



New Jersey Department of Education 2025/2026 New Jersey Lighthouse Awardees

Division of Teaching and Learning Services

June 2026

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Lighthouse Awardee Categories

The focus of cohort five is educational improvement in equity.

- Increasing Equity in Dual Enrollment
- Increasing Equity in Course Enrollment in Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate (AP/IB)
- Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce



Lighthouse Selection Process

Step 1: Data Analysis:

- Initial pool of LEAs was identified through an equity-based quantitative data review.

Step 2: Internal Review:

- Offices throughout the NJDOE reviewed the initial pool of LEAs through their respective programmatic lenses.

Step 3: Application Narratives:

- Select LEAs were asked to share narratives describing their efforts within one category.
- A panel of internal NJDOE staff scored the narrative statements.



Increasing Equity in Dual Enrollment



The LEAs recognized in this category have shown purposeful, measurable progress in increasing dual enrollment for traditionally underserved populations. Research has found that dual enrollment programs lead to higher degree attainment for those with access.



Paterson Charter School for Science and Technology: Increasing Equity in Dual Enrollment

Expanded Reach: Formed nine college partnerships serving 130+ students in engineering and healthcare.

Full Funding: 100% of tuition, fees, and materials covered by district funds and grants.

Direct Impact: Used PSAT/NJSLA data to transition first-generation scholars toward Associate's degrees.



Penns Grove-Carneys Point Regional School District: Increasing Equity in Dual Enrollment

Early College Pathway: Formed a Strategic Salem County College partnership allowing students to earn Associate's degrees by 12th grade.

Staff Investment: Funded Master's Degrees for HS teachers to serve as on-campus adjunct faculty.

Proven Results: 18 seniors graduated with Associate's degrees in 2024.



Saddle Brook Public Schools: Increasing Equity in Dual Enrollment

Empowered Staff: Identified and certified teachers with Master's degrees to lead college-level instruction on-site.

Student-Led Curriculum: Utilized interest surveys to align new course offerings directly with student goals.

Family Engagement: Hosted dedicated parent sessions to promote dual enrollment as a reliable pathway to college credit.



Increasing Equity in AP and IB Course Enrollment



The LEAs recognized in this category have shown purposeful, measurable progress in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate coursework, with a focus of increasing the representation of traditionally underrepresented populations in the rigorous coursework associated with these programs.



Emerson Public Schools: Increasing Equity in AP and IB Course Enrollment

Dismantled Barriers: Collapsed traditional academic tracks to encourage all students to pursue AP coursework.

Easier Access: Expanded the course catalog to include more accessible AP subjects without prerequisites.

Full Support: Replaced student "sorting" with tiered elementary supports and district-funded exam fees.



Hamilton Township School District: Increasing Equity in AP and IB Course Enrollment

Demystified AP: Hosted "Potentially AP" Assemblies across all high schools to reach non-traditional AP students.

Student Testimonials: Leveraged peer and teacher experiences to reduce the intimidation of advanced coursework.

Universal Funding: Board of Education committed to covering 100% of AP exam costs for every student.



Lower Cape May Regional School District: Increasing Equity in AP and IB Course Enrollment

Dual-Credit Alignment: Partnered with Stockton University to approve 10 AP courses for dual credit.

Targeted Financial Aid: Eliminated costs by providing free dual credit to free/reduced lunch students.

Embedded Support: Utilized the “Caper Connections” tutoring program to empower underrepresented students in rigorous coursework.



Salem City School District: Increasing Equity in AP and IB Course Enrollment

Open Access Philosophy: Removed placement tests and restrictive criteria to open the door for any student wishing to challenge themselves.

Expanded Offerings: Significantly increased the variety of both AP and IB courses to align with diverse student career goals.

Competitive Results: Fostered a culture of belief and support, ensuring student transcripts are highly competitive for top-tier university admissions.



South Hunterdon Regional School District: Increasing Equity in AP and IB Course Enrollment

Science Pathway Redesign: Intentionally restructured the science sequence to ensure all students access AP-level courses by senior year.

Daily FLEX Period: Established dedicated time for 1-on-1 teacher support and academic enrichment.

Inclusive Outreach: Utilized ACCESS for ELLs data to engage multilingual learners and provided scholarships for payment of all AP exam fees.



Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce



The LEA recognized in this category has shown purposeful, measurable progress in recruiting and retaining a diverse group of teachers which greater represents the demographics of the students it serves.



Vineland Public Schools: Increasing Diversity in the Teacher Workforce

Redesigned Recruitment: Hosted on-site job fairs with instant interviews to attract a candidate pool reflecting the student body.

VINE Mentoring Program: Established a robust support system for new teachers, including those from non-traditional certification pathways.

"Grow Your Own" Pipeline: Empowered local paraprofessionals and substitutes to pursue full teaching certification.



Presenting the 2025/2026 Lighthouse Awardees: Congratulations!

