

CHARTER LEADERS OF COLOR **MATTER.**



Tiffanie Lewis

Founder and CEO,
J.S. Clark Leadership Academy

I grew up in poverty, in a public housing project. and my mom was a single parent.

Every day, my mom would drive 40 minutes each way to bring me to Tice Elementary, in the Galena Park Independent School District in Harris County, a suburb of Houston. My mom had the propensity to understand that a great education was the key to success, and she chose Tice for me because it provided a more rigorous education than the schools in our neighborhood. Coming from so far and juggling her work with my schedule, she was often late to pick me up, at no fault of her own. The Assistant Principal, Mr. Norman, would stay late and wait with me, every single day. He always told me, “you’re going to be great. You’re going to be somebody.” And just as my mother worked hard to send me to a good school and Mr. Norman created an environment of encouragement, it is important to me to create a place where kids will feel love every day and where parents have a choice. This is why I went on to pursue my teaching certificate at Texas Southern University.

STARTING WITH LOVE

I envisioned JS Clark Leadership Academy as a school where learning would take place through love. If we don’t touch the hearts of children, our efforts to teach math and English will be in vein. One example of how we build our school family is our daily, school-wide, 30-minute morning meetings. Kids share topics of interest to them and updates on extracurricular activities, we discuss current events, we have guest speakers, and there is always a wise life lesson delivered. When our staff learns of a conflict between students (including conflicts on social media), we raise the issue during a morning meeting and work through it as a team. This moment of accord, early in the day, sets the tone for learning together. I believe this makes a difference in the hearts of children.

Students respond to the school culture. Their academic performance improves significantly during their time at JS Clark Leadership Academy, and school performance increases each year. In the 2016–2017 school year, 17% of students performed at or above grade level in English Language Arts (ELA), and in the 2018–2019 year, this rose to 36%. Math performance showed a similar increase, with 8% of students showing mastery in 2016–2017 versus 24% in 2018–2019. We have excellent student retention rates. In our 2020 graduating class of 36 students, 32 have been with us since the fifth grade. Student attendance is at 97.9%. alumni keep in touch with us and participate in the school community, and many are pursuing degrees to comeback to be a part of the JSCLA staff. We have a 100% graduation rate.

As a school dedicated to providing opportunities in a supportive environment, we understand that we must stretch our students’ thinking beyond their experiences and imaginations. We encourage our high-school students to begin attending college, through our dual-enrollment programs that lead to Associates degrees in General Studies or Technical fields with many Louisiana community colleges and universities. Our school aims to prepare students to be

college-and-career-ready—ready to pursue additional college if/when they'd like to, but also positioned to begin earning high wages in desirable careers right out of JS Clark Leadership Academy.

In the first graduating class of the dual-enrollment program (class of 2018), 47 students received an Associates degree. Some of these graduates are now earning high wages, purchasing homes, pursuing post-secondary degrees, and building new legacies for their families.

GROWING POTENTIAL

As we train our students to be self-reliant, and as we coach them to take on high levels of responsibility, it is essential that they see people who look like them in positions of influence. This makes a tremendous difference in how students see themselves (as research shows). Because of this, I am present at one of the schools every day so that students and staff see me being a hard working team-player. In addition to my responsibilities as CEO and Head of School, I teach ninth and tenth grade English, I am Athletic Director, and I am one of two female boys head varsity basketball coaches in the state of Louisiana.

Through empowering charter school leaders of color and single-site charter schools, there is so much potential to elevate our most under-served communities.

J.S. Clark Leadership Academy

Location	Opelousas, LA
Year Opened	2012
Student enrollment	249
Grades served	5-12
Website	www.jsclarkcharter.com



Student Demographics

Black/African-American	98%
White/Caucasian	1%
Hispanic/Latino	1%

Homeless Youth	4.8%
At Risk Students	100%
Students with Disabilities	4%



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