

Little Falls Township School District, Passaic County

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Lighthouse District Initiative recognizes districts that have demonstrated measurable progress across diverse groups of learners. The NJDOE is proud to welcome the Little Falls Township School District to the second cohort of Lighthouse Districts.

Little Falls Township School District has fostered improvement by placing an emphasis on both self-care and academic improvement. The staff and administration of Little Falls are committed to developing and nurturing students to become self-driven learners who will continue to embrace that mindset for the rest of their lives. The mission of the Little Falls Township School District is to work collaboratively with the community and caregivers to motivate each student to reach their individual potential through meaningful programs, outstanding teaching and innovative learning experiences. The entire school community works collaboratively to set the course for the district in the areas of school improvement, safety, school climate and professional learning. Teachers develop their practice collaboratively through a system of professional learning communities and “Learning Walks” that provide teachers a chance to observe each other, learn from each other and offer positive support to other educators.

Using data and inquiry to drive conversations is paramount at Little Falls. In the past four years, data-informed instruction has been instrumental in their success. A district once operating without the common language of data, has been transformed into a school where data has fostered optimism, trust and hard work. Dedicated time for Professional Learning Communities was built into the schedule for the principal and teachers to analyze data and collaborate. As this analysis progressed, and as educators felt empowered to make decisions that would benefit all students, so did new teaching methods and materials. Teachers focus on strengthening their instructional practices and further differentiate to meet student needs, personalizing instruction to meet the unique needs of every student.

Students routinely set goals and remain aware of their growth as learners through Growth Mindset/Student Data Tracking folders found in each classroom. Students monitor their personal academic growth weekly, monthly and each marking period. Students reflect on their growth, their successes and what their individual needs are. Through knowledge of their progress, students can advocate for themselves as well as their needs, and educators can better support every student in their classroom. These practices allow students to set goals, work toward these goals and feel a sense of accomplishment when the goals are achieved.

The entire community works to challenge and support all students within the district. Through a full inclusion model, students are exposed to the benefits of team teaching. Through this model, the special education population is privy to positive peer modeling, general education settings and engagement in grade-level expectations.

In Little Falls, everyone is a part of the conversation. Superintendent Tracey Marinelli has an open-door policy. Staff in Little Falls are empowered to take on leadership roles, propose changes and share in problem-solving with peers. District and school level administrators share a philosophy symbolic of a diamond where pedagogical ideas are woven through conversations at the district, school, grade and content level. As ideas are discussed, reworked and shared they are woven through decisions at all levels within the district.

Little Falls Twp. School District Demographic Information

Grades Served: Pre-K to 8

Number of Schools: 3

Total Enrollment: 887

Economically Disadvantaged: 21%

Students with Disabilities: 21.9%

English Learners: 1%

Ask Little Falls to Share Their Story

- 1) Student goal setting
- 2) Data-driven education
- 3) Teacher leadership
- 4) Teacher-generated professional learning
- 5) Building teams

Contact Information

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