

Summary of School



School Mission

- The Whole Life Charter School/Learner Alternatives Charter School (WLCS/LACS) will prepare students who have struggled in traditional school settings for academic, real world, and whole life achievement through a demanding, standards compliant, program customized to each student's interests and educational needs.

Demographics

- As the only tuition-free high-school targeting students having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, those attempting to manage specific and non-specific learning disabilities, and students at risk of failure in or disengaged from traditional school methodologies in southeastern Pennsylvania, we receive applications from parents/guardians residing in most of the school districts within a 30 miles radius of Philadelphia. Of the applications we have received approximately 85% of those applying are for students described above with the remaining 15% coming from parent/guardians of students dissatisfied with public education.

Contact

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Intended Population

- maximum 150 students in 12 advisories (classes)
- 14 – 16 faculty
- 4 administrative staff
- 2 - 4 non administrative staff

Hours of Operation

- @ 180 operational days between September and June
- Monday – Friday excluding most legal holidays
- 7:00 am – 6:00 PM (includes after school activities)

Founding Team

- Mr. Gary Sobolow – Team Leader
- Portia Hunt, Ph. D. – Director of School Counseling, Coordinator of Counseling Psychology, Temple University
- James Cohen, Ph. D. – Partner & Vice President with Micro-marketing Strategy Partners
- Alex Schuh, Ph. D. – Educational Psychology - Policy Research, Evaluation, and Measurement
- Dr. Chris Kenty, Ph. D. – Social Science and Psychiatric Research
- Mrs. Loretta Leader – District Magisterial Judge, Ret., Cheltenham Township
- Mr. Keith Drobness – CPA/Partner,
- Ms. Kathleen Dzura – CEO/Principal, Philadelphia Montessori Academy
- Mr. David Meketon – Dean of Students/Assistant Principal, Ret., Masterman High School, Philadelphia, Pa
- Ms. Rhonda Feder – BA.Psy, JD
- Ms. Denise Marshall – President, Marshall Insurance Agency
- Ms. Diane Williams
- Beth Chalick-Kaplan – RN, BSN, CCM
- Elon Kaplan – D.C.
- Beryl Katz – Director of Senior Adults for Greater Education

Academic Associations

- The Whole Life Charter School/Learner Alternatives Charter School is a part of Big Picture Philadelphia and Big Picture Learning, a network of over 140 schools worldwide. For up to date information about the Big Picture Learning network and philosophy go to <http://www.bigpicture.org>.
- Montgomery County Community College has offered a dual enrollment option to students at WLCS/LACS expanding course options and giving our students the opportunity to receive an associates degree during their high school careers

“The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do.”

~ 19th century British philosopher, James Allen

Method

The Whole Life Charter School/Learner Alternatives Charter School (WLCS/LACS) model is structured to educate teenagers within specific populations who have struggled in schools or are mismatched to traditional school curricula and structure and will offer particular support for children affected by ADHD. Many of the children we target have disengaged from academic pursuit or accomplish just enough to avoid being left behind. We believe our primary job in cultivating lifelong, passionate, and competent learners is to ensure each child claim his or her belief in their ability to achieve. We have developed a rigorous whole-child educational model that expects the absolute best of each student while offering the appropriate supports to allow them to attain it.



- **Start with a small school where going unnoticed is virtually impossible.** – A national study by the Bank Street College of Education, released in 2000, found that small schools have higher student attendance, fewer student dropouts, fewer academic failures, fewer incidents of violence and higher teacher, student, parent, and community member satisfaction than large schools. The WLCS/LACS cohort will never be larger than 150 students allowing each to benefit from their school’s small size.
- **Start later in the day.** – Research has shown that teenagers generally need more sleep than adults. Additionally, teenagers affected by ADHD frequently have difficulty managing their sleep schedule. A day at WLCS/LACS starts later in the morning than district schools and engage students in academic pursuit when they are most receptive.
- **Customize each child’s education to leverage their interests and learning styles.** – Children affected by ADHD are known to aggressively avoid tasks they are not interested in completing and hold unwavering attention when engaged in an activity they are. Understanding this, WLCS/LACS advisors, supported by content specialists, work with each student to devise learning plans that incorporate standards compliant, academic concepts and make them uniquely meaningful.
- **Enable students to co-design their learning plans with eyes wide open.** – Students perform better when expectations are explicit and accountability is required and supported. Through daily utilization of Project Foundry software, students are made aware of all State learning standards and are held to account for each of them as they progress through their education. State standards are understood as law. The avenues to them, projects involving the understanding of their abstract concept or acquisition of the abstract skill, can be co-designed with the student’s advisory team. Students meet more than the State standards using this approach. They learn accountability to the rule of law and practice designing and evaluating the success of an academic plan, skills necessary for success in college and beyond.
- **Evaluate, assess, and grade the whole student.** – Research has shown that each learner acquires and processes information uniquely. Additional to the more traditional assessments of tests and written work, our school’s size and structure allow WLCS/LACS advisors to customize assessment models for each student.
- **Provide consistent information between all members of a student’s learning team.** – Our advisory-centric model enables parents, content instructors, mentors, and the school administration to stay connected in support of a student. Students (and, by extension, their parents/guardians) remain with their first year advisor throughout their enrollment at WLCS/LACS. The pair meet twice daily to schedule and assess the day’s work, create solutions to academic and personal concerns, and plan long range projects and learning goals. Items of interest or concern can be communicated by the advisor during daily morning advisor meetings.
- **Cooperative and project-based learning.** – Following guidelines set forth by the Buck Institute for Education, Big Picture Learning and the Edvisions education networks, students will explore together in project teams, learn through real-world, mentored, internships that are tied to their personal interests, and share their academic mastery, nonacademic skills and talents as peer and advisor mentors so that they may become confident educators in their own right as well as expert learners.
- **Grow the teachers so they can better feed the students.** – We believe that providing continuous exploration opportunities for our advisors and administrators is the best way to model learning for our students. Our teachers meet each morning to share ideas and resources, discuss and improve support of a student, learn a skill, and perfect their practices so that WLCS/LACS students get the most capable and prepared teachers every day.
- **Leverage emerging technologies.** – WLCS/LACS advisors, with the school’s administrative support, will share, trial, and assign new found resources in assessed student projects giving our students unlimited paths towards academic understanding. Schools as notable as MIT now make entire courses freely available on the Web. We believe that our students will be entering a world where learning will be global and that it is important for them to become discriminating consumers of academic resources. It is our responsibility to prepare them for this future.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

	Monday	Internship Schedule A	B Schedule	Internship Schedule B	Friday	
7:30 – 8:00 AM	Early Arrival breakfast, chat, read, study, or project work	Early Arrival	Early Arrival	Early Arrival	Early Arrival	
8:00 – 8:30 AM						
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Advisors Meet	Advisors Meet	Advisors Meet	Advisors Meet	Advisors Meet	
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Morning Exercise Yoga, Tai Chi, Karate, etc.	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	Morning Exercise	
9:30 – 10:00 AM	Advisory Advisee schedule development and Project Planning	Advisory (Thematic) Social Skills Development, Community Awareness	Advisory Project Planning	Advisory Thematic	Advisory (Thematic) Social Skills Development, Community Awareness	
10:00 – 10:30 AM						
10:30 – 11:00 AM	Mathematics or	Novanet	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	
11:00 – 11:30 AM		or	Mathematics	or	or	Mathematics
11:30 – 12:00 PM	NovaNet	Mathematics	Novanet	Novanet	Novanet	
12:00 – 12:30 PM	Lunch	Internships Internships at LACS do not generally happen for the entire year. If a student is not engaged in an internship his/her schedule would resemble a B schedule	Lunch	Internships A student may negotiate an internship that he/she attends on one or two days each week. The days may be consecutive as in Wednesday-Thursday or they conform to the schedule as it is shown.	Lunch	
12:30 – 1:00 PM	Projects, Groupwork, Coursework, Novanet, Test Prep Advisors will assist advisees in managing projects that incorporate elements in each PDE mandated subject area		Science Theatre Each week all students will take part in a hand-on 2.5 hour science laboratory which will be supported by additional investigation individually designed into their project work		Projects, Groupwork, Coursework, Novanet, Test Prep	
1:00 – 1:30 PM			Reading, Debate, Journaling and Discussion A student may join one of several book-centric discussion groups meeting			Reading, Debate, Journaling and Discussion
1:30 – 2:00 PM						
2:00 – 2:30 PM						
2:30 – 3:00 PM	Advisory Check Out	Advisory Check Out				
3:00 – 3:30 PM	Advisory Check Out	Advisory Check Out	Advisory Check Out	All School Meeting		
3:30 – 4:00 PM						

Early Arrival --- students may start their day at Learning Alternatives Charter School at 7:30 AM if needed or desired. **Advisors meet** at 8:15 AM to brainstorm, get support, or discuss specific students.

Morning Exercises --- students, teachers, and school staff engage in stretching, yoga, tai chi, karate, or other physical exercises.

Advisory --- there are three types of advisory meetings. **Schedule Development and Planning Advisories** are for the purposes of planning the week, assessing successes and failures with regards to targets and making adjustments. **Thematic Advisories** are for the purpose of examining interpersonal relationships, the development of personal and people skills, esteem building, school culture development, and other topics. **Check Out Advisories** are half hour sessions held before a students leave for the day to reassess goals, evaluate the day, manage logistics, and say goodbye to advisory mates and advisors.

Projects And Self-Directed Study --- These are sessions during which students will work together or separately on exhibition preparation, internship development, or, if so advised, academic skills development in partnership with other students, an academic discipline specialist, a graduate student, or a volunteer, or the utilization of NovaNet. And I would

Mathematics/NovaNet --- 45 minute classes will be taught at four different levels/2 levels per timeslot to cover algebra, geometry, advanced algebra, and beginning calculus. The gnome and a curriculum will then be used to remediate or augment an individual students progress.