



Mission

The mission of Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School is to assure educational excellence and character development for all its students in Grades K through 8. The school will combine rigorous classical academic instruction with an emphasis on formal character education resulting in the highest levels of student achievement, ethical behavior, and cultural literacy.

Dr. Lena Edwards

SCHOLAR; PHYSICIAN; ADVOCATE; RECIPIENT, PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM

It is fitting that a Jersey City charter school dedicated to academic excellence and the development of ethical values should honor the life of Dr. Lena Edwards. In adopting her name, the school recognizes her academic accomplishments, her compassionate service to the people of Jersey City, and her commitment to family, community, and nation.

Dr. Lena Edwards was the valedictorian of the 1917 class at Dunbar High School, Washington, D.C. and completed her Bachelor's Degree in three years at Howard University. In 1924, she graduated from the Howard University College of Medicine. Shortly after graduation, she moved to Jersey City with her husband and classmate, Dr. Keith Madison. She opened an Ob-Gyn practice in the Bergen-Lafayette section of Jersey City and, in 1945, while practicing at the Jersey City Medical Center, became one of the first African-American National Board certified female Ob-Gyn's in the US. During 30 years of service to the city's working class and poor, she delivered more than 5,000 babies while raising six children of her own. Dr. Edwards was a staunch advocate on issues affecting women's health, and a proponent of natural child birth and quality health care regardless of income.

In 1954, she resumed her academic career, returning to Washington to teach Obstetrics at Howard University College of Medicine. In 1960, at age 60, Dr. Edwards, inspired by her religious faith, left her teaching position to minister to the needs of migrant workers in Texas, where she founded a modern maternity hospital. In 1964, President Johnson recognized her humanitarian work by awarding Dr. Edwards the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

In her later years, she returned to medical practice in Jersey City, working with her daughter, Dr. Marie Metoyer. Dr. Edwards received an honorary degree from St. Peter's College in 1966 and taught at the College's Institute of Industrial Relations until her retirement in 1972.

Admission Policy

Admission to Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School is open to all interested students seeking enrollment in Grades K-8 on a space-available basis without regard to sex, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, status as a handicapped person, proficiency in the English language, or any other basis prohibited by public school regulations.

As a New Jersey public school, the School charges no tuition.

Facilities

Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) will be located at 509 Bramhall Avenue, Jersey City. The total school facility includes a four-story brick school building and an adjacent, free-standing gymnasium located at 832 Ocean Avenue. The school building is currently used as a private grammar school, Grades K through 8. It will be available to DLEACS on July 1, 2011.

The school building includes 33,450 square feet of leased space including:

- 22 classrooms
- art room/studio
- computer room
- library
- Jacques d'Amboise Theater with a seating capacity for 658
- cafeteria with two restrooms
- teachers' room
- six additional large restrooms
- six offices

The gym is located in an 8,050 square-foot building and includes:

- a basketball court, which also serves as a multi-purpose room
- a girls' bathroom with showers
- a boys' bathroom with showers
- kitchen, office, and two equipment rooms

Academic and Non-Academic Goals and Objectives

The **Academic Goals and Objectives** of the Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) are:

Academic Goal 1: to assure that students enrolled will meet or exceed all grade-level standards in language and mathematics, and all other grade-level standards as defined in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS):

- **Objective:** on a year-over-year basis, 85% of DLEACS students will score a minimum of 5% higher on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) standardized tests in language arts and mathematics
- **Objective:** on a year-over-year basis, 80% of DLEACS students will score a minimum of 5% percent higher on NJ ASK standardized tests in all subjects other than language arts and mathematics
- **Objective:** 100% of students who do not score Proficient or Advanced Proficient on the NJ ASK will be provided with, and required to participate in, remedial, compensatory, or supplemental instructions until they score Proficient or Advanced Proficient on NJ ASK
- **Objective:** each DLEACS grade level that participates in NJ ASK will achieve higher average language arts and mathematics scores than 80% of their peers in other Jersey City district and charter schools

Academic Goal 2: to extend and enhance student mastery of the NJCCCS through the acquisition of a defined “core knowledge sequence of specific content, concepts, and skills in math, science, language arts, history, geography, music and the visual arts, with incremental building on that foundation from Grades K through 8”

- **Objective:** 90% of students in Grades K through 8 will demonstrate acquisition, retention, and mastery of appropriate grade level content, concepts and skills of the defined core knowledge sequence as measured by curriculum-referenced tests, teacher-developed assessments, student portfolios, and performance on individual and project-based assignments
- **Objective:** 75% of students in Grades 6 through 8 will participate in co-curricular activities designed to enhance and deepen their classical core knowledge and cultural literacy, as measured by student participation rates in school-based programs in critical writing, public speaking, forensics, and debate

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

The **Non-Academic Goals and Objectives** of the Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) are:

Non-Academic Goal 1: To facilitate social and emotional growth, sound character development, and ethical pursuit of excellence in all students:

- **Objective:** 95% of students will demonstrate observable traits of good character, peer interaction, and pro-social behaviors
- **Objective:** 100% of classroom teachers will demonstrate their commitment to the DLEACS Character Education Program by developing weekly lesson plans to teach and cultivate in their students the capacity to understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values of honesty, respect, responsibility, and diligence
- **Objective:** by completion of its third full-year of operation, DLEACS will be designated a “National School of Character” by the Character Education Partnership as measured by the National Character Quality Standards

Non-Academic Goal 2: To assure that all DLEACS educational, administrative, and support staff will become and remain highly trained professionals, competent in the performance of their duties, and will respond to the needs and requirements of the DLEACS population:

- **Objective:** as measured by staff meetings and other joint activities, 100% of DLEACS teachers will be provided with an opportunity to work collaboratively and promote student achievement and faculty-ownership of student successes
- **Objective:** all faculty and staff will participate in comprehensive professional development activities attended by a minimum of 95% of faculty and staff
- **Objective:** a school-wide, written professional development plan, developed by faculty and staff, will be disseminated and will provide guidelines on all required services

Non-Academic Goal 3: To develop at DLEACS a school culture where parents and other stakeholders are true partners in the education of their children, and where the children establish and maintain strong connections to family and community

- **Objective:** all parents will be invited to be represented on the school’s Board of Trustees, participate on various school committees, and participate in school policy development
- **Objective:** 75% of parents will participate, on a voluntary basis, with their children and their children’s teachers in the planning and scheduling of co-curricular activities throughout the year
- **Objective:** a minimum of two community-based activities will be conducted by the school during each year to make the community aware of the added value DLEACS brings both to enrolled students and the community at large

Overview of Educational Program

The **Educational Philosophy** of the Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) is the academic and personal success of all its students, which will be achieved by providing them with and reinforcing a stable, unbroken, continuum of core knowledge and behavioral standards. The school will build incrementally on this foundation from Kindergarten through Grade 8.

Academic success will be accomplished by:

- Attainment of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) including the development of “a curriculum that promotes the use of innovative learning strategies by integrating supportive technologies, inquiry and problem based approaches, and higher order thinking skills”
- Providing a content-rich, integrated and sequenced body of core knowledge as an adjunct to the school’s efforts to develop the curricular strategies and skills described above. The core curriculum will include math, science, language arts, history, geography, music and visual arts for Grades K through 8

The school also will focus on the character development of each student, which, as defined by the NJ Department of Education, “encompasses the enhancement of school-wide climate, infusion of core ethical values into the curriculum, and teaching strategies that are designed to assist young people develop positive character traits, relationships and behaviors that result in a nurturing environment for students.”

The **Focus** of the school’s efforts will be:

- to provide equal access to knowledge and standards for every student, thus reducing the “achievement gap” between diverse student subgroups
- to offer a Kindergarten through Grade 8 configuration as an alternative choice for many students and parents
- to offer specialized course options that may be available in a free-standing middle school, but limited in a K-8 building, via e-learning
- to improve teaching and learning on an ongoing basis through DLEACS’ accountability/evaluation process and to design performance-based compensation packages for staff
- to extend the school day by one hour, and the school year by 10 days; to develop college/university partnerships
- to stress continued parental involvement, developing parent/community outreach and communications systems and volunteer options; to mobilize parent and community groups in the service of assuring academic success and character development

Student Discipline

Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) will establish a three-pronged approach to student behavior and the disciplinary process by:

- establishing positive School behavioral expectations
- creating and operating a caring, supportive environment, conducive to student learning and personal development, thereby minimizing disruptive negative behavior
- implementing a structured, understood, and consistently applied Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy accepted by all stakeholders in the educational process

A “Levels of Interventions and Standard Response” schedule will be developed and provide guidelines for use by the Board of Trustees, School management, teachers, and staff to ensure a uniform approach regarding conduct and discipline.

DLEAC’s criteria for short- and long-term suspensions, and for expulsion, will be consistent with applicable New Jersey statutes and regulations.

Student Assessment

Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) will make student success in all areas of the Statewide Assessment Program a priority in its operations. The goal is for students to achieve Proficient or Advanced Proficient levels on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) as defined by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE). Test results will be used to measure the progress of the school as required for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by the NJ DOE to meet the goals of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as well as to provide data to be used to inform the public about the success of the teaching in the School. Achievement of Proficient and Advanced Proficient scores in all subject areas are also key goals of the School.

Non-mandated tests will be used by DLEACS to assist in the preparation of students to be successful in required end-of-year New Jersey tests. They will also be used to formulate baseline data for the first school year and as a beginning measure for comparison to end-of-year testing. These tests will also be used to identify student weaknesses in specific areas and as a tool to improve the School’s curriculum.

Kindergarten students will be evaluated during the first 45 days of the start of classes.

Parental and Community Involvement

Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) considers the relationship between home and school at the heart of the School's philosophy, and believes it provides the foundation for an excellent educational and developmental program for its students. The School welcomes and anticipates the full involvement of parents and the Jersey City community in all aspects of its development and operation.

The Founders of DLEACS have long histories of providing educational opportunities and social services to the Jersey City community. Among the School's 11 Founders are parents of children attending Jersey City schools; others are educators in Jersey City, and business and community representatives with long histories in the city. All Founders are deeply committed to creating an outstanding charter school in a community that desperately needs improvement in its educational system.

DLEACS will form a Parents' Council, which will assume its full role once the School has opened. The Parents Council will be involved in planning School programs and operations, development efforts, communications, and community outreach.

The School's Board of Trustees will include one parent as a voting member.

DLEACS has already developed a strong relationship with St. Peter's College Department of Education, which will play a critical advisory role in the development of the School's curriculum. DLEACS will also build on relationships with the following:

- The Urban League of Hudson County
- PACO (Hispanic community development group)
- Haitians United for Development of Education
- Communipaw Block Association
- Morris Canal Area Redevelopment Corporation
- National Dance Institute (NDI).

School Governance

Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (DLEACS) will be governed by a Board of Trustees completely committed to the mission, goals, and objectives of the School. The Board of Trustees will be designated within 45 days of the charter's approval and a parent member will be appointed after enrollment is completed.

The initial Board will be comprised of 11 Members; nine voting members and two non-voting members.

The public is welcome at all meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Board will comply with the requirements of New Jersey's Open Public Meetings Act.

Among the Board's responsibilities are:

- aggressively pursuing the goals of the School
- long-range planning
- developing financial support for the effective operation and future of the school
- establishing, approving, and monitoring the annual school budget
- maintaining an efficient and effective governance structure
- hiring, evaluating, and overseeing the School's Principal; approving the hiring of all School staff members recommended by the Principal