student
composition, and parental involvement rely more heavily on the cultural capital of teachers, administrators, community, and families. For example, both teacher quality and school culture can also be influenced by cultural capital.

In the spring of 2009 and 2010, I administered a parent survey during parent-teacher conferences in March. The return rate of the survey was indicative of both the cooperative nature of LCCS parents and the high level of parent participation at LCCS. Out of a possible 180 families, 132 families completed the survey in 2009 and out of a possible 250 families, 172 completed the survey in 2010. In March of 2009 and March of 2010, parents identified features of the district public schools that they found unsatisfactory and identified reasons why they chose LCCS. The surveys sought to measure factors deterring LCCS families from attending public schools and attracting them to LCCS.

**Reasons for District School Opt-Out**

Out of 16 options, LCCS parents identified the most undesirable factors of their zoned public school. Respondents who had attended a district zoned school ranked the following as the top three most unsatisfactory issues: lack of parent involvement, school culture, and student composition. The parents’ concerns reflected cultural implications—not organizational ones. Thus, LCCS families who attended their district school chose to leave primarily for reasons outside of the district school’s authority. Similarly, of the respondents who did not attend the district school, their top three concerns were mostly cultural (culture and student composition) with one institutional (class size). Table 7.1 presents parents’ responses about unsatisfactory district characteristics.
Surprisingly, institutional factors within the school’s authority, such as teacher quality, school safety, discipline, quality of curriculum, bullying, principal, teacher-centered methods, or excessive homework, ranked lower than the cultural factors: parent involvement, student population, and culture. Additionally, many of the school factors—including: curriculum, teacher quality, class size, and school culture—were identified 15-20% more often by respondents who never attended the district schools than by respondents who attended the district. One explanation for the large difference could be parents’ perceptions of the district school factors are more negative than families’ actual experiences. Similarly, those who never attended district schools were more likely to rank student composition unsatisfactory than those who had. This could also be due to negative perceptions of the district student population as opposed to fewer negative concerns among families with actual experiences.
Culture is a combination of the norms and values of a community. Within a school, the norms and values of the students assist in establishing the school’s culture. Both school and cultural factors influence a school’s culture or climate (Bantine, 2001; Brookover, 1996). There are numerous examples of schools that establish clear cultures. These schools run the gamut from Debbie Meier’s progressive and student-centered Central Park East to the “No Excuses” school cultures in which students’ failure to abide by certain rules, procedures, and norms results in disciplinary actions. In contrast, many private and wealthy public schools tend to have progressive cultures and are less authoritarian and focused on discipline. These schools have a hidden curriculum with access to cultural norms and habits. Although the “No Excuses” schools assist in establishing school cultures in which learning can occur, they establish the culture in a more constrictive manner.

A cultural factor of significant interest in this study is student population. Both families who had attended the public district and those who had never attended the public school ranked student composition as the third most unsatisfactory component of their district school. As described in the previous section, students enrolled in Jersey City public schools come from predominantly low-income and minority backgrounds. Thus, the data supports the outgroup avoidance theory (Saporito, 2003), which argues choice makes it easier for White or otherwise advantaged parents to avoid schools with higher proportions of minorities. By avoiding minority students, a White or advantaged family may seek out a school with students who share more in common in terms of values and norms.
Class size, the only organization factor identified by LCCS families as a major concern, is a component of a school culture. The smaller the class size, the more individualized attention a child will receive. A small class size allows a teacher to spend more time with each student giving students in-depth comments or working one-on-one with a student in class.

**Reasons for LCCS Opt-In**

Surprisingly, the school’s diversity was one of the top reasons families chose LCCS. Student diversity tied with teacher quality. The top four reasons why parents chose LCCS were: student diversity (82%), teacher quality (82%), school culture (79%), and parent involvement (73%). These elements represent the educational values of LCCS families. Three of the four values are cultural; thus, LCCS parents place a high value on cultural factors and this distinguishes them from parents in other studies of school choice in which researchers have measured families’ distinctions (Schneider, Teske, & Marschall, 2000, Chapter 4). In the work of Schneider et al., the data showed the parents found teacher quality, high test scores, and safety the most important in schools.

The value LCCS parents placed on cultural factors exemplifies the importance LCCS parents place on the connection between home and school. Through parent involvement, families have the potential to influence their child’s school and gain knowledge about the curriculum, the teacher’s style/personality, their child’s peer relationships, and the child’s day-to-day life at school. This influence and knowledge can be useful in assisting children with schoolwork, aligning behavioral expectations to those of the school, and assessing whether the school is right for the child and family.
Numerous studies have cited school culture and climate as a beneficial component of an effective school. From a parent’s perspective, school culture has a relationship with the home. According to Lareau, middle-class parents put a great deal of effort into cultivating their children with a specific form of culture. Therefore, the culture of the school should align with the culture valued by the family.

Student Diversity

The last educational value that aligns to the home is student diversity. At first glance, the fact that student diversity was the top reason for opting into LCCS seemed progressive and enlightened; however, respondents ranked the district student composition, with a large percent of low-income minorities, the third most unsatisfactory part of the district system. A lack of further qualitative data, such as parent interviews, prohibits speculation, but it seems likely that the reasons for choosing student diversity have more to do with outgroup avoidance theory than liberation theory. LCCS families are avoiding a specific population of children whose family backgrounds differ from their own children.

For LCCS parents, the meaning of diversity is ironic. Searching for diversity would usually mean searching for a school in which there are more people from different backgrounds. However, given the fact that the public schools are so racially and economically segregated, for these parents diversity means searching for a school with more white and non-poor students. More diversity means more white, more Asian and more middle-class students.
The respondents most likely to consider student diversity important were those with incomes in the $50,000-75,000 bracket; the lower and higher socioeconomic status groups identified student diversity as less important. Middle-class families are seeking a more diverse school for their children. They may want their children to attend schools with wealthier peers. Due to the financial costs of private and parochial schools, they cannot afford to leave segregated public schools, unless it is through public school choice. Figure 7.2 presents the percent of families attracted to LCCS because of its student diversity, broken down by class.

Figure 7.2. Percent of Families Attracted to Student Diversity by Socio-economic Class

Additionally, LCCS families find racial diversity to be more important than socioeconomic diversity. The survey asked parents how important economic and racial diversity were in deciding to apply to LCCS. Overall, the data shows that families from all economic backgrounds value economic and racial diversity. When comparing economic and racial diversity, a higher percentage of respondents found racial diversity “very important.” Relative to economic diversity, 7% more low-income respondents found racial diversity very important; in comparison, among middle-income respondents
9% more found racial diversity very important than found economic diversity very important; among the high-income respondents the difference was 18%. The data reveal that the school’s economic diversity is more important among respondents in lower income brackets: 26% more low-income respondents than high-income respondents found economic diversity very important. However, roughly the same percent of respondents of all socioeconomic classes chose the neutral response. Table 7.1 highlights the degrees of importance families place on economic integration.

Table 7.1. Importance of Economic Diversity by Socio-economic Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Diversity</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income (less than 49K) n=31</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Income (49-100 K) n=43</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Income (100 K or more) n=85</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank n=9</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table illustrates that LCCS families are less keen to send their children to schools with economic diversity than racial diversity. Low-income peers are less desirable than peers from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. At LCCS as the percent of low-income students has declined the number of students on the waiting list has increased.

The data reveal that racial diversity is valued fairly similarly in different economic brackets. However, compared to the middle-income and high-income families, 15% more low-income families considered racial diversity “very important.” This data
supports liberation theory, which argues choice has reduced racial segregation in schools by providing families access to schools that are more integrated (Archbald, 2003). LCCS families value racial diversity. However, economic diversity is less important to the families. Table 7.2 presents data on the importance parents placed on racial diversity.

Table 7.2 Importance of Racial Diversity by Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Diversity</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income (less than 49K) n=31</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Income (49-100K) n=43</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Income (100K or more) n=85</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank n=9</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ironically, diversity to LCCS parents is a combination of liberation and outgroup avoidance theory. On the one hand, parents since the founders have valued the notion of student diversity, but on the other hand recent parents do not value economic diversity the same as racial diversity. The question is what percent of low-income students attending a school will attract middle- and high-income families? Is there a tipping point?

School Culture/Climate

School climate and culture are more important to families making more than $50,000 a year compared to families making less. School culture and climate pertain to the norms and forms of cultural capital that are valued within a school. At LCCS, school culture is a distinguishing factor for parents comparing the school to the district options. In comparing LCCS to another high-achieving district elementary school, the culture at
LCCS was more nurturing and child-centered. At the other public school, classrooms were quieter and discipline problems were more numerous. In contrast, at LCCS students are chatty and involved in their group activities. Although the district school had tables, there were fewer peer interactions than at LCCS, where interaction and collaboration are key components of the pedagogy. Additionally, at LCCS teachers interacted with students in a more nurturing way. Instead of saying “no” or “stop,” LCCS teachers were more likely say, “make good choices,” or “how would you feel if…”

Respondents whose children had previously attended the district school compared how LCCS differed from the district. Out of 52 responses, 24 included components of school culture (better community, parent involvement, caring, student-teacher relationships, communication, and teacher attitudes). One respondent highlighted the school culture by stating, “LCCS is more a community than public school. We really know other families. In the public schools there were not as many school events and field trips” (2010 parent survey). Another quote emphasized the importance of shared values, “a like mind, similar values, goals, parental involvement, [and] more excitement, [it is] rare to have students who are a distraction or discipline problem” (2010 parent survey). One respondent stated dramatically, that LCCS was “so much better, the zoned school was like a prison—parents weren’t welcome—too much homework” (2010 parent survey). Figure 7.3 highlights the percent of families attracted to LCCS’s school culture.
Figure 7.3. Percent of Families Attracted to School Culture by Socio-economic Class

Teacher Quality

Compared to middle- and upper-income respondents, a higher percent of low-income respondents, 88%, identified teacher quality as a reason for applying to LCCS. Nine percent fewer middle- and high-income families identified teacher quality as important. The data show that low-income parents rank teacher quality as much more important than school culture. In comparison, middle-income families rank school culture a bit higher than teacher quality. Table 7.3 lists the percent of families attracted to LCCS because of teacher quality.
Table 7.3. Families Attracted to Teacher Quality by Socio-economic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or less</td>
<td>.878788</td>
<td>.33143398</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>.79545455</td>
<td>.40803246</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>.79761905</td>
<td>.40418777</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.31622777</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>.81871345</strong></td>
<td><strong>.38638686</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One component of teacher quality is teacher training. A large percent of LCCS’s original teachers were educated at a university emphasizing progressive child-centered pedagogy, such as Bank Street, NYC, or TC- Columbia University. Additionally, LCCS has historically invested in professional development at Columbia University’s summer Reading and Writing Institute. Not only are these programs child centered and progressive, but also they also promote methods and strategies that utilize middle-class cultural capital. For example, the methods encourage constructivist approaches in which students “discover” and take ownership in their learning.

*After School Programs and Extracurricular Activities*

There is a negative correlation between the importance of after school programs and family wealth. As families become wealthier, after school programs lose importance. Twice as many families making less than $100,000 chose extracurricular activities than those making more than $100,000. The difference between these values is due to necessity. Extracurricular activities typically cost families a lot in terms of both time and money. The wealthier the family, the more resources they have to contribute to out-of-school enrichment programs. Such programs are a large component of middle class
cultural cultivation. Table 7.4 presents the percent of families attracted to LCCS because of extracurricular activities.

Table 7.4. Extracurricular Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or below</td>
<td>.54545</td>
<td>.50565</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>.52273</td>
<td>.50526</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeding $100,000</td>
<td>.23810</td>
<td>.42848</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.48304</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.39766</td>
<td>.49085</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to LCCS’s extracurricular activities, a larger percent of low-income families (compared to middle- and high-income families) were attracted to LCCS for its after school program. Figure 7.4 highlights the difference between family income groups.

Figure 7.4. Parents Attracted to After School Programs by Socio-economic Class

A teacher explained why lower-income families might be more interested in extracurricular activities:
A lot of parents, they don’t have the money to, you know, register their kids for the town team or get them to where they have to go… you know…. If it’s down at Bayview Park, where there’s a practice, they can’t get them there…. umm… so, if it was school-based, I think that we’d have more participation. You know, I think wherever you go it’s the ‘have’s and the have-not’s’ …. You know, some kids discuss where they’ve been…. And I see that, you know, some kids never leave their lot all summer…. And other kids have been to Greece…. (Founding teacher 14, June 2010).

Establishing a school that attracts a diverse population requires that the school features attract families from a range of backgrounds. In terms of class, families from different economic backgrounds prioritize school features differently. For example, families from the six economic background categories ranked their reasons for applying to LCCS somewhat differently. However, despite the difference in rankings, the families chose the same reasons.

The highest percent and top priority for both families making less than $49,000 and families making more than $150,000 was teacher quality. Respondents making $50,000-75,000 and $100,000-150,000 ranked school culture as the highest priority; and respondents earning between $75,000 and 100,000 ranked small class size as the highest priority. Despite economic differences, families from all three economic classes chose teacher quality as a reason for applying to LCCS. The distribution was equitable between the socio-economic groups. A slightly higher percent of families from the two lowest income brackets chose teacher quality.

Education Level

Compared to economic class, a family’s level of educational attainment appears to be more strongly related to their reasons for applying to LCCS. Figure 7.5 illustrates the value families from different educational backgrounds place on specific school features.
For example, cultural educational values, like school culture, climate, and parent involvement all become more attractive as a family’s educational attainment increases. Both school culture and parent involvement influence family social capital and family influence by providing opportunities for families to influence the school institution. Likewise, school culture involves the specific cultural capital that results in the cultural cultivation of a child. Small class size is less attractive to families as educational attainment decreases, excluding families with a high school diploma. The smaller a class becomes, the more individualized attention students can potentially receive. Families attracted to student diversity are illustrated in a bell curve shape, when comparing educational attainment levels. Those in the lowest and highest educational attainment groups value student diversity the same; while those with college degrees value student diversity more than the other groups. As Lareau pointed out, “as college graduates they gained symbolic access to the world of educated people and thereby to the word of education itself” (Lareau, 2000, p. 171). Figure 7.5 illustrates the LCCS features attracting families from different educational levels.
Social Networks

The social capital of a school encompasses both school culture and parent involvement. These are important factors in attracting families to LCCS. Social capital is a useful medium for LCCS families to inform new families about its educational opportunities. However, a negative limitation of social networking is that it advantages the wealthy because they have more time to network. Evidence suggests that middle-income families tend to spend more time researching school choices than their lower-income counterparts. The methods parents use to learn about charter schools was researched by Teske, Fitzpatrick and Kaplan, who found racial and economic differences
in the degree to which parents research choice programs (2007). Their research concluded that social networks provide an advantage to middle-income parents.

In the survey, parents were asked, “How did you learn about Learning Community Charter School”; responses included: 5% (9/169) recruitment, 78% (132/169) word of mouth, 25% (41/169) research, and 5% (9/169) the preschool program. Therefore, the majority of parents relied on social capital operating through the word-of-mouth method of inquiry. Additionally, there was a positive correlation between socio-economic status and the word-of-mouth strategy. Figure 7.6 illustrates the percent of families who learned about LCCS through word of mouth.

Figure 7.6 Families Who Learned about LCCS through Word of Mouth by Socio-economic Status

The Diversity of LCCS

LCCS families ranked student diversity highly in their educational values. In the next section I discuss both LCCS’s diversity and the possibilities the diversity brings.
These possibilities include both the social and cultural capital of a diverse group of students.

**LCCS: Racial Balance**

LCCS is more racially balanced than the majority of Jersey City public schools. Compared with the most racially diverse elementary schools in Jersey City, LCCS is very diverse, but not the most diverse. Out of the six most diverse Jersey City elementary schools, two are located in the downtown ward (P.S. 16 and P.S. 37), two are in West Side (P.S. 23 and P.S. 33), one is in the Heights (P.S. 25), and one is in Journal Square (P.S. 11). Figure 7.7 illustrates that LCCS’s representation of the four races measured by national and state data—White, Black, Asian and Hispanic—is well balanced. However, both the Black and White populations are more than double the size of the school’s Asian and Hispanic populations.

Of the six most diverse elementary schools, only four have at least 15% of their students of each of the four races. Similarly, LCCS has at least 15% of its students from each of the races; however, both Black and White students are overrepresented. Thus, LCCS has a racial balance, but is not as balanced as P.S. 33, P.S. 16, P.S. 23, and P.S. 11. Figure 7.7 highlights the racial balance of Jersey City’s most diverse public elementary schools.
A year after LCCS opened its doors, in the 1998 school year, 46% of LCCS students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. This number was 26.5% lower than the district during the 1998 school year. As LCCS became more established, the percentage of low-income students declined. Meanwhile, during the same time period the district’s percentage of low-income students gradually grew. Figure 7.8 illustrates the percent of free lunch students at LCCS compared to the district and shows an inverse relationship between the percent of low-income students at LCCS and the percent of low-income students in the between 1998 and 2010.
Since 1998, the total number of district students has dropped from 32,516.5 to 27,464 in the 2009-10 school year. Both the number of low-income and middle-income students has declined. However, the number of middle-income students declined at a higher rate. The enrollment of middle-income students declined at a 21% rate, while the enrollment of low-income students declined at 16% rate. The declining number of middle-income students attending the district schools could also be accounted for by LCCS and other successful charter schools, which some argue “cream” the public system.

The increasing percent of middle-income students attending LCCS can be explained by the school’s burgeoning reputation. Since 1997, the first year of charter schools in New Jersey, LCCS and other Jersey City charter schools’ middle-class populations have expanded. Two of the three original Jersey City charter schools were located in the city’s gentrifying downtown area and one was located next to County Village, a middle-class neighborhood in Greenville. The demographic trend at other charter schools also follows the pattern of “gentrification.” Over time, three of the charter...
schools established in 2001 have had declining low-income populations. At only one, a high school, has the low-income population increased over time. The combination of a charter school’s reputation and geographic proximity influence its demographics. Figures 7.9 and 7.10 illustrate the rising middle-class population in Jersey City charter schools.

Figures 7.9 and 7.10: Increase in Middle-Class Population in Charter Schools

Despite the charter schools’ increase in middle-income students, only one other Jersey City Charter School has demographics that are as economically mixed, according to Kahlenberg’s definition (2006). At Ethical Community Charter School, 44 of 119 students were low income in the 2009 school year, with a rate of 37% of its students being eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Thus, Ethical Community Charter School, founded by middle-class families in 2009, is Jersey City’s second most economically mixed charter school. The other charter schools have nearly as high a percent of low-income students as the average district public schools (75% of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch).

In addition to LCCS being an economically mixed school, the school is also socio-economically mixed in terms of the education levels of the parents. LCCS families
have attained a much higher level of education than most Jersey City families. Compared with the city average, 15% more LCCS families finished college. Additionally, 22.9% more LCCS families have graduate degrees than the city average. Therefore, LCCS has a disproportionate number of educated parents. Currently, statistics for the school district are not attainable, but these numbers should be close to the city’s percentages. Table 7.5 compares the educational attainment level of Jersey City residents to that of LCCS parents.

### Table 7.5 Educational Attainment Level of Jersey City Residents Compared to LCCS Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment Levels</th>
<th>Individuals over 25 in Jersey City</th>
<th>LCCS Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No High School</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree/College Diploma</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The educational backgrounds of LCCS parent survey respondents show that compared to the Jersey City average, LCCS parents are highly educated. Between the 2009 and 2010 school years, the percent of parent respondents who completed college increased 16% to 45%. Additionally, the percent of parents with graduate degrees increased from 31% in 2009 to 35% in 2010. Those with some college dropped from 31% in 2009 to 14% in 2010. The percent of parents with GEDs and some high school
remained about the same, with 6% GEDs in 2009 and 5% in 2010; 2% had some high school in 2009 compared to 1% in 2010.

The educational level of a child’s parents influences the child’s academic achievement. Educated parents influence their children both through structuring educational activities at home and by influencing the schools. Therefore, at a school like LCCS, with highly educated parents, students are more likely to perform better than their low-income peers are, because

Parents with low education levels demonstrate a deeper form of disadvantage; they show less investment in their children’s education than those parents with more years of schooling even when controlling for family income. (Schneider & Coleman, 1993, p. 12)

One important question is whether educated parents can influence their child’s peers, who have less educated parents.

**Immigrants**

Research indicates that students of immigrants, who voluntarily chose to move to the United States, have a high degree of both social and cultural capital. Many first-generation students out-perform their native peers (Lew, 2006; Ogbu, 2003). At LCCS, a large percent of students come from families of immigrants. In 2010, 44% of the families had one or more parent born in another country. The number of families with one or more parent born outside the United States increased from 38.35% in 2009 to 44% in 2010. When disaggregated by race, the majority of the families of immigrants are Asian, mixed race, and Hispanic. An equal percent of White and Black families are immigrants. Table 7.6 shows the percent of LCCS families who are immigrants by race.
Table 7.6: Percent of Immigrant LCCS Families Compared to Jersey City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Immigrants</th>
<th>Percent of Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8/16</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>12/35</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26/79</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>19/25</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>7/13</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immigrant families have a lot of social and cultural capital that can assist children in their educational careers.

*Family Composition*

In 2010, 74% (131) of the respondents in the LCCS parent survey reported being married. This number is disproportinate to an average urban elementary school. Further, only 12% were single, 6% were divorced, 5% were separated, and 1% were widowed. Such a high percent of married parents has implications for both parent involvement and fundraising activities. The percentage had increased since 2009 when 66% of respondents were married. The marriage status of a parent is a significant factor in a child’s educational achievement.
Conclusion

Compared with the district and other urban areas, LCCS’s demographics are more diverse; however, in some ways the demographics remain homogenous. The high percent of married and educated families provide the school with a higher level of family capital. Families are capable of providing more time and, in some cases, economic capital to the school. In addition to more family capital (a form of social capital), LCCS families have more cultural capital than district schools. Cultural and social capital both influence academic achievement. In the next section I investigate how family capital and diversity influence the school and whether the capital of peers can positively influence LCCS’s low-income students.
Chapter Eight: Achievement and Diversity

Given that LCCS’s students are diverse, a key question is the nature of student achievement. Are there social class, racial, and cohort achievement gaps, and if so, are they ameliorated by LCCS over time? Overall, the evidence illustrates that the peer composition of a cohort is the most positive influence on student growth. Cohorts with a higher percent of free-lunch students improve less over time at LCCS. In contrast, cohorts with fewer free-lunch students improve more over the years. Similarly, both students who are free lunch and those who are not free lunch perform better in cohorts with fewer free-lunch students.

On average, LCCS student achievement is at or above the state average. Figure 8.1 illustrates that in cohorts 2009-2012, the average test scores for all racial groups, with the exception of Black-Hispanic, were above the state average. The data excludes students who transferred in or out and who are classified as special education. However at LCCS, there is an achievement gap between racial subgroups. This achievement gap mirrors the national achievement gap: White and Asian students have higher achievement than Black and Hispanic students. However, the average test scores for Hispanic and Black subgroups are above the state average. Therefore, Hispanic and Black students are out-performing their state and district peers. Figure 8.1 illustrates LCCS’s mean test scores normalized to the state scores between 2005-2009.

7 All data in this section excludes transfer-in/transfer-out students and classified students.
When comparing the average test scores for LCCS’s racial subgroups, most racial subgroups exceed the state average for the particular racial subgroup. The next four figures illustrate 2009 data for cohort 2012 (in fifth grade); cohort 2011 (in sixth grade); cohort 2010 (in seventh grade) and cohort 2009 (in eighth grade). Figure 8.2 illustrates that Black students from cohort 2010, who were in seventh grade, and from cohort 2011, who were in sixth grade, were at least 15 points above the state average for Black students. However, Black students from cohorts 2009 and 2012 were just slightly above the state average.
In 2009, White students exceeded the state average for White students. In some cases, LCCS White students out-performed their state peers by more than 25 points. Figure 8.3 compares LCCS White students’ achievement to the state average.

Figure 8.3. 2009 Achievement: White Students
LCCS Hispanic students, from cohorts 2009-2011, out-performed the state average for Hispanic students. However, the Hispanic average for cohort 2012 while in fifth grade in 2009 was 7.2 points lower than the state average. Figure 8.4 compares LCCS Hispanic students’ achievement to the state average.

Figure 8.4. 2009 Achievement: Hispanic Students

In 2009, LCCS Asian students from cohorts 2011-2013 did worse than the state average for Asian students. In cohort 2011, students performed the same as the state average and in 2012, LCCS Asian students performed better than the state average. One explanation for the disparity between the LCCS average and the state average could be that LCCS Asian students are more likely to be from immigrant families in which English is not spoken at home. Figure 8.5 compares LCCS Asian students’ performance to the state average.
Over time, most racial groups performed better in math, with the exception of Hispanics. Hispanics’s performance declined over the years. The achievement gap between White and Asians and Black and Hispanics is extremely wide. By seventh grade, however, the gap begins to decrease.
In language arts, performance for all races declined overtime. As performance declined, the achievement gap narrowed, until eighth grade when it widened again.
In addition to a racial achievement gap, there is also an economic achievement gap at LCCS. However, in 2009, for language arts, both groups of students, free lunch and not free lunch, were above their respective state averages. Figure 8.8 shows that on average, LCCS free lunch and not free lunch students are above the state average in Language Arts.

Figure 8.8. Language Arts, 2009

![Language Arts, 2009](image)

However, at the school level, the data illustrate that over time free-lunch students’ performance declined. The language arts curriculum is not as concrete and tangible as the math curriculum. Figure 8.9 shows the decline among free-lunch students in language arts in comparison to the stability of the performance of the economically advantaged students.
In math, free-lunch students were above the state average for free-lunch students. Additionally, the economically advantaged students in grades six through eight were above the state average. However, the fifth graders in Cohort 2012 were below the average. The LCCS economic gap was narrow until eighth grade when the economically advantaged students outperformed the free-lunch students. Figure 8.10 shows that on average, LCCS both free-lunch and economically advantaged students are above the state average in math.
The socio-economic achievement gap for math within the school shows that in the initial grades, free lunch students’ performance was very close to the state norm; however, as students progress into seventh and eighth grade, the school gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students begins to narrow. Figure 8.11 illustrates this gap.

Figure 8.11. Math by Socio-economic Status
Figure 8.12 contains a historical illustration of the economic achievement gap between 2005 and 2009 for cohorts 2009-2012; the figure suggests that the math gap between free-lunch and economically advantaged students narrowed between fifth and eighth grade. The narrowing could be due to the explicit middle school instruction.

Figure 8.12. LCCS Math Socio-economic Achievement Gap

In contrast, the language arts economic achievement gap expanded as students progressed into middle school. At fourth grade, the average test score for free-lunch students plummeted to the state average. By eighth grade, the achievement gap between free-lunch and economically advantaged students expanded by almost one standard deviation.

Figure 8.13 illustrates the economic achievement gap for language arts at LCCS.
The data suggest a cohort effect. For cohort 2009, the average test scores for both language arts and math were much lower than for cohorts 2010 and 2011. However, by cohort 2012, the average was lower than the preceding cohorts. Figure 8.14 illustrates the cohort effect at LCCS.
The demographics of the cohorts may explain the cohort effect. Cohort 2009 had the highest percent of low-income and minority students. Additionally, cohort 2009 had a lower percent of White students than subsequent cohorts. Cohort 2011 has the lowest percent of students eligible for free lunch and the lowest percent of Hispanic and Black students. Additionally, the percent of low-income students increased from 31.5% in cohort 2011 to 37% in cohort 2012. Table 8.1 describes the four cohorts.

Table 8.1. Cohort Demographics
Despite the fact that the 2009 cohort had the lowest average for both math and language arts, the cohort also had the largest growth for math over the years measured. In contrast, for cohorts 2011 and 2012 math growth was negative. Interestingly, over time growth in language arts was negative for all four cohorts.

The cohort effect at LCCS provides opportunities to investigate how low-income students perform in different cohorts. In cohort 2009, free-lunch students’ performance in both language arts and math was below or close to the state average in the majority of the grade years. The only growth can be seen in seventh and eighth grade for math.

Figures 8.15 and 8.16. Math and Language Arts Growth, Cohort 2009

In contrast to cohort 2009, cohort 2010 had high levels of achievement. Additionally, in 2010, the graduating class sent 18 of its 36 students to McNair Academy. This was the highest percent LCCS had ever sent to McNair. Further, LCCS sent more
students to McNair than any other feeder school. In math, both the free-lunch and economically advantaged students experienced consistent and positive growth, with the exception of free-lunch students in sixth grade. However language arts scores depict a less promising picture. Compared to the state average, free-lunch students had negative growth each year and while economically advantaged students made progress, scores peaked in fifth grade and declined each year after. Figures 8.17 and 8.18 illustrate the performance of cohort 2010.

Figures 8.17 and 8.18. Math and Language Arts Growth, Cohort 2010

Similar to cohort 2010, cohort 2011 had a low percent of free-lunch students and had higher achievement than cohorts 2009 and 2012. Most remarkably, the gap between free-lunch students and economically advantaged students was far narrower in cohort 2011 than cohort 2010. Figure 8.19 and 8.20 depict the achievement for this group.
Similar to cohort 2009, cohort 2012 showed less achievement than the other two cohorts. In math, free-lunch students began performing better than economically advantaged students. However, over time both free-lunch and economically advantaged students performed below the state average in fifth grade. Language arts scores illustrate that over time free-lunch and economically advantaged students experienced negative growth. Figures 8.21 and 8.22 illustrate these patterns.

Figures 8.21 and 8.22. Math and Language Arts Growth, Cohort 2012
Achievement & Diversity: Explanations

Why do low-income students perform better in mixed-income schools than in economically poor schools? Why do low-income students at LCCS perform better in economically mixed cohorts than in predominantly low-income cohorts? The data I gathered via observations, interviews, and experience as a classroom teacher indicate the following top ten benefits of an economically diverse school: parental pressure, culture, interaction with children from different backgrounds, normalizing social capital, peer models, teachers having more time to reach out to at-risk students, social capital, exposure to cultural capital, parental involvement, and fundraising opportunities.

Parental Pressure

A professor once told me, “A good teacher imagines the students’ parents sat at the back of the room and ensures that the children are treated the way that his or her parents would want.” At LCCS, parents are an integral component of the school’s environment. Although parents are not physically sitting in each classroom, they are working on projects with teachers, planning events in the library, volunteering in the cafeteria and in some cases, they are employees of the school. During the 2010-11 school year, six members of the LCCS staff were current or former LCCS parents. This has its advantages and disadvantages, but serves as a conduit for parents’ voices. In addition to parents working at the school, the school’s board of trustees has six voting parents. Both the parents on the board and the parents working at the school are middle- or high-income parents. At LCCS parents act as advocates ensuring that their children are treated the way they desire.
Studies have shown that middle- and high-income families are more likely to be involved in school events and challenge teachers when they feel that the curriculum or practices are not effective (Lareau, 2000). LCCS teachers and administrators treat students with fairness and respect, and are nurturing. Much of this is due to the high expectations placed on the school by parents. Historically, the founding parents established a nurturing and respectful culture. Not only do LCCS’s middle-income parents often challenge and dispute issues, such as recess safety, fairness of silent lunches, validity of the curriculum, and homework, but they also volunteer their suggestions and time to help the school solve its problems. For instance, when LCCS moved to the Lincoln Park neighborhood, a large number of parents were upset with the new recess and lunch situation. The new building provided the school with a cafeteria, which required the students to eat in a room with 120 other students. Parent volunteers helped supervise the lunchroom. At recess, instead of having a designated private area for recess, students were required to share county land; with the county land came requirements that were difficult for students to abide by, such as no ball playing and no running, as well as other challenges (e.g., strangers smoking near the children). In response, multiple parents volunteered on a daily basis to ensure that the children were safe at recess and that the students received lunches in a speedy manner.

In discussing the differences between parents from different economic backgrounds, one LCCS teacher explained, “low-income parents are more likely to say yes. Whatever I say is gold. Sometimes it is good and sometimes it is bad. I know I can get away with things that the higher income parents will more likely challenge” (Teacher 1). Thus, a balance is important. There are inefficiencies at schools in which parents
challenge and complain because of the amount of time required to respond to these complaints; however, a culture in which no challenging occurs could result in teachers not being as accountable to children and their families. A balance of challenging parents and less-challenging parents ensures that teachers are meeting community and family expectations.

School Culture/Climate

A diverse school requires a certain school culture for all members of the community to feel welcome and included. The school culture must ensure that all family backgrounds are treated the same. Without this, some families may receive more benefits than others. LCCS teachers believe that LCCS has established a culture that respects diversity. One teacher explained that, “we have created a safe space for a diverse community” (Teacher 11). One way that LCCS establishes a safe space is through the establishment of a safe community in which the school promotes diversity through its integration in the curriculum.

The school established a culture of sharing with both the teachers and students. Teachers email one another if they need a resource and students contribute to communal supplies. At the beginning of each school year, parents receive a letter requesting classroom supplies. Some children bring in ten of every item and some children bring in what they can afford. All the supplies are stored together and distributed equitably. This practice ensures that all students have the supplies needed for learning and encourages the value of sharing. One teacher explained:

[Students] don’t bring in their own pencil boxes, so you don’t see it like, the kid with the fancy pencil box and the one that doesn’t have pencils, because we do
everything as a communal supply, everybody pretty much has the same things.
(Teacher 10, May 2009)

At LCCS, the discipline style among teachers in the lower school is very progressive and child-centered. Teachers remind children to make good choices. Rarely do teachers raise their voices; instead, teachers use the school values of: Community, Independent, Responsibility, Courage, Leadership, and Effort (CIRCLE) to reinforce positive behavior. Weekly, each grade has a CIRCLE meeting in which students receive recognition for exemplifying one of the CIRCLE values.

At the 2009 eighth grade graduation, the principal explained to the students the importance of their LCCS school culture. She argued that for the school to continue succeeding students must be actively involve in their new school and bring the aspects of their LCCS culture with them. She encouraged students to:

Get involved in clubs and organizations. Seek out supportive communities. High school will be bigger than our community at LCCS. Remember to continue being leaders, give it all your effort. Remember our CIRCLE values learned at Learning Community. Seek out positive students to surround yourself with. (Principal, June 2009)

Interactions between Students from Different Backgrounds

We live in a multicultural society. When people meet people of a different background as full-fledged adults it is much harder to learn and appreciate people, who are different. …we wanted our kids to interact with kids who were different than them. We think it is good for our kids....[Our son] is more open to cultural difference and he has learned to appreciate cultural differences. (Founding parent 2, May 2009)

When children from diverse backgrounds attend the same school and engage in classes together, they learn a considerable amount about cultural differences and as a
result become more tolerant and culturally aware. In my first year teaching at LCCS, I read Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s *I Have a Dream* speech with my class of 20 fourth graders. Dr. King’s speech provoked a dynamic and powerful classroom discussion about non-violent responses to discrimination and terrorism. Our discussion quickly went from a very elementary level to a very sophisticated level when students began making comparisons to their own cultural examples of discrimination and non-violent protest. An African American boy discussed how his African American cousin experienced discriminated for living in a housing project. Next, a Tibetan girl raised her hand to share a story about how China was still discriminating against Tibet and how her uncle was similar to Dr. King in that he was peacefully protesting against China and as a result he was killed. Then a boy from India discussed terrorism in India and how his family lived in fear. He compared Gandhi to Dr. King. Last, a Nigerian student discussed a Broadway performance her father had just taken her to about a Nigerian musician, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, whose music was politically motivated and resulted in an attack on his house and the death of his mother, who was murdered by the military (Classroom discussion, January 13, 2010).

This classroom discussion taught the students sophisticated cultural, political, and geographical concepts. Due to the personal and emotional nature of the students’ stories, all the students were engaged and listening. Without the personalization of the stories, the discussion would have lacked intensity and sophistication. Thus, with an engaging and interactive curriculum, a diverse body of students can learn from each other and establish cultural tolerance and understanding. In addition to sharing cultural stories, students were also sharing cultural capital. The Nigerian student shared her cultural experience of going
to a Broadway performance with students who have never been to a Broadway performance.

One teacher highlighted LCCS’s level of student integration and how it exposes low-income students to various forms of middle-class cultural capital:

Kids who never have had the opportunity to associate with kids from a higher economic status, like in the public school, your neighborhood school. If you’re down in that section of Greenville, everybody’s going to look and talk like you… everyone’s going to live in the same projects… you know… whereas here, we do get that and the fact that play-dates are you know to someone’s home who might have richer books or take the kids to a little more interesting places to see how the other half lives… and maybe want to get out of that ghetto mentality in a good way. (Teacher 14, June 2010)

Thus, low-income students attending public schools are segregated from higher income students and their capital. However, at LCCS low-income students are able to interact with students who have middle- and high-income forms of social and cultural capital.

A contributing factor to children interacting is the size of the school. One teacher explained that:

Here we are smaller, that intimacy, maybe some of those kids are being exposed, outside of school, by being friends with a kid whose family does do stuff… go on a trip with them or something. (Teacher 9, May 2009)

Similarly, the intimacy provides the teachers and students with more opportunities to get to know one another. LCCS capped the size of the classroom at 18 until the 2009 school year, when the limit rose to 20 for financial reasons.

There is one example at the school of a student from a low-income and unstable family background receiving assistance and support from a wealthier family.

There was a wealthy family, kind of looking out for a very economically disadvantaged child whose parents were in jail…. In the long run this kid
prospered and I think because the mom was a stay at home mom, she could pick her kids up at 3 o’clock make sure that he got homework, a snack, went to soccer practice… he got this kind of more well-rounded family life he wouldn’t have had otherwise. (Teacher 11, May 2009)

In this rare case, a middle-income family quasi-adopted the child to ensure that he had a structured and supportive family life.

Although there are some stories of students interacting outside of school, there are also cases in which neighborhood barriers prevented play-dates with children from different backgrounds. For example,

But outside of school, you know… that’s where it seems to get separated… I think about [child’s name]. He doesn’t get called for play-dates… he lives in an awful neighborhood. So his social life is all here. It’s all within these walls. But when he goes home doors are shut, he’s not out in the street, he doesn’t see any of these kids where he lives. (Teacher 6, May 2009)

Unfortunately, there is a negative correlation between social class and play dates. According to the 2010 LCCS Parent Survey, 76% of low-income families (making less than $50,000) have play dates compared with 94% of middle-income families ($50,000-75,000) and 93% of upper-middle-income families ($75,000-100,000) and 91% of high income families (More than $100,000).

School factors enable or hinder the potential for students to interact. In the early years of the middle school, student interactions outside class and racial groups were limited due to tracking. Like many mixed-income schools, LCCS had a phase when they sorted middle school students by ability. This resulted in racial and economic segregation. A veteran middle school teacher explained that:

When I first came here they had leveled the kids but as it turned out… the upper level kids were all white and the lower level kids were all black and Latinos. So
there were the black kids, white kids, smart kids, stupid kids. Really it took three years to change that perception. (Teacher 4, May 2009)

The middle school no longer tracks its students and this has resulted in both a better middle school culture and more interactions between students of different races. During my observations in the middle school in the 2008-09 school year, students ate lunch with friends of different backgrounds and interacted together both inside and outside of class. There were no friendship groups based on class or race.; instead students interact with a diverse group of peers.

Norms

When low-income kids or kids from families that are less intact or families that have their own internal dysfunctions, come to a school like Learning Community, the atmosphere is so much more positive that many of them, not all, but many of them get the program. They pick up the vibe… I can name a half dozen students by name who if they were in a traditional, urban middle school would be weak, mediocre students, who would pass, but barely and wouldn’t learn much. In our school, they’re not the best students, but they rise to the occasion. I see them becoming friends with the more middle-class kids, and they benefit … they pick up some of that cultural, goal-oriented sense. (Teacher 7, May 2009)

Through integration and relationships with peers from other backgrounds, students establish common norms. Teacher 7 explained how students from less structured families perform well at LCCS because of the atmosphere or the established culture—a combination of families, teachers, and the school’s history. However, “picking up the vibe” refers to exposure to a norm, a form of social capital that assists students from less-structured backgrounds. Coleman explained that "value consistency grows through the interactions found in a functional community, and when it exists it facilitates the norms that grow up in such a community" (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 8).
At LCCS, a common norm threaded into the school’s culture is the desire to learn. Whether at the kindergarten insect museum, a third grade habitat dance, or a seventh grade Model U.N. debate, an outsider will find that overall, LCCS students, despite their disabilities or obstacles, value learning. For example, one teacher explained:

There is something in this school that made [students] understand that being smart is a good thing and they should encourage it. And that it was okay. Whereas in Brooklyn, you would always be hiding it. (Teacher 4, May 2009)

In addition to the low-income students learning “middle-income” norms of what teacher 7 referred to as “goal-oriented sense,” there are also cases of middle-income students learning from their low-income peers. A teacher in the lower-school explained:

I think that every child comes from a home [probably] with something different and I think that the more diverse a group the better. They probably learn things from each other... I think that when kids are more homogenous [wealthy], like this year, they all come in, kind of being leaders, but it’s like when you have a classroom full of leaders, like that’s why I think there’s been a lot of conflict...when they came from different backgrounds, they had come with different values and we were able to form that circle [school values: Community, Independence, Respect, Leadership, and Effort] that bonds, everyone was able to come together...they lack, maybe a little more respect. They’re very independent, they might be leaders, but some of them lack a little more effort this year. And in the past I’ve had a more diverse group of kids coming in, with a little bit of each, so it’s easier to create a whole. (Teacher 3, May 2009)

As the middle school’s student composition has become more middle class, the norms have changed. For example, one teacher explained that “it is sometimes difficult for kids who come from difficult backgrounds to buy into if somebody hits you don’t hit them back...there is less of that now” (Teacher 4). Therefore, as the school has become more economically diverse and balanced, the school established its “school norms.” These norms are a product of the social and cultural capital of the students. As the student body becomes more homogenous (either wealthy or low-income), the norms shift; as
teacher 3 explained, in her lower school classroom, the higher-income students enter the classroom with more entitlement and less responsiveness to boundaries and rules.

Social Capital Accumulation through Peer Models

Attending a school with peers from a diverse population provides exposure to different forms of capital: economic, social, and cultural. A functionalist sociologist would argue that this exposure in itself could provide students with tools to navigate through the educational system and mobilize socially. However, social reproduction scholars view social capital as just another advantage utilized by the wealthy to maintain their status. At LCCS, social capital provides opportunities for educational and social advancement, while at the same time it has limitations.

When asked, “Studies show that low-income students perform better when they are at economically mixed schools than their counterparts who are at economically segregated school. Why do you think this is the case?” 53% of the respondents’ explanations included the importance of peer models. Coleman argued that peer culture is the second most influential factor determining a child’s academic achievement, after family background. One way that students influence each other is by modeling skills and norms. At LCCS, students’ work is displayed on bulletin boards, teachers use examples of high-performing students’ work to model high expectations, and students work at tables—not desks—so they share both their products and processes with one another.

One teacher explained that “there’s a lot more peer modeling… also a natural sense of wanting to keep up is a little more exaggerated here… well if she can do it, so can I” (Teacher 9). A teacher who also taught at a district school explained that, “they
have models, they have cues in front of them that are performing at that level...whereas at P.S.17, they may not have those peers that are high-performing” (Teacher 6).

Similarly, another teacher compared LCCS to the district schools and explained that “class discussion are richer and I think that children try to model the brighter student” (Teacher 14, June 2010).

LCCS has established a culture in which students embrace effort and leadership. Throughout the observations, there were numerous examples of students who were eager to help others. For example:

The kids who might not have had those experiences can reach higher because they have good role models in their peers. Although there might be a sense of frustration at times, they can dream bigger because they can see bigger. (Teacher 12, May 2009)

LCCS provides more opportunities for students to be successful than the district. The social culture of the classroom provides opportunities during collaborative work for more advanced students to model and assist struggling students. One teacher explained that,

the more models you have for people who embrace and value their intelligence and yet are generous in the way they share it with people, not judgmental and the better the kids are able to succeed...Sometimes it is easier to learn from a peer than a teacher. The pressure is off. (Teacher 4, May 2009)

Another teacher commented that:

The literacy of the rich kids lulls them up. If you are sitting in a room with 30 kids with a level L, you will read at a level L. If it runs the gamut from K-Z, because of competition you will want to do as well as the girl sitting next to you. It boosts them up. (Teacher 1, May 2009)
Many middle-income students have parents who act on their behalf and advocate for them. At LCCS, there are multiple examples of teachers who formed weak ties with low-income students and acted as institutional navigators, sharing useful social and cultural capital. Examples include: taking students to Brooklyn for art classes on Saturdays, bringing students to museums on the weekends, establishing an internship for an LCCS alumnus. At an economically mixed school, there are fewer low-income students than at an economically segregated school. Thus, there is a greater potential for teachers to reach out to students. Many of the LCCS teachers who have formed weak ties with low-income students have a background teaching in urban environments, such as Jersey City, Union City, and New York City. This background prepared them for the challenges of urban life. Some teachers who lacked an urban teaching experience were less understanding and willing to reach out to low-income students. When discussing making accommodations for low-income and English-language-learning (ELL) families, one teacher said, “When I was in school, no one did that for me” (Informal discussion, 2011).

Additionally, teachers help students learn “middle-class values” by assisting them in school. Two teacher described this process:

There are a whole lot of socio-economic issues we can’t fix… you know we’re not going to change where a child comes from or who his parents are… Things like disorganization because their lives are maybe not as stable…that makes a difference…you help them, as much as you can, to organized themselves or at least, while they’re in class make them feel some type of stability and security. (Teacher 10 May 2009)

It’s not because their IQs are low, it’s just that they come in with a language disadvantage… you know, so you try to really engross them, and really immerse
them in language and literacy skills… I try to instill that a sense of independence as much as possible. So that by second and third grade, if they are not getting the attention of the parents to sit down with them each night… that they can at least try and feel good about the effort that they’re putting in. (Teacher 9, May 2009)

Some LCCS teachers understood the economic struggles and were explicit when discussing them with their students. For example:

I think that being honest and appropriately honest about your struggles as a person from struggling economic background is really helpful….Sharing experience helps them see me differently and as someone not keeping something away from them but inviting them into a process of struggle. (Teacher 4, May 2009)

In response to the struggles of living in an urban environment, teachers have gone out of their way to assist students in dealing with obstacles. One teacher explained, “Here there have been some seventh and eighth graders hanging out with the wrong crowd. We were all over it. Teachers picking kids up every morning. So they don’t take buses with thugs on the street” (Teacher 1, May 2009).

**Individualization/Differentiation**

With diversity comes difference. Students at LCCS do not enter with homogeneous academic skills; therefore, teachers must individualize, accommodate, and differentiate their instruction. High-achieving students guarantee that teachers’ expectations are high for all students. The ability of teachers to differentiate and individualize their instruction is a result of both the small class sizes and the teaching experience of the staff. The average teacher has taught in the school for at least four years. LCCS has a “grow their own” program, in which teachers begin as teaching assistants. This provides them enough time to learn the culture and curriculum of the school. LCCS teachers have a great deal of experience in LCCS classrooms before having their own.
An administrator explained that “expectations that teachers have knowing that they have students in the classroom who can perform beyond basic skills so they teach to that. They teach to that expectation and provide work for those who need it”  
(Administrator 2, May 2009). For example, two teachers discussed this process:

They are nowhere near each other in terms of reading and writing level, and yet can I penalize somebody who should have gotten services since kindergarten? Who reads and writes at a fourth grade level and still writes in Ebonics because she didn’t get special services or find a way to value the things she can do and find a way for her to succeed? I think you have to find ways to succeed. I think if students fail in your room, you failed to do your job There has to be some way for them to achieve success... different ways to assess kids... a visual, written, hands-on element, so that kids have three different ways of proving they have learned the material. (Teacher 4, May 2009)

You’re grading each student as an individual and you want to document growth as opposed to comparing them to each other (Teacher 11, May 2009)

Another example of how the school individualizes its practices is illustrated at graduation. Instead of emphasizing just one student’s achievements, the school celebrates all students by writing individualized graduation speeches. Additionally, at the 2009 graduation, the school actually delayed the ceremony by 25 minutes, because one (African American) student and her family were late (Field Notes, June 2009). Below is an example of a speech written specially for one of the 32 students. Below is an example of a personalized graduation speech:

It is my honor to present this diploma to [student’s name]. I’ve known [the student] for quite some time now, and he is among my greatest teachers, for the best of them are a mirror—not always the most flattering one, but a mirror nonetheless. I remember—it seems like so long ago—a short talk I gave to his class about each period being a new opportunity. One day, when I had the nerve to bring into [the student’s] class the problem I had with the previous class, he reminded me—ever so gently—that I needed to follow my own advice. “Each period is a new beginning, remember. That’s what you told us.” Although [the student] may not always seem to be listening, he is listening closely, and every so often—especially when you least expect it—your words come through him; he pays very close attention because [student’s name] is a thinker and a philosopher.
So often, I listened with joy to his close reading of a text, his insight into a problem with which we were struggling as a community, or watched him welcome and embrace this family that we call our eighth grade. He is a young man full of surprises, and with great promise. It is with pride and sadness that we bid him farewell and wish for him all the best, for it is the best that he deserves, and that—we hope—he will embrace.

Exposure to Cultural Capital

A: These kids need enrichment…. They need to get out of their little ghetto…. And I don’t mean Black ghetto, necessarily….  
Q: Right…  
A: but the ghetto of being stuck in Jersey City…. They need to travel… they need to go other places…. And I wish I could do more of that…we take her to the movies, we take her out to the country with us for awhile… and I realize… I don’t even think about it because I like this kid… but it probably happens more than I realize… that a lot of the kids who mingle with middle-class people, also get that…  
Q: Exposure  
A: Right.  
(Teacher 7, May 2009)

In addition to students accumulating cultural capital through their relationships with peers, LCCS’s culture and curriculum exposes students to many forms of cultural capital. Teacher 7 indicated that LCCS should provide more cultural capital exposure opportunities for low-income children. In his quote, he explained the importance of low-income students receiving middle-income forms of capital. His argument is an example of how LCCS teachers are aware of differences between students and the need to assist students.

At LCCS, low-income children’s exposure to cultural capital at home is less than it is for middle- and upper-class children. For example, 61% of high-income students had visited an art museum in the last year compared with only 32% of low-income students.
Therefore, both field trips and play dates at LCCS are opportunities to expose students to more cultural activities. Table 8.2 shows the difference in the percent of low-income and high-income students that had visited an art museum.

Table 8.2. Attendance at Art Museum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or below</td>
<td>.32352941</td>
<td>.47485808</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>.43181818</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>.6091954</td>
<td>.4907593</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>.51639778</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>.49714286</td>
<td>.50142654</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hands-on, thematic units of study at LCCS expose students to varying forms of cultural capital. Many of the units involve external field trips that provide students with cultural exposure and experiences. An administrator explained that:

Units of study coupled with field experiences and field trips. Those two kind of fill a role in building vocabulary, building the experiences, building content knowledge and background, things that they can speak about and relate to that they read in the books that they are reading. So, in a sense we level the playing field providing the students with the same opportunities as someone from a middle class [family]. (Administrator 2, May 2009).

**Parent Involvement: Intergenerational Closure**

Students, teachers, and parents establish the norms of a school. Parents founded and established LCCS. Consequently, parental involvement was an established norm from the beginning. Not only do parents perform services for the school, but they also establish a parental norm of involvement. Coleman (1988) referred to the kinds of
networks that emerge when parents know the parents of their child's friends as "intergenerational closure," and hypothesized that these networks provide a foundation for the mutual understanding and enforcement of social norms (Schneider & Coleman, 1993, p. 30). Three teachers illustrated intergenerational closure:

Just like the kids get raised up, I think the parents get raised up (Teacher 6, May 2009).

Because the kids hang out together so much outside of school and I think it forced the parents from the lower economic group to really be involved in the school.. (Teacher 11, May 2009).

Parents are looking to other parents as role models. When they see other parents really involved they make a greater intent to be involved (Teacher 12, May 2009).

In addition to establishing a culture of involvement, many of the middle-class parents expose low-income students to cultural capital through their involvement. For example, a teacher explained “one parent came in who has a beehive… I was in a kindergarten class [and] someone who is very good read stories. A grandfather displaced from New Orleans [who] came here to live with his son…came in and played jazz for us. They just enhance the curriculum” (Teacher 12, May 2009). Another teacher described parent involvement as “resources” and exposure:

We have resources, like parents who own recording studies. Lend us recording time, so a kid from the Duncan projects can go and sing a song. You know most kids sat in whatever school around here is not going to a professional studio to record a CD. Even non-academic activities. Expose them to activities that they wouldn’t have otherwise. The careers and parental involvement is huge. Even if their own parents aren’t involved all the parents know all the kids because they have all been in the same class since kindergarten. The community feeling of the school is apparent. When we had our field trip and one student couldn’t get to school. I called a parent and asked can you pick her up. Yes. It didn’t matter. Okay. You know it was just like this natural thing. In the Bronx they would have been like, “I am not picking up that kid.” (Teacher 1, May 2009)
Another teacher compared parent involvement in New York to LCCS parent involvement. At LCCS she found parents were more willing to assist in projects:

I remember when I was in New York [and also here] if I sent home something extra, it often didn’t come back, or was incomplete… or the parents didn’t understand what I was sending home… I feel like I can send a lot home with these guys, and they’ll do what they need to do… With this group, I’ll call them up and say: “You guys need to type these things up, I need them done by Wednesday..” and guess what? They’re all done by Wednesday. (Teacher 6, May 2009)

The volunteer rate is very high at LCCS. However, there are differences in the frequency of involvement and income levels of students. For example, 44% of high-income and 39% of middle-income parents volunteer more than four times a year, compared to 15% of low-income parents. Table 8.3 illustrates the volunteer rate at LCCS by economic breakdown.

Table 8.3. LCCS Volunteer Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Times</th>
<th>49K or less</th>
<th>50K or more</th>
<th>100 K or more</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 times</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 times</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 or more times</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One teacher offered an explanation for this difference:

I think rich people have more free time. Or at least more flexible schedules. If you are fortunate enough to be a kid with a stay-at-home mom, your mom can go to every publishing party, chaperone every field trip, volunteer for June-a-polazza. And if you are in a single-parent house, like her mom doesn’t have a college degree and works for minimum wage. For her to take off an afternoon to attend a play is money. It is actually food off the table to be able to pull it off. I think the wealthier you are the better job with more flexibility. (Teacher 1, May 2009)

Fundraising Opportunities

Socio-economically, LCCS families have more money than the district. Therefore, they are more capable of donating resources to the school via fundraising. LCCS families’ incomes range from below the federal poverty level to upper class. The economic diversity of the survey respondents runs the gamut. In 2009, 21% of respondents earned between $0 and $49,000; 12% of families earned between $50,000 and $75,000; 17% earned between $76,000 and $99,000; 27% earned between $100,000 and $150,000 and 16% earned more than $150,000. In 2010, after the school moved and expanded by 100 students, the survey respondents’ economic diversity was as varied as before the expansion. In 2010, 21% of respondents earned $0-$49,000; 12% of families earned $50,000-$75,000; 15% earned $76,000-$99,000; 30% earned $100,000-$150,000 and 22% earned more than $150,000.

Given the higher average economic backgrounds, families are more able to both donate money and participate time to fundraising activities for the school community than at a district school. These forms of activities build community and enhance a
school’s social capital. Table 8.4 illustrates differences in donating money to the school’s annual fund by economic group.

Table 8.4. Donating Money to the School’s Annual Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or below</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.43994135</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>.26190476</td>
<td>.44500062</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeding $100,000</td>
<td>.54117647</td>
<td>.50125892</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>.44444444</td>
<td>.52704628</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>.41071429</strong></td>
<td><strong>.49343422</strong></td>
<td><strong>168</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The achievement data suggest that students grow academically while attending LCCS. Additionally low income, Black, Hispanic, White, and economically advantaged students all exceed the state average for their subgroups. The combination of the school’s culture and its pedagogy encourages interactions that provide students opportunities to learn from one another. Qualified and experienced teachers facilitate the interactions to ensure the student learning occurs.

The wealthier a family, the more resources they have to contribute to out-of-school enrichment programs. This is a large component of middle-class cultural cultivation. Figure 8.5 shows the percent of families attracted to LCCS for its extracurricular activities.

Figure 8.5. Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or below</td>
<td>.54545455</td>
<td>.5056499</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>.52272727</td>
<td>.50525777</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeding $100,000</td>
<td>.23809524</td>
<td>.4284758</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.48304589</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>.39766082</strong></td>
<td><strong>.49085199</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LCCS students opportunities to engage in extracurricular activities varies dependent upon their socio-economic class. This could be one reason why low-income LCCS students are still not performing as well as high-income LCCS students. Table 8.6 shows differences in the number of organized activities.

Table 8.6. Average Number of Organized Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or below</td>
<td>1.4705882</td>
<td>1.2847661</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>2.0454545</td>
<td>1.2931761</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>2.6781609</td>
<td>1.4745457</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.1186998</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2.2685714</td>
<td>1.5016794</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A particular organized activity, music lessons, highlights the disparities between low-income and high-income LCCS students. Table 8.7 illustrates which students enroll in music lessons.

Table 8.7. Music Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$49,000 or below</td>
<td>.08823529</td>
<td>.28790224</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-100,000</td>
<td>.20454545</td>
<td>.40803246</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
<td>.43678161</td>
<td>.49886265</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>.51639778</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Establishing a school that attracts a diverse population requires that the school features attract families from a range of backgrounds. In terms of class, families from different
economic backgrounds prioritize school features differently. For example, families from six economic backgrounds ranked their reasons for applying to LCCS somewhat differently. However, the families chose the same reasons.

Conclusion

At LCCS, there is a relationship between students’ performance and students’ cohorts. Therefore, peer effects are an important component of student achievement. At a school like LCCS, the interactive pedagogy encourages students to work together and learn from each other. Unfortunately, the data show that the fewer free-lunch students in a cohort, the higher the performance for all students. Over time, the LCCS population has included a greater proportion of middle- and high-income students. Although the shift in demographics may positively influence academic achievement, it indicates that fewer free-lunch students are accessing the school.
Chapter Nine: Can a Diverse Charter School be Sustained?

One challenge for an economically and racially diverse charter school is sustainability. Once established, factors such as prestige, school location, gentrification, and parent networks may influence the racial and economic balance of the school. Additionally, the less economically diverse the school becomes, the more it need to raise funds through high-end fundraising activities, which in turn attracts more middle- and high-income families. The sustainability of a charter school’s diversity determines whether the charter school will act as a vehicle for promoting or impeding educational equity. Charter schools hold the potential to integrate students from diverse backgrounds, including those who would opt-out of the public schools. However, charter schools must be required to act as democratic institutions that implement policies and curriculum in an equitable and fair manner that provides all students the opportunity to be successful.

Is a Diverse Charter School Sustainable?

The biggest obstacle to racial and economic integration is sustainability. Pessimistically, activist Saul Alinsky once concluded that “racial integration is merely the time between when the first black moves in and the last white moves out” (cited in Iceland, 2009, p. 116). In terms of educational integration, the key features are the conditions that enable or inhibit diversity and how to prevent student demographic shifts away from integration.

Since its establishment, LCCS’s population has undergone demographic changes. In the early years, the student population at LCCS was more economically diverse, with a balance of both low-income and middle-income students. However, as the school developed, student demographics shifted away from an economically balanced school
and toward a predominantly middle-income population. Figure 9.1 illustrates the percent of students eligible for free lunch over time.

Figure 9.1: LCCS Students Eligible for Free/Reduced-Price Lunch

![LCCS: free/reduced lunch](image)

Between the 2000-01 and 2006-07 school years, the low-income population declined drastically from 49% to 34%. During the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, the low-income population dropped further, to 32%. However, during the 2010-11 school year, after the school moved from its gentrified location, the low-income population climbed to 34.8%.

In addition to a loss in economic diversity, the school became less racially diverse. The initial student population had a balance of Asian, Hispanic, African
American and White students. However, as the school became more established, the percent of Black students declined, while the percent of White students increased. Figure 9.2 illustrates the racial breakdown at LCCS over time.

Figure 9.2: LCCS Racial Composition

An illustration of the demographic shift can be seen in the classroom of a lower-school teacher who explained in the spring of 2009 that:

I always prided myself on the fact that when people asked me about the demographics of my class, I would say “Oh’s it’s 1/3 African American, 1/3 Latin, and 1/3 Caucasian. And I usually always had about 1/3 of my class, which was free lunch. However, I’ve noticed this is really the first year I have only one little African American girl in my class. The rest are almost all Caucasian. (Teacher 3, 2009)

Another lower-school teacher shared this sentiment by explaining, “I remember saying there’re only four black kids in my class and when I started teaching here I had 12 black kids in my class” (Teacher 9). As the school became more prestigious, its kindergarteners
came from wealthier backgrounds. A teacher of older students also commented on the demographic shift:

I think that we’re under-represented in the Hispanic population in Jersey City. We do the immigration study, so we find out where kids are from.. and if you look at our graphs now, it’s all from Europe… the majority of people are from Europe or North America… we had no one from South America this year… a few from Puerto Rico... it has definitely changed (Teacher 11).

Since 1998, LCCS expanded from a kindergarten through second grade elementary school with 90 students to a preschool through eighth grade school with a population of over 500 students in the 2011-12 school year. As the school grew, it experienced many changes, which can explain the shifting demographics of the school:
(a) the gentrification of the downtown area, (b) the social networking of the middle class, (c) middle school improvements, (d) busing, (e) a change in the deadline for applications, and (f) recruitment.

**Downtown’s Gentrification**

The buildings around us have literally grown, like around… this used to be nothing. (Teacher 10)

Both the decline in the percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and the decline in the proportion of African American and Hispanic students can be attributed to the gentrification of the downtown area in which the school was located for 11 years. In the 11 years that the school was located downtown, the area around it developed and gentrified extremely quickly. LCCS shared space with the Hudson County Boys and Girls Club housed in a former coal bunker on Canal Street. Both the coal
bunker and Canal Street, formerly part of the Morris Canal, are reminders of the city’s industrial past. A founding teacher recalled her first year in 1998:

There must have been 50 African American kids just hanging out front, boom boxes, double-dutch I mean, it was very much what you would envision an urban after school program to look like… just a bunch of kids hanging out… but not a White kid in the crowd. You know, Grove street was seedy at best… there was a lot of vacant store fronts still… even just right out in front of the school, where now beautiful Liberty Harbor is… there was squatters, a lot of cars broken into, teachers’ cars broken into and a little bonfire. Many times I used to call 911 because we’d see a little fire that had gotten away from them, or somebody lingering near a car who shouldn’t have been… there was [sic] a lot of homeless people in and around this neighborhood. But after 9/11 the neighborhoods started to change because once those businesses came and threw up those million dollar office buildings, it gentrified at such a rapid pace. Hoboken gentrified in 20 years; here it only took seven years. (Teacher 9, May 2009)

In addition, to the above comment, eight other interviewed teachers commented on the effect the area’s gentrification had on the school’s population.

In 2005, the neighborhood around the Boys and Girls Club was still crime ridden. Below is an account of how a potential family was mugged returning from the LCCS lottery.

It was early January when [the parent] took their four-year-old daughter [daughter’s name] to the LCCS just off Grand Street, where she was to find out her chances of winning a coveted slot at the popular downtown school. She parked her car on Bright Street, about a block away, in a neighborhood that includes a mix of automobile repair shops, homes and an elementary school. Inside, she learned she had not received a very good lottery number. As she left and strode toward her car, she noticed another car cruising the street, but thought nothing of it. She opened the car door, put her pocketbook down and began strapping (her daughter) into the car seat. It was then that the man grabbed her from behind and put his hand over her mouth. (Miller, 2006)

The neighborhood changed between 2005 and 2011. The construction of houses developed the neighborhood and established a community.

Liberty Harbor, a residential community designed by Peter Mocco changed a great deal of the landscape around the school. For example, “the whole area was a toxic
dump and this guy Mocco buys it and buys the whole land and he’s building this incredible…community, which I have to say so far what he has done is kind of attractive” (Teacher 3, May 2009). As buildings were constructed, the area became more developed and squatters and the homeless became displaced. Between 2005 and 2009, construction sites were located on three sides of the school building. The classrooms at either side of the building watched and listened while ten feet from their windows the area was bulldozed and rebuilt.

In the second grade, the teachers integrated the construction into their science curriculum.

The simple machine unit came out of this going on outside of my window… I said, “Susan, first of all it’s a standard,” but second of all I said “We can’t sit here and be rattling and rolling and not study what is going on outside. We made a journal. They did observations outside the window everyday of what was happening, so they notice you know, the pylons.” (Teacher 6, May 2009)

The gentrification of the neighborhood increased both the property values and rent rates; one teacher explained “as these apartment are developed…rents have been raised… we get all these new workers in the area… they’re looking for a better school because the schools in Jersey City don’t have a good reputation” (Teacher 11, May 2009). In addition to pushing low-income families out of the neighborhood, many new families moved in. The neighborhood’s changing demographics impacted the school’s demographics. The neighborhood gentrified and influenced the school. Likewise, the school aided in the development of the neighborhood. When I toured downtown condominiums as a potential buyer, realtors often cited LCCS as a “neighborhood school”; however, they never explained the lottery system. A teacher described the school’s appeal:
You have a lot of young families who are coming in because of the businesses being developed, the housing being developed, and our school is one of the top rated charter schools in the state and they see that as appealing (Teacher 5, May 2009).

*Middle-Income Social Networking*

Look at the kindergarten, it does not look like the eighth grade (Teacher 6, May 2009)

Due to word of mouth and social networking, LCCS’s population in the younger grades gentrified quickly. The combination of the school’s becoming more prestigious and middle-income families spending more time researching school choices than lower-income families, resulted in the school being gentrified. The methods parents use to learn about charter schools were researched by Teske, Fitzpatrick and Kaplan, who found racial and economic differences in the degree to which parents research choice programs (2007). The authors found that social networks advantage middle-income parents. In the parent survey, when parents were asked, “How did you learn about Learning Community Charter School?” the respondents answered as follows: 5% (9/169) recruitment, 78% (132/169) word of mouth, 25% (41/169) research, and 5% (9/169) the preschool program (2010 Parent Survey). The overwhelming majority of parents relied on social capital operating via a word-of-mouth method of inquiry.

Not only was word of mouth the most popular method, but there was also a positive relationship between wealth and word of mouth. Many teachers implied that the wealthier parents had more opportunities to promote the school to their friends. Many downtown families have LCCS stickers on their cars. One teacher explained:

The lottery and the waiting lists are so long, but as we become more desirable those poorer, minority families were slowly getting squeezed out, as this
neighborhood gentrified parents were telling other parents, “oh you’ve got to go to this school.” (Teacher 9, May 2009)

The data confirm the teacher’s comment. The figure below illustrates that socio-economic class influenced how families learned about the school. Fewer low-income families learned about the school through word of mouth than middle- or high-income families. The data show that there is a positive correlation between economic level and the use of word of mouth as a strategy to learn about the school. Figure 9.3 illustrates the percent of families who learned about LCCS through word of mouth.

Figure 9.3. Percent of Families Who Learned about LCCS by Word of Mouth

Middle School Improvements

The end of the middle-class mass exodus out of middle school is another explanation for the changes in the demographics of the school. Established in the 2004-05 school year, the middle school had neither a curriculum nor discipline that was well organized or developed. Six of the 15 interviewed members of LCCS cited the middle school improvements as one reason for the school’s improvements. One teacher explained that “those first few years it was tough... very unorganized so I
think it was hard for some parents to use their kids as the guinea pigs” (Teacher 9, May 2009). Instead of using their children as guinea pigs, many parents pulled their children out. Parents had less faith in the middle school program during the early years; one teacher summarized the situation: “The kids were difficult back then, a lot happens, they don’t know what is going on, I think that there wasn’t a lot of faith that the work was rigorous enough for the students. And last year we lost two students”; the teacher continued, “we have been successful both in terms of creating an environment in which kids feel safe and also having success at the state testing level” (Teacher 4, May 2009). An administrator further explained that “before, the curriculum was just what the teacher wanted to teach. There was less of an alignment with the standards. So making it more standards-based increased understanding” (Administrator 3, May 2009).

As the school became more established, parents were more willing to keep their children enrolled. As one teacher noted, “I think that more than anything else this year middle-class parents did not take their children out because it was our fourth year” (Teacher 4, May 2009). However, the middle school had competition. An administrator explained,

These magnets were sort of the entry way or the gateway into the competitive high schools. So they were concerned to get their kids into competitive high school, if they could get their kids into the magnet middle school, they are sort of automatically in these competitive high schools Out of a cohort of 36 LCCS students no more than 2 left. (Administrator 3, May 2009)

Another administrator explained that parents are attracted to the magnet honors programs because “kids will be surrounded by bright kids” (Administrator 1, May 2009). Therefore, the magnet programs led many families to pull their children out of
LCCS by middle school and the students who them were often from low-income backgrounds. A founder explained:

Every year we have gotten more middle-class in the middle school. In the lower grades it’s always been the case.. but in the middle school, because a lot of times when kids get to fifth, sixth grade… middle-class kids would bail—they go off to either a private middle school or the parents would move to the suburbs…for the first few years the middle school was always much more predominantly Black than the rest of the school and that’s changed. (Founding parent 1, August 2008)

The first cohort, who started in kindergarten, was cohort 2010. This cohort had the effect of the kindergarten through eighth grade curriculum.

[The] first graduating classes that we had came in as fourth, fifth grade students and they weren’t there since kindergarten. It definitely makes a difference if the cohort has been here since kindergarten. They have invested in the culture of the school. (Administrator 3, May 2009)

Lastly, the middle school took a number of years to mature and become established.

The quality of the program had never really matched the lower school and I don’t think it’s anybody’s fault. I just think that everybody just kind of floundered... I think in the last two years since we have had an assistant principal it’s been much better. (Teacher 9, May 2009)

**Busing**

One limitation of integrated charter school reform is the ability to integrate students from diverse geographic areas. Geographic integration, which often enables racial integration, requires public school buses. However, LCCS lost its public buses in 2008. A founding parent explained the importance of busing for a diverse charter school:

When we started the school we had school buses.. we had three routes, we were funded by the state because state law says that a child who lives more than two miles from the school is entitled to transportation. And so they allocated a certain amount of money… we were able to use that money to pay for buses… that ensured a certain amount of diversity... because when you go up deep into the Heights, or way down into Greenville, or along Ocean and Garfield, you know,
over there, it meant kids from those neighborhoods could come downtown to the school. (Founding parent 1, August 2008)

Currently, transportation is provided via public bus vouchers (). The principal explained that in the past, “We paid for the buses using state and local funds and finally they caught up with us and the state said we could only use fundraising money (lots of bake sales) for the bus” (Informal interview with the principal, March 16, 2009). The principal continued, explaining that

In the beginning from 1997-2001 the Jersey City district footed the bill for buses. Once they decided to stop doing that, we were the only school that continued to pay for busing. All the other charters decided not to pay. We are committed to diversity so we felt it was necessary to maintain our program. (Informal interview with principal, March 17, 2009)

Therefore, the district’s regulations adversely affected the potential for low-income students whose families did not have cars to attend the school.

After busing ended, teachers realized its impact on both the lower-income families and those who lived further away:

The loss of the buses, I think, really contributed to a certain amount ... a certain number of kids who live far away, not coming.. And made the school a little too much... a little more of a downtown. (Teacher 9, May 2009)

Busing has been huge and the development has pushed out lower-income people and brought in higher-income people. (Teacher 12, May 2009)

The Deadline for Application

In 2005, the Department of Education changed the deadline by which charter schools must submit their subsequent year’s student enrollment numbers. (Chapter 11, 6A:11-4.4). The department changed the date from April 15 to January 15. Consequently, the department curtailed the potential time for student recruitment by three months. As Martha Minow argued, “State policymakers have implemented
charter school programs that may result primarily in enhancing opportunities for well- to-do and well-informed families while reducing opportunities for the poor and less informed” (Martin, 2004, p. 331). This particular procedural change favored well-informed and well-prepared applicants. Because “some individuals simply have more education, time, and skills to devote to finding and utilizing effective information” (Schneider, Teske & Marschall, 2002, p. 50), the change in the deadline adversely affected low-income and less-educated parents. A LCCS teacher highlighted this argument:

Some parents work two to three jobs or working all day may not be thinking let me sign my child up for kindergarten in November. Whereas some of the other parents are very focused in on education and want their child to get the best education they can are signing up and that is how we are getting such a change in the school community. (Teacher 2, May 2009)

A founding parent described the difference between low- and middle-income parents and how it influenced the application process:

The deadlines which got worse..mitigate against poor people. And I don’t think that the state of New Jersey has any idea how screwed up they’ve made this… because it used to be April or March and even that for many poor families it’s not an economic thing, it’s a cultural thing, but people don’t think that much in advance. Middle-class families think so far in advance that we get people who have a two year old come to the school and say “I want to apply in two years.” (Founding parent 1, August 2008)

The evidence shows that both the LCCS teacher and the founding parent were correct in arguing that the change in the deadline influenced the school’s demographics. The application deadline for the 2005-06 lottery was April 2, 2004, while the 2006-07 lottery deadline was January 1, 2005. The data in Table 9.1 illustrate that at most Jersey City charter schools, the percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch decreased after the change in the deadline. Out of eight Jersey City charter
schools, five schools experienced a decline in the percent of students eligible for free lunch. Similarly, five of the eight schools had a reduction in the percent of students eligible for reduced-price lunch. Table 9.1 shows the percent of free and reduced-price lunch students before and after the new lottery application date.

Table 9.1. LCCS Students Eligible for Free and Reduced-Price Lunch before and after Change in Lottery Application Due Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charter School</th>
<th>% Free Lunch 2005-06</th>
<th>% Free Lunch 2006-07</th>
<th>Change from 2005-2006 school years</th>
<th>% Reduced Lunch 2005-06</th>
<th>% Reduced Lunch 2006-07</th>
<th>Change from 2005-2006 school years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CREATE</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td>+8.4%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>+4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>-11.2%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>+6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>+5.2%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>-2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCCS</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>-2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>+29.2%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>+4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schomburg</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>-12.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soaring Heights</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>-.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>-6.7%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, Enrollment data

By the 2006-07 school year, the stratification among Jersey City charter schools began to expand. Three of Jersey City’s charter schools, Soaring Heights, University, and LCCS, were “economically mixed” while the other four were economically segregated. The change in the state’s deadline further stratified the demographics of particularly attractive charter schools that were also academically successful.
An additional factor influencing the 2006-07 school year was the rise in the number of applications. From the 2005-06 school year to the 2007-08 school year, the number of students on the wait list nearly doubled, increasing from 116 to 231. Thus, despite the earlier application due date and shortened application period, more families applied to LCCS. In addition to the number of kindergarten students on the waitlist, the number of students on the waitlist in other grades grew as well. Figure 9.2 illustrates the burgeoning LCCS waitlist.

### Table 9.2. Increase in Demand: Burgeoning Waitlist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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One teacher commented on the “types of parents” applying to the school:

I think the people living in this neighborhood who are going to be more proactive (in terms of their children’s education) have beaten a lot of the less well off socioeconomically economic… those families just can’t get to fill out the applications soon enough. (Teacher 9, May 2009)
Nearly 60 families attended the November 15, 2009 open house. Out of the 60, about half were of Asian descent. This illustrates how a disproportionate numbers of the applicants are White, Asian, and upper class.

**Recruitment**

Due to the change in the application deadline, the charter school recruitment period has decreased from seven months to four. With the other responsibilities of a charter school, the shorter recruitment period may adversely affect the number of low-income students recruited. In the early years, LCCS established an effort to diversify the school through recruitment strategies. A founding teacher explained how the recruitment effort specifically targeted low-income families.

After 3 years, we reached out to the projects and it was a decision that we wanted to diversify the school... we didn’t want a prep-school setting... we wanted to teach the children of Jersey City. We can’t have this White, preppy, upper middle-class look, if we really want to be a community school. And in gentrifying downtown, we didn’t want to push out the children that had lived there. So, we wanted to reach out to the parents…. And there was a lot of community outreach…. Michael did go around to the local churches to discuss the school; our vision; you know, what we wanted for every child in Jersey City. (Teacher 14, June, 2010)

Despite the efforts, few families learned about the school through recruitment. According to the 2009 and 2010 parent survey, the percent of respondents learning about the school through recruitment went from 8% (11) in 2009 down to 5.5% (9) in 2010. I accompanied an LCCS representative to an LCCS recruitment initiative at the Bethany Church in the Greenville area of Jersey City on December 8, 2009. The representative was from the Greenville neighborhood and used her church connections to find potential recruitment locations. The representative was African American as were the majority of the parents in attendance.
Out of 12 people in attendance, only three raised their hands and indicated that they would be interested in applying. When the LCCS representative asked the others why they didn’t want to apply, they responded by saying that the school was too far away and it was unsafe to send a child on a public bus to attend school. Instead, they would prefer to walk their child across the street. After the recruitment initiative, the LCCS representative and I drove on JFK blvd from the church to the new school location—it took less than three minutes. In the fall of 2009, there were three recruitment efforts.

_Parent Intervention_

Over time, LCCS demographics have changed. One implication of a wealthier population could be the transformation of the school culture. Has the change in demographics challenged or altered LCCS’ s community or culture? The high percent of parent involvement provides parents with opportunities to assess the quality of the school culture and measure if the school’s values align to home values.

The first orientation has been the basis for public schooling in America, a second orientation has been the basis for private schools. This second orientation to schooling sees a school as an extension of the family, reinforcing the family's values. The school is in loco parentis, vested with the authority of the parent to carry out the parent's will. (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987, p. 3)

Parent involvement at LCCS has contributed to its success as a tight-knit community and an educationally successful institution; however, parent-involvement has the potential to promote favoritism, middle-class tyranny, and consequently, inequities in the way families of different socio-economic classes are treated. Two potential consequences of middle-class parent involvement are increased accessibility to school
information and lenient treatment of middle-class students. Both observations and teacher interviews provided examples of parental intervention that can hinder a teacher’s instructional practices. One teacher highlighted the duality of middle-class parent involvement:

> It can go both ways, they can offer you support and come and chaperone on trips and come in and do things in the classroom or they have too much time on their hands and they’re kind of meddlesome in some ways. (Teacher 11, May 2009)

Parent involvement is extremely high at LCCS, with 63% of parents volunteering 1-3 times a year, 22% volunteering 4-6 times a year and 10% volunteering more than 6 times in one year. In addition, 70% of parents chose LCCS for the opportunities to participate in the school community. However, the rate of parent involvement depends on class and education level, which empowers certain individuals to influence decisions and have access to information. One teacher shared that:

> I think that the parents with money and who donate time and money to the school have too much to say... and there’s a very fine line where [at one point it becomes] sort of something a charter school needs to look at. (Teacher 14, May 2009)

Another teacher echoed this sentiment and commented on the gratitude of the lower income parents:

> Parents feel a little entitled, like they feel that their kids deserve this education... that they’re receiving this education, they’re not as grateful for it as parents in the past have been. One of my parents wrote me the nicest letter and that was so grateful for everything... and it was from a free-lunch kid (Teacher 3, May 2009).

**Assertive Parents**

Just as neighborhood gentrification has phases, so does the gentrification of a charter school’s demographics. At first, LCCS depended on parents for assistance with
initial and physical construction of the school, from building benches to sorting the classroom library. However, as the school became established there was less need for those types of parent involvement. Additionally, the types of parents in the beginning were representative of gentrification of the 1990’s—artists and musicians and families doing their own home renovations. As the school developed, so did the neighborhoods and their families. By the mid-2000s, property values had increased and consequently wealthier families moved to the gentrified neighborhoods. These families became the second generation of LCCS. One teacher described the shift to the “new generation” of LCCS parents:

They are not the ones who started the school, so naturally when you’ve got a group of parents who are the original members who started the school they have more of a hands-on feeling of “we’re going to get in there and we’re willing to do anything.” Where, when a school is already set up, there are parents who are used to it being a certain way. Who aren’t in the same priority, “We started this from scratch and we did this because we want our kids.” Now there just tends to be a lot more of the usual, like questioning, and that is not bad, but it’s some parents have gotten combative, a little bit, about “Why aren’t you doing it like this?” or “Why aren’t you doing it like that?” (Teacher 10, May 2009)

More than one-third of the teachers interviewed commented on how the culture of the school has changed with the changing demographic of wealthier families. The teachers explained that in the beginning the school’s parents were more trusting and supportive; however, as the school has evolved and the parents have become wealthier there is more of a sense of entitlement and privilege. For example, one teacher said:

I think of the influx of middle class people as a good thing for the city… but and there is a point at which the middle class take over … the middle-class sense of entitlement… and we feel it at this school… you get parents who just think everybody is supposed to drop everything to help them and their kids. (Teacher 7, May 2009)
As the culture of the school changed, the new generation of parents’ relationships with teachers changed. The once grateful and appreciative culture transformed into a more adversarial one. One teacher explained that:

In blue-collar families the level of respect for teachers seems to be higher. Like they assume you know what you are talking about and if you say well I really care about Elijah but he is starting to have trouble they don’t question you. They assume …That was true until this year [2008-2009], people are more challenging, more entitled to their opinions. The dynamic is a bit different. (Teacher 4, May 2009)

An example of how a middle-class parent utilizes her class privilege occurred during a first grade publishing party. Unfortunately, a first grade student fell ill and missed the party. His parents went to the principal and asked if a new publishing party could be planned and the principal agreed. Due to the assertiveness of the parent, the teacher was required to plan a new publishing party. Clearly, a school cannot accommodate all students who miss special activities. This was an example of a time a middle-class parent overstepped her boundaries.

Due to middle-class privilege, the parents who question or challenge discipline policies, such as incident reports (IRs), the documenting student discipline problems, tend to be middle- or upper-class. However, the less-advantaged families trust that the consequences are fair. An example of middle-class privilege can be seen in the following example pertaining to the equitability of discipline policies:

There’s a certain element of parents who seem to think that they know what’s best for LCCS and the other children... and sort of are a little dismissive for our lower income parents who may not be as articulate, but are just as insightful. If you bring a parent in after an IR or something for middle school… I find that a lot of the parents of the lower income children will be like ‘You listen to the teacher. Where are you going.’ The children are more disciplined and will take it. Whereas, I get from the higher income parents it seems to be that “Oh the teachers
must be wrong. My child couldn’t possibly have done that.” (Teacher 14, June 2010)

**Funding Disparities Enable Wealthier Parents to Pitch in**

In the early years parents were needed to do hands-on jobs, like physically building classrooms and tearing down walls. The combination of state funding formula changes and LCCS’s demographics shifting toward a wealthier student population resulted in the school losing necessary funding. Between 200-08, the year prior to the formula’s change, and 2009-10, the state’s share for LCCS went from $10,353.15 per student to $9,253 per student. The change was a result of the new funding formula favoring low-income students. According to SFRA, Governor Corzine’s new funding formula in 2008, funding followed the students. Therefore, a school such as LCCS with a declining low-income population received less money. However, Soaring Heights Charter School, whose population has remained near 50% low-income students, received similar amounts. In the 2007-08 year, Soaring Heights received $10,590.84 and in the 2009-10 school year, the school received $10,515 per student. There was a slight reduction coupled with inflation. In the 2009-10 school year, the average charter school cost, per pupil, was $12,673. By the 2010-11 school year, all nine of Jersey City’s charter schools received below-average per student funding. Three of Jersey City’s charter schools received more than 20% below the state average: Learning Community Charter School, Ethical Community Charter School, and Soaring Heights Charter School.

In addition to charter schools receiving 90% of their district’s per pupil expenditure and no facility aid, economically diverse charter schools such as LCCS receive less money because of their low number of students eligible for free and reduced-
price lunch. Indeed, due to the current formula, LCCS, ECCS, and SHCS received the least funding in Jersey City due to their low percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (NJ DOE Comparative Spending Guide, 2009-10). Most charter schools located in poorer areas have student demographics that match the district’s demographics. According to Jackie Gramma at the New Jersey Department of Education, the formula is weighted according to a student’s demographics, for example a typical student = 1 and free and reduced-price lunch students = 1.3 (Interview with Jackie Grama, February 28, 2011). However, in March 2011, Governor Christie’s proposed budget included an additional $1,000,000 for Jersey City Charter Schools. This was due to lobbying from LCCS Director of Development Shelley Skinner. Skinner organized an event at City Hall in January at which over 200 parents and students wore yellow t-shirts. Presenters from LCCS, including one student, persuaded the council to advocate for a more equitable funding formula for Jersey City charter schools.

Disparities, Fundraising, and Alienation

Due to the shortage of school funding, the school hired a director of development in 2008 to assist with school fundraising and grant writing. Unfortunately, the fundraising events tend to mobilize the higher-income families. Consequently, this alienates the lower-income families from opportunities to socialize with school administrators and teachers. Figure 9.4 illustrates that for each form of parent involvement, including non-fund-raising activities, the parent’s income level influences the level of participation. However, there is a dip for classroom help and committee involvement after $75,000-100,000. Additionally, there is a dip for fundraising events and chaperoning after
$100,000- $150,000. Figure 9.2 illustrates parent participation for different LCCS activities.

Figure 9.4. Parental Participation by Socio-economic Class

![Parent participation graph](image)

There seems to be a relationship between parents volunteering for committees and their educational levels. The proportion of respondents who volunteered for a committee by education level were: some college 17% (4/23); college 31% (23/74) and graduate school 37% (22/59) (2010 Parent Survey).

There is a relationship between participation in specific fundraising events and income. Due to the nature of a fundraising event, it attracts families with economic means. Therefore, fewer lower-income families may feel inclined to attend. Additionally, these events may be difficult for lower-income families to attend due to their locations and times. Figure 9.5 shows that at LCCS, higher-income families participated more often in fundraising events, especially efforts that require large sums of money, such as wine tastings.
Figure 9.5. Parental Participation in Fundraising Events by Socio-economic Status

These events are good for the school financially and socially; unfortunately, the cost of the events alienates lower-income families who cannot afford to attend them.

*Location, Location, Location: Heading Back to Diversity*

The combination of One Canal’s location in a gentrified neighborhood, the lack of busing, and the lack of financial security prompted the school to purchase its own building, increase its school size, and move to a more diverse and central location in Jersey City. Geographically, LCCS families in 2009 disproportionally came from the gentrified downtown neighborhoods, with over 51% of survey respondents indicating they lived in the downtown neighborhood. In contrast, only 22% of respondents lived in Greenville (and Bergen Lafayette), an economically depressed part of Jersey City. The remainder of respondents resided in the Heights (11%) and Journal Square (11%). Both the Heights and Journal Square are now closer to the new school location. Due to the school’s former location in the gentrified section of Jersey City, half of its students (50%)
came from the downtown ward. A large portion of this enrollment pattern is due to both
proximity and social networking. Due to the families’ proximity to the location at One
Canal, many could walk their children to school on their way to the PATH train into
NYC. Similarly, the majority of founding parents resided in the gentrified downtown
and, through social networking and word of mouth, shared information about the school.
Therefore, the potential applicants were all from similar friendship groups. An
administrator explained that:

The student demographic has changed since I have been here. I think that was
primarily due to the location of the school, it was in downtown Jersey City which
was being gentrified, I was there, in three years I saw the difference in the
gentrification, which changed the population of the families around the
neighborhood, which changed the demographics of the school. (Administrator 3,
May 2009)

According to administration, in addition to the financial constraints of paying rent, the
primary reason for moving was to increase the student diversity:

The location, because you know how we talked about the changing demographics,
moving the building and the school closer to more the heart of the city and a more
diverse, you know racially and economically [demographic] will attract more.
What is happening is that families are very reluctant to send their kid to a school
that was more than three miles always. What we are hoping is that the school
becomes more representative of the neighborhood itself. It was doing so in the
downtown area, but the downtown area was being gentrified so we wanted this
school be representative of the neighborhood of the Jersey City neighborhood as a
whole versus just one section, now it is more centrally located. (Administrator 3,
May 2009)

The 2009 administration predicted that, in time, the change in location would
attract a more diverse group of families, because of its economic and ethnic diversity. In
2010, 45% of the students came from downtown, 13% from the Heights, 15% from
Greenville, 10% from Journal Square, 6% from Bergen, and 10% from West Side (2010
Parent Survey). Thus, the student population shifted from the gentrifying downtown to other, more diverse, neighborhoods. Additionally, the racial background of the families changed after the move. Figure 9.6 illustrates the racial composition before and after the move.

Figure 9.6. Change in Racial Composition, 2009-2010

![LCCS: Racial Makeup '09-'10](image)

The Asian population increased, while both the Black and White population decreased. The Hispanic population remained the same. In addition to the racial demographic changes, the socio-economic population has changed as well. The percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch has increased from 32% to 34.5%. Many LCCS teachers, administrators and founding parents predict that this number will continue increasing as more families from the nearby location apply.

In 2001, 61 survey respondents answered, “yes” to “Is this your first year at LCCS?” Of those who were new in the 2009-2010 school year, 18 came from the downtown area. Figure 9.7 reveals that in the 2009-10 school year between 3 and 18 new
families from each of the six neighborhoods enrolled to LCCS. Although a disproportionate number of students from the downtown neighborhood attended the school, a significant number of students from the other five neighborhoods, which were previously less well represented, were now attending the school. Figure 9.7 shows that the West Side neighborhood increased its LCCS population by 240% (from 7 to 19). In contrast, the downtown population only increased its population by 130%.

Figure 9.7: Change in Neighborhood Composition, 2009-2010

LCCS’s demographic profile before and after its move illustrates the importance a charter school’s location has for its student demographics. Between the 1998 and 2008 school years, when LCCS was located in its gentrifying downtown location, the number of White students increased from 35% to 44%. In contrast, the number of Black students declined from 41% in 1998 to 27% in 2008. The number of Hispanic students dropped from 17% in 1998 to 15% in 2008, while the number of Asian students rose from 7% in
1998 to 9% in 2008. The move to the Lincoln Park neighborhood resulted in a drop in the White population from 44% to 36% in 2010, and an increase in the Asian population, from 9% to its highest percent, 22%. The Lincoln Park neighborhood has the high percent of Asian families. These changes represent a demographic shift toward the new location’s population.

*Implications: Can Charter Schools Act as Vehicles for Diversity?*

In ten years, six of Jersey City’s original eight charter schools attracted an expanding middle-class population. Compared with the 15 kindergarten through eighth grade elementary schools in Jersey City, LCCS is one of the most racially diverse schools in the district. Other Jersey City kindergarten through eighth schools have racially and economically segregated student populations. Do charter schools have the potential to integrate middle-class families who would otherwise opt-out of their zoned public school, back into the public system?

The data reveal that LCCS is a vehicle that encourages families who would have otherwise opted-out of the public school system to remain in the system. In 2010, parent respondents were asked, “If your child did not get into LCCS where would you have sent him or her?” Only 21% of the (35/171) respondents would have sent their child to their public zoned school and 11% (18/171) would have sent their child to their public unzoned schools. However, 40% would have considered a private option and 13% a parochial school. Clearly, Figure 9.8 illustrates, more than twice as many parents would choose the private option than would choose their zoned public school. Therefore,
without LCCS, the majority of LCCS students would have opted out of the public school system.

Additionally, LCCS has provided many families the option of staying in Jersey City. The data show that 25% (42/171) of respondents would have considered leaving Jersey City altogether, had LCCS not been available. Figure 9.6 shows where parents would consider sending their children if they did not get into LCCS.

Figure 9.8. If Not LCCS, Then Where?

Of the respondents who considered public options that would keep them in the district, more were inclined to select options providing them choice: 11% would have selected un-zoned public school, and 12% charter school, compared to 21% zoned public schools. Thus, in the case of LCCS, over 80% of the families would not have sent their children to their publically zoned school. Thus, LCCS is not taking children from the public system, but rather integrating children who would otherwise utilize other forms of education.
Thus, not only does LCCS reintegrate families into district schools, the school also provides families with an incentive to stay in Jersey City. In 2010, one-quarter of the respondents indicated they would have considered leaving Jersey City had their child not been accepted to LCCS. The chart below illustrates that the families in the $75,000 to $100,000 economic bracket would have been the most likely to considering leaving Jersey City. The lower income groups might not have the resources to leave and the upper-income groups may choose private schools. Therefore, in order to encourage lower-middle class families to stay in Jersey City, policy makers might consider how some, but not all charter schools, might sustain residential diversity.

Figure 9.9: Percent Parents Who Would Consider Leaving Jersey City if No LCCS by Socio-economic Status
Conclusion

The combination of a school’s location, middle-income families’ social networks, and state policies like a lack of charter school transportation and an early lottery, inhibited the number of low-income families who applied to LCCS. In the case of LCCS, the population has shifted as a result of these factors. Currently, 40% of LCCS’s students would attend a private school if they did not get into LCCS. Therefore, LCCS is reintegrating public schools; however, LCCS’s population is far wealthier than that in the public schools. If this trend continues, LCCS will become a publically funded way for families to avoid sending their children to school with the district population.
Chapter Ten: Conclusion

The urban landscape in Jersey City is evolving and changing. The tall public housing projects are becoming mixed-income town houses; former brownfields are becoming high-end gated communities; the once seedy waterfront is being transformed into an exclusive neighborhood scattered with high-rise condominiums; and historically rundown brownstone tenement are returning to their former status as single-families homes. Consequently, the new housing opportunities have attracted more middle- and high-income families to Jersey City. Despite the arrival of new families, many with middle- or high-income backgrounds avoid the city’s racially and economically segregated public schools.

The development of new communities, such as the gated communities of Port Liberte and Society Hill, are located in the city’s most economically poor ward, Greenville. As a result, Asian and White students residing in Greenville opt out of the public schools at a higher rate than in other wards. Historically, Jersey City’s middle-income families opted out of the public system and into the parochial one. However, the decline of parochial schools has provided opportunities for additional forms of choice, private schools, home schooling, and, the newest form, public charter schools.

Theoretically, public charter schools provide the opportunity to reintegrate Jersey City’s low- and middle-income families. Currently, Jersey City’s charter schools educate 10% of Jersey City’s public school system’s population; by the 2011 school year, the city will open two additional charter schools. Currently, the majority of Jersey City charter
schools have a similar percent of free and reduced-price lunch students as the public district.

Unlike the majority of Jersey City charter schools, parents organized and founded LCCS. The social and cultural capital of the middle-class, gentrifying parent founders established a school that was culturally different than the district and had small classes, progressive approaches, and a culture of parent involvement. According to the survey data, school factors attracting middle-income and educated families are cultural, instead of organizational. Cultural factors include student demographics, school culture, and parental involvement. In contrast, the survey data show that low-income and less-educated families are more attracted to organizational factors, such as teacher quality and extracurricular activities.

The philosophy, pedagogy, curriculum and leadership are all distinguishing features of the school. (Semel and Sadovnik, 1999). Additionally the four features influence each other; unless the philosophy, pedagogy and curriculum are institutionalized, the leadership can change some or all of the features. At LCCS, a combination of leadership changes and the standards movement changed these components of the school. When Principal Grierson entered the school, she realized that the current pedagogy was not adequately preparing all of the students; therefore, she chose to adjust the curriculum and pedagogy. These changes included adding after school test prep and establishing a more explicit pedagogy to ensure that all students understood what was being asked of them.
Compared to the district and other Jersey City public schools, LCCS is more racially and economically diverse. Its diversity is what attracts most families to LCCS; however, diversity to LCCS families means a balance between different types of families, not necessarily seeking out a school with a “typically” urban demographic. The same families attracted to LCCS’s diversity were deterred by the public system’s student demographics—predominantly Hispanic, African American, and low income. While LCCS’s student demographics are both racially and economically balanced, LCCS families have greater economic, cultural, and social capital than families in Jersey City. Therefore, the capital of LCCS children and families enriches the school community.

Demographically, the school has shifted since its establishment. The shift has resulted from two things (a) the gentrification of the downtown ward, and (b) the relationship between LCCS and middle class families social networks. However, the school’s recent move to the Lincoln Park neighborhood resulted in a return to a more economically and racially diverse school. The sustainability of a diverse charter school, within a district lacking social and educational diversity results from the school’s uniqueness. With a child-centered curriculum and a school culture that aligns to that of many middle class families, the school’s diversity will be sustained. The two obstacles to its sustainability are dramatic changes in the culture and curricula of the school. These changes could deter families from enrolling their children. An additional obstacle is competition. If a competitor charter school or district school is capable of developing a school with a stronger culture and curricula then, the school may loss some of its middle class families.
At LCCS, students from most subgroups—free-lunch, Black, White, economically advantaged, and Hispanic—out-perform the state specific subgroup averages. On average, students demonstrate a small amount of growth; however, there are also wide racial and economic achievement gaps at LCCS. The gaps narrow in math, but for language arts they expand in middle school. Interestingly, free-lunch students in more economically balanced cohorts performed better than free-lunch students in less economically balanced cohorts. Explanations for the cohort effect range from middle-income students establishing norms and behavior models to teachers having higher expectations for all students when there are more high-performing students in the class.

Teachers’ and students’ cultural expectations establish cultural norms in a school. Additionally, students from non-middle-income backgrounds may use the norms as opportunities to learn new forms of cultural capital. Academically, students require cultural capital, like organizational skills, confidence, eagerness to learn, creativity, and problem solving. The constructivist approach in the lower grades combined with many peer examples, affords students with opportunities to learn and enhance their cultural capital. However, there is still an achievement gap, and in-school enrichment activities alone are not enough to narrow the achievement gap. Currently, middle- and upper-class LCCS students participate in more than twice as many cultural activities as lower-income students. Therefore, LCCS alone cannot alleviate the achievement gap; however, it can narrow the gap.
Significance

This study has policy implications for both the state of New Jersey and the City of Jersey City. State policies currently enable economic segregation in charter schools. Both the lack of busing and the early deadline create an advantage for the privileged families who are socially connected and have knowledge about the charter school system. Similarly, the policies disadvantage low-income families who may lack social networks and information about charter schools. Therefore, this study illustrates the importance of equalizing the playing field for all parents. Due to the middle-class advantage, charter schools and the state should do more to educate low-income families about their choices and assist them in transporting their children, if needed.

This study also has implications for the City of Jersey City. Currently, Jersey City is assisting housing developments and local businesses with tax abatements and other incentives. However, the population that Jersey City is attempting to attract will only stay if the quality of the schools improves or school choice options are increased. Currently, LCCS has successfully integrated families who would otherwise send their children to private school or leave the district all together. This finding has extremely important implications for the maintenance of residential integration. Without quality schools, wealthier families will leave Jersey City’s high taxes for more affordable alternatives with better educational opportunities. Thus, the city’s already small tax base will become even smaller. More importantly, there will be fewer opportunities for low-income children to interact with middle- and high-income children and experience high-quality schools.
In terms of educational policy, the school has provided an opportunity for students from diverse backgrounds to be integrated. Student diversity is a goal that should be sought out as a policy measure. Student diversity not only influences students’ academic achievement in a positive way, but it also teaches tolerance and acceptance at an early age. Student diversity should be developed at the district level through the creation of more magnet schools. The magnet schools should utilize factors that attract middle class parents, such as child-centered curricula, opportunities for parent involvement, such as publishing parties and stronger communication between the school and the families. One way to ensure that the magnet schools maintain an economic balance is through economic quotas.

Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations of the study. First, the number of students within each cohort in the achievement data was small. After controlling for students who transferred in or out, and special education students, the number of students from specific subgroups was too small to be statistically significant. However, as the school expands, the size of the cohort will increase from 36 to 60, allowing for more statistical power.

The survey data provided reasons why LCCS families opt out of the district and are attracted to LCCS. However, the survey data did not explain the families’ reasons. The data indicated a difference between the specific school factors attracting low-income and middle-income families. Future research should elaborate on this finding with qualitative parent interviews to provide further explanation.
Lastly, the research does not include the voices of students. Students’ opinions about economic diversity and why students perform better at LCCS would add provide additional insight. Without student interviews, it is hard to assess the limitations of an economically integrated school. The study does not address how students with less capital feel being around students with more capital. Additionally, the study does not connect students’ cultural and social capital to their achievement.

Future Research

Due to the limitations of the study, future research will include collecting data to help explain the racial and economic achievement gap at LCCS. I plan to extend the study with a third round of parent surveys. The surveys would gather data on the languages students speak at home, the level of assistance students have while completing homework, families’ assessments of students’ weaknesses, and the number of families who rely on after-school tutors to supplement their children’s educations.

Other research projects will include interviewing parents from many backgrounds about their choices and the process they underwent to learn about a charter school. These interviews would provide data about why parents seek diversity; what features of the district school’s student composition they dislike; and why they feel LCCS has higher teacher quality than the district.

The last research project I intend to conduct is a parent survey of exclusive neighborhoods in Jersey City. I would like to survey and interview parents about their educational options and choices. This project will evaluate the level of integration within the new housing developments.
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New Jersey Department of Education http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/

http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottvBurke/AbbottDistricts.htm


N.J.S.A. §18A:7F-1 et seq

N.J.S.A. §18A:7F-11


Primary Prep website: http://www.primaryprep.com/


Racitit “ An analysis of the decline of the Jersey City Economy” (1968)


Robinson v. Cahill, 118 N.J. Super. 223(1972) and 119 N.J. Super. 40 (1972)


Stevens Cooperative website: http://www.stevenscoop.org/


Tractenberg, Liss and Sadovnik. (2002). Rutgers-Newark Institute on Education Law and Policy. *Developing a Plan For Reestablishing Local Control in the State-Operated School Districts*


Vernon, L (2004) Images of America : Jersey City Medical Center. Arcadia Publishing


## Appendix A: Alignment of the Conceptual Framework and Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Conceptual Codes</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>Family networks (word of mouth referrals)</td>
<td>Parent surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social influence (middle income networks and knowledge)</td>
<td>Observation of events (such as high school discussions) and school culture; interviews with administrators and teachers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social engagement with institutional agents (parent participation in school)</td>
<td>Parent survey (parent participation and fundraising); observations of parent participation in school; interviews with principal, teachers, and admin, re: recruiting parents for involvement; time spent with low-income students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family social capital (how time is spent at home)</td>
<td>Parent survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking (weak ties: coworkers, business associates, school peers)</td>
<td>Interviews with teachers about interactions with other teachers and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Capital</td>
<td>Cultural logic childrearing</td>
<td>Parent surveys: natural growth versus cultivated culturation, involvement in play dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-cognitive traits</td>
<td>Interview teachers about students’ personalities; homework, class participation, effort, organization, assertiveness, appearance and dress and lack of absenteeism; agreeableness, extroversion, work orientation, emotionality, and helpfulness; interviews with founding parents about the skills required of starting a charter school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural preference for pedagogy and discipline</td>
<td>Parent survey on pedagogy, discipline, and tracking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentrification</td>
<td>Symbolic ownership</td>
<td>Using the school as an “MC establishment”; realtors use of school as a magnet for their literature (review of real estate literature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Neighborhood downtown school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family gentrification</td>
<td>Number of middle-income families in Jersey City; number of LCCS parents who did not leave Jersey City because of their acceptance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community gentrification</td>
<td>Number and type of amenities in Jersey City (census data); Improvements in public infrastructure; housing prices; median income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Racial diversity</td>
<td>Annual reports: student enrollment numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Annual reports: teachers’ racial backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic diversity</td>
<td>Annual reports: student enrollment numbers</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board of trustee minutes: teachers’ resumes (cultural capital)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic diversity</td>
<td>Board of trustees’ zip codes; waiting list zip code analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Achievement</strong></td>
<td>New Jersey state exams/alternative indicators of success</td>
<td>Students’ test scores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher? (Cultural capital)
2. How would you describe your teaching style? (Pedagogy)
3. Have you ever worked in a setting outside the classroom (cultural capital)
4. What University certified you to become a teacher? (Cultural capital)
5. Could you describe the pedagogical or curriculum philosophy of the program?
6. How many years have you been a teacher? (Experience)
7. Have you ever taught at a district school? (Comparison to district)
   a. If yes, how did that compare to LCCS?
   b. As a teacher what can you do at LCCS that you cannot do at a district school?
8. How many years have you worked at LCCS? (Experience)
9. In that time how has the school changed (mechanisms)
10. In that time how has student population changed? (Diversity)
    a. In your opinion, what factors influenced the demographic changes?
       (School mechanisms/neighborhood mechanisms)
    b. Have the demographic changes in the student population affected the school in any ways?
11. How do the different socio-economic backgrounds of students influence the classroom?
    a. How does economic class influence students’ preparation for school?
    b. Does the economic class of parents influence their involvement in the school
    c. Does economic class influence parents preferences for school programs, curriculums, pedagogies or discipline?
    d. Do you need to spend extra time working with low-income students?
    e. How does the economic diversity of LCCS influence low-income students? (networking)
    f. How does the small class size at LCCS influence low-income students?
    g. How does the small school size of LCCS influence low-income students? (Social networking)
12. Are there certain norms or values that LCCS helps to foster in its students? (Non-cognitive- cultural capital)
13. Do most students’ home lives prepare them for these values?
14. In your opinion, is LCCS successful and why?
15. How do you meet the academic needs of all your students?
16. What support does LCCS provide you to meet the needs of all your students?
   (Autonomy/ school mechanisms)
17. How do you meet the social needs of all your students?
Appendix C: Founding Parent Interview Protocol

1. How many children do you have? What age are they?
2. Where did they go to preschool?
3. Did you children ever attend any of the Jersey City Public Schools?
4. Please describe their experience?
5. If none of your children attended the public school, please describe to me how you assessed the quality of the public schools?
6. Did you visit any of them? What were you dissatisfied about?
7. Overall, what features of the Public Schools were you the most dissatisfied with?
8. What features did you find satisfactory?
9. How did you meet the other founding members of the Charter School?
10. How did you learn how to apply for a Charter?
11. Please describe the application process?
12. About how much time did it take to apply for the Charter School?
13. In terms of the School’s mission and vision, were most people in agreement or did the group spend a considerable amount of time negotiating and debating?
14. Was the visual based upon any literature or research-based methods?
15. What were the group’s goals for the curriculum?
16. What were the group’s goals for parental involvement?
17. Where in the community did you receive the most support for the Charter School?
18. Where did you receive the most resistance to founding a Charter School?
19. What were the major obstacles you experienced in founding the school?
20. As a parent at a young Charter School, what role did you play?
21. How do you think the Charter School has changed since you founded it?
22. Are these changes for the best?
23. Had the school not been built where would you have sent your child?
Appendix D: Administrator Interview Protocol

1. Why did you decide to work at LCCS? (Cultural capital)
2. How would you describe your educational philosophy? (Pedagogy)
3. Have you ever worked in a setting outside the classroom (cultural capital)
4. What University certified you to become an administrator? (Cultural capital)
5. Could you describe the pedagogical or curriculum philosophy of the program?
6. How many years have you been an administrator? (Experience)
7. Have you ever worked at a district school? (Comparison to district)
   a. If yes, how did that compare to LCCS?
   b. As a teacher what can you do at LCCS that you cannot do at a district school?
8. How many years have you worked at LCCS? (Experience)
9. In that time how has the school changed (mechanisms)
10. In that time how has student population changed? (Diversity)
    a. In your opinion, what factors influenced the demographic changes?
       (School mechanisms/neighborhood mechanisms)
    b. Have the demographic changes in the student population affected the school in any ways?
11. How do the different socio-economic backgrounds of students influence the classroom?
    a. How does economic class influence students’ preparation for school?
    b. Does the economic class of parents influence their involvement in the school?
    c. Does economic class influence parents preferences for school programs, curriculums, pedagogies or discipline?
    d. Do you need to spend extra time working with low-income students?
    e. How does the economic diversity of LCCS influence low-income students? (networking)
    f. How does the small class size at LCCS influence low-income students?
    g. How does the small school size of LCCS influence low-income students? (Social networking)
12. Are there certain norms or values that LCCS helps to foster in its students? (Non-cognitive- cultural capital)
13. Do most students’ home lives prepare them for these values?
14. In your opinion, is LCCS successful and why?
15. How do you meet the academic needs of all your students?
16. What support does LCCS provide you to meet the needs of all your students?
   (Autonomy/ school mechanisms)
17. How do you meet the social needs of all your students?

For Director of Development:
1. How does the Title I Funding effect LCCS?
2. What strategies does LCCS use to raise money?

For Director of Student Affairs:
1. What does the school do to attract low-income students?
Appendix E: Parent Survey Instrument
Dear Learning Community Parents:

My name is Liz Brown and I am a Ph.D. student from Rutgers University. This school year, I am studying Learning Community Charter School for my dissertation. I chose to study LCCS because it is an example of a diverse and academically challenging alternative to the public schools.

The information I collect from the surveys is absolutely confidential and will only be used in an academic context. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you, such as your race, class, or ethnicity. Additionally, I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. I will not record your name, address, phone number or date of birth.

Liz Brown and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties who will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for five years.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. The benefits of taking part in this study may include: Providing essential information about mixed income schools for policy makers, administrators and educators. This study will provide much needed insight into how parents act as political stakeholders and active constituents.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at (917) 442-8162 or by email at msemorrison@gmail.com or you can contact my study coordinator, Alan Sadovnik at sadovnik@rutgers.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150, ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) ________________________________________
Subject Signature ____________________________ Date ______________________

Principal Investigator Signature _____________________ Date _____________________
Please consider the first child you sent to LCCS for the following questions:

1. Did your child attend preschool?
   a) Yes      b) No

2. If yes, what type of preschool did your child attend?
   a) Private  b) Head Start  c) Abbott

3. Does your child participate in organized play dates?
   a) Yes      b) No

4. Which organized activities are your children involved in?
   ___ Organized dance class  ___ Organized sports team  ___ Swimming lessons
   ___ Organized music lessons  ___ Organized art classes  ___ Yoga
   ___ Organized theater program  ___ Girl/Boy Scouts  ___ Religious activities

5. Which unorganized activities are your children involved in?
   ___ Watches TV nightly  ___ Plays outside
   ___ Plays at the park  ___ Visits relatives  ___ Play unorganized sports
   ___ Video games nightly  ___ Hangs out with friends

6. Please check any of the places your children have visited in the last year:
   ___ The Liberty Science Museum  ___ A Professional Sporting Event
   ___ The Jersey City Museum  ___ A classical music performance
   ___ An Art Museum  ___ A non-classical music performance
   ___ A Children's Museum  ___ A professional dance performance

7. Please name your child's neighborhood or zoned-school:

____________________________________________________________________

8. What schools have your children attended prior to LCCS? Please circle ALL that apply:
   a) Jersey City Public zoned-school  d) Jersey City Private School  g) Other
   b) Jersey City Public un-zoned School  e) Jersey City Parochial School
   c) Jersey City Charter School  f) Home Schooled by parent
If your child **ATTENDED** a Jersey City public school, please answer questions 9, 10 and 11.

If your child has **NEVER** attended a Jersey City Public School, please answer questions 12 and 13.

### ATTENDED

9. If your child attended a public school, please circle all methods used to assess the quality of the public schools while your child was in attendance:
   - a) Test scores
   - b) School Observation
   - c) Child's experience
   - d) Other__________

10. If your child attended a public school, please describe any unsatisfactory characteristics of his/her zoned public school:
   - ___Student population
   - ___Teacher quality
   - ___School culture/climate
   - ___Extracurricular activities
   - ___After school programs
   - ___Cleanliness of the school
   - ___School safety
   - ___Lack of parent involvement
   - ___School environment
   - ___Discipline
   - ___Quality of curriculum
   - ___School safety
   - ___Large class size
   - ___Large school size
   - ___Bullying
   - ___Principal
   - ___Teacher-centered methods
   - ___Excessive homework

11. How does LCCS compare to your experience of your child's zoned public school?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

### NEVER attended

12. If none of your children attended a public school, please circle all methods used to assess the quality of the public schools:
   - a) Test Scores
   - b) Word of Mouth
   - c) Internet Research
   - d) School Visit

13. If your child NEVER attended a public school, please describe any unsatisfactory characteristics of his/her zoned public school, which you were you unsatisfied with:
   - ___Student population
   - ___Teacher quality
   - ___School culture/climate
   - ___Extracurricular activities
   - ___After school programs
   - ___Cleanliness of the school
   - ___School safety
   - ___Lack of parent involvement
   - ___School environment
   - ___Discipline
   - ___Quality of curriculum
   - ___School safety
   - ___Large class size
   - ___Large school size
   - ___Bullying
   - ___Principal
   - ___Teacher-centered methods
   - ___Excessive homework
14. Initially, how did you find out about Learning Community Charter School?
   a) Recruitment by LCCS  
   b) Word of Mouth  
   c) Personal Research  
   d) Preschool Director  
   e) I am one of the founding parents of LCCS

15. Why did you choose to send your child to LCCS, please check all that apply:

   ____ Student diversity  ____ Cleanliness of the school  ____ Absence of bullying
   ____ Student diversity  ____ Challenging curriculum  ____ Discipline policies
   ____ Teacher quality  ____ School safety  ____ Multicultural curriculum
   ____ School culture/climate  ____ Special Education  ____ Small school size
   ____ Extracurricular activities  ____ Parent Involvement  ____ Small class sizes
   ____ After school programs  ____ School environment is good for learning  ____ Other ________________

16. If your child did not get into LCCS where would you have sent him or her?
   a) Public zoned-school  
   b) Public out of zone school  
   c) Other Charter School  
   d) Private School  
   e) Parochial School  
   f) Home Schooling by parents  
   g) Considered leaving Jersey City

17. Have you ever considered transferring your child out of the school?
   a) Yes  
   b) No

18. If yes, what is your reasoning?
   a) The lack of busing  
   b) Special education needs  
   c) Unchallenging curriculum  
   d) Current location of the school  
   e) The new location of the school  
   f) Teacher quality

19. How many times has a family member volunteered for a school function this year?
   a) 1-3 times  
   b) 4-6 times  
   c) More than 6 times

20. Please describe the types of volunteer work:
   a) Chaperone for a field trip  
   b) Helping a teacher in the classroom  
   c) Fundraising activities  
   d) Volunteered for a committee  
   e) Other ________________
21. Please circle all school fundraising events you have attended/participated in the last year

a) June A Palooza  
b) Wine Tasting  
c) Benefit at the Beacon  
d) Sold wrapping paper  
e) Purchased Raffle Tickets  
f) Purchased school calendars  
g) Donated money to the Annual Fund  
h) Other _______________

22. Please rate each statement about LCCS on a scale from "Very important" to "Not Important" and circle the response that most closely reflects your perspective:

A. The school's racial diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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B. The school's economic diversity

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<tr>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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C. The school's student-centered activities and projects

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<tr>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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D. The school's location in the downtown area

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<th>Very important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
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23. Please rate each statement about LCCS on a scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" and circle the response that most closely reflects your perspective:

A) LCCS Teacher quality is excellent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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B) The freedom students are provided within the classroom allows them to grow as learners

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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C) My child's class work is challenging

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>
D) The art and music programs adequately expose my children to different forms of the arts

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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E) Tracking at the Middle School level is important for all students' needs to be met

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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F) Discipline Policies are effective

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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G) Currently, transporting my child to school is difficult

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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H) Due to the new location of the school, we plan to participate in a car pool with other families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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I) I am satisfied with the decision to move the school to the Journal Square area

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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J) Materials for school activities and performances are affordable

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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K) Our family attends most of the school performances

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

L) If more school performances were in the evening, our families would attend more of them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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24. How many children live with you at home?

a) 1  

b) 2  

c) 3  

d) 4  

e) 5  

f) 6 or more
25. What are the current grades of your LCCS children?
   a) Kindergarten  d) Third  g) Sixth  j) Ninth  m) Twelfth
   b) First  e) Fourth  h) Seventh  k) Tenth  n) High School Graduate
   c) Second  f) Fifth  i) Eighth  l) Eleventh

26. Please circle the item which best describes your race:
   a) Hispanic  c) White  e) Mixed-race
   b) African American  d) Asian  f) Other___________

27. Please circle the item which best describes the race of your child's other parent:
   g) Hispanic  i) White  k) Mixed-race
   h) African American  j) Asian  l) Other___________

28. Were either you or your child's other parent born in a country other than the United States?
   a) Yes  b) No

29. Current family's annual income:
   a) Below $18,200  b) Between $18,300 - $49,000  c) Between $50,000 - $75,000  d) Between $76,000 - $99,000
   e) Between $100,000 - $150,000  f) More than $150,000

30. What is your Marital Status?
   a) Single  b) Married  c) Separated  d) Divorced  e) Widowed

31. What is your highest level of education?
   a) Some high school  b) Some College  c) College Diploma  d) Graduate School
   b) GED/High School Diploma

32. What is the highest level of education for your child's other parent?
   a) Some high school  b) Some College  c) College Diploma  d) Graduate School
   b) GED/High School Diploma

33. What neighborhood do you live in?
   a) Downtown  b) The Heights  c) Greenville  d) Journal Square

34. Is your child eligible for free and reduced lunch?
   a) Yes  b) No

Thank you very much for completing this survey!!
Appendix F: Alignment of the Survey Instrument and Concepts

1. How did the founding and development of Learning Community Charter School relate to the social, economical, educational, and cultural interests of the founding and subsequent parents? Why do parents from different race, ethnic, and social class backgrounds choose to send or not send their children to LCCS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Alignment of Research Question Themes and Parent Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents’ Cultural Interests</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parents’ Education Interests</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for Sending Student</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. How have the mechanisms within LCCS increased or decreased the diversity of its student population in terms of the race and social class of its students? For example, has the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch increased or decreased? Has the number of Black and Hispanic students increased or decreased?

School Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District School Criticism</th>
<th>If your child attended a public school, please describe any of the characteristics of his/her zoned public school, which you were you unsatisfied with?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does LCCS compare to your public school experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If your child NEVER attended a public school, please describe any of the characteristics of his/her zoned public school, which you were you unsatisfied with?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Initially, how did you find out about Learning Community Charter School?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Discipline Policies are effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Participation</td>
<td>How many times has a family member volunteered for a school function this year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please describe the types of volunteer work:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please circle all school fundraising events you have attended/participated in the last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials for school activities and performances are affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our family attends most of the school performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If school performances were in the evenings, our families would attend more of them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tracking at the Middle School level is essential for all students’ needs to be met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Pedagogy</td>
<td>Have you ever considered transferring your son or daughter out of the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think of the school’s student-centered activities and projects?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LCCS teacher quality is excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are provided with freedom in the classroom, which allows them to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students would learn more if they had more textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My child’s class work is challenging</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Student Composition
- The school’s racial diversity
- The school’s economic diversity

### Location

### Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Grades</th>
<th>Current grade levels of children who attend LCCS and/or graduated from LCCS, please circle all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Please circle the item which best describes your race:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary versus Involuntary Immigrants</td>
<td>Were you or your child’s other parent born in a country other than the United States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic Class</td>
<td>How much money does your family earn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is your child eligible for free or reduced lunch?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How many children are in your family?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G: Charter School Requirements for Transportation in Comparison

**States**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State specifies who pays</th>
<th>Organization responsible for paying for transportation:</th>
<th>No, but eligible for some money</th>
<th>No, but must describe a plan</th>
<th>Required plan for low-income students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Local or regional school board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Depending on the circumstances, local school district</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Charter school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Charter schools are required to comply with the same provisions for transportation as all public schools and receive funding for it as per all public schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Illinois</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Indiana</td>
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<td>Kansas</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<td>School District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Choice between school district and charter school funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>Choice between school district and charter school funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Charter School, but may pay district for services</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<td>School District</td>
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<td>New Jersey</td>
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<td>New Mexico</td>
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<td>Nevada</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Curriculum Vitae

Elizabeth Morrison Brown

1980  Born May 9 in Plymouth, Massachusetts, United States
1998  Graduated from Saint Johnsbury Academy, Vermont
2002  Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Wheaton College, Massachusetts
2004  Master of Arts in Secondary Social Studies Education, City College CUNY
2011  Ph.D. in Urban Systems-Educational Policy, Rutgers University/ UMDNJ/NJIT