



New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter Schools

LEAP Academy University Charter School

Collection of Best Practice

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Name of Charter School: LEAP Academy University Charter School, Inc.

About the Charter School (Mission / Key Design Elements): *LEAP's mission is to* “enhance opportunities for the children and families of Camden through the collaborative design, implementation, and integration of education, health, and human services programs and through community development.” The school’s educational philosophy has a dual focus on closing the achievement gap and ensuring college preparation and completion for African American and Latino students. LEAP’s academic focus has been sustained through four design elements: (1) the charter school approach used as a platform for transforming educational options for parents and children in Camden City by producing educational outcomes and establishing an organization that is entrepreneurial, efficient and highly accountable; (2) adoption of a rigorous curriculum that focuses on the STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Technology) content areas that is taught using multi-disciplinary collaborations and is supported by opportunities for students to engage in active, integrated and self-directed learning across grade levels; (3) embraced the importance of placing college and career readiness at the center of its organizational structure—one that encompasses high expectations for students, educators, and families; and (4) the LEAP model begins at infancy to ensure that children are part of a comprehensive educational pipeline that supports them into productive adulthood.

Best Practice Topic(s) / Performance Area within Organizational Framework:

K-12 STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Curriculum), Data Driven instruction and Fabrication Lab as Zone of Practice and Innovation

Summary: LEAP has a rigorous data driven instruction program and a curriculum that focuses on the STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Technology) content areas and is taught using multi-disciplinary approaches and collaborations. This academic focus is supported by opportunities for students to engage in active, integrated and self-directed learning across grade levels. LEAP Academy capitalizes on rigor and data driven instructional program that integrates problem solving, analytical, research, applied experimentation and active learning as pillars for learning. Across grade levels, students and teachers are engaged in teaching and learning through data driven and applied learning modules that expose students to core content knowledge and raises the awareness, interest and motivation of students in the STEM fields. This focus is best represented through the work of the Fabrication Lab that provides a zone of practice and the setting for multi-disciplinary projects, to solving societal problems locally, domestically and globally. This kind of approach also leads to an increased sense of civic responsibility as students learn how to become global citizens and contributors to solving local and global environmental and social problems such as water quality, food desserts, recycling and composting for organic urban gardens. The Fabrication Lab offers an opportunity for developing products that can impact society and curriculum approaches that are replicable. It's location within a school anchors it as a technical prototyping platform for innovation and invention that stimulates student engagement, creativity and promotes local entrepreneurship. It also exposes students to a complete curriculum from product development to commercialization that stimulates learning, engagement and local entrepreneurship.

Partner(s): Rutgers University Camden; Fabrication Lab; Rowan University

Dates: from 2010-present

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Resources:

Makerbots Replicators 3D Printers; 3D Digitalizer; Shopbot CNC Routers; Universal Laser Systems; Skill Drill Press and Saw; Furnace; Incubators; Centrifuges; UV Sterilizers; Light Spectrophotometer; Orbit shakers; STEM university faculty and students.