Letter from Our Executive Director

In the 1960s Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) spoke of a Beloved Community and the idea of a truly interracial democracy; President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) shared his vision for a Great Society wherein every child can find knowledge to enrich their mind and to enlarge their talents. These leaders envisioned a nation where Americans of diverse backgrounds would live and thrive together. Fast forward to today, our nation is still segregated and polarized. This is happening at the same time as our nation’s youngest generations are the most diverse they have ever been; our reality is a far cry from the vision of the 60’s.

At Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC), we believe we have an answer. DCSC works to realize the shared visions of MLK and LBJ by supporting and expanding intentionally diverse charter schools, schools wherein all students and their communities reap the benefits of a diverse and inclusive education. Since its founding in 2014, DCSC believed in this vision. It was an audacious idea 10 years ago — that charter schools can and should be one of the strongest tools available to increase diversity in student populations — but one that attracted like-minded leaders. Today, DCSC is helping public schools successfully counter segregation and advance equity by developing intentional and inclusive school communities.

At DCSC, we believe diversity goes beyond student demographics and should be reflected by everyone in the building — from the students to the teachers to administrators. Intentional diversity goes far beyond simply enrolling students of different races, wealth levels, and other socioeconomic markers; it embraces a deepening understanding of an inclusive school community. We’re working to help schools not just attain diverse enrollment, staff and leadership, but foster inspiring communities where students can form bonds that cross boundaries, learn from one another, and together develop a vision for their shared world.

As we reflect on the past 10 years of DCSC — on our membership growth, new intentional diverse schools launched by our UnifiED fellows, and educators learning via communities of practice — we must also look to the ongoing and future efforts of our members and the Coalition. We share this strategic plan as our vision of our collective growth.

Finding solutions to the persistent problem of segregation remains fundamental to justice and opportunity in this country. At DCSC, our work has only just begun.

We’re excited to be on this journey with you.

Sonia C. Park
Executive Director, Diverse Charter Schools Coalition

Pictured in bottom cover photo: Pedro Noguera, Ph.D., Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops, Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education.
Introduction

The following strategic plan is the product of a comprehensive process of quantitative and qualitative research and discovery to forge the 2024-2029 path for the Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC). This strategic planning process intentionally elicited input and feedback from DCSC stakeholder groups, including members, staff, board members, partner organizations, and funders.

As a result, the strategic plan codifies the transformative strategies DCSC will employ to support the membership coalition so that they may ensure students live, learn, and lead with empathy and understanding in a diverse, interconnected world.

Table of Contents

- Letter from Our Executive Director 2
- Introduction 3
- Our Path Forward 4
- Our Definition 8
- Our 2024–2029 Strategic Priorities 8
- Acknowledgements 13
- Appendix 13
Our Path Forward

One of the great victories of the Civil Rights Movement was the integration of schools. In the decades following 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which ruled that separating public school students based on race was unconstitutional, an era of deliberate integration blossomed across America.

Yet this era of integration was short-lived. In the 1990s, courts ended their oversight of desegregation efforts. Today, even as the nation’s school districts tend to be more diverse than ever before, public schools are, by many measures, actually more segregated than they have been at any point since the 1970s. The growing resegregation of American schools has had seriously negative effects on educational outcomes.

In the last few decades, however, charter schools began to independently emerge around the country with the goal of increasing diversity. In 2014, which marked the sixtieth anniversary of *Brown*, fourteen of these schools formed the Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC) with a shared vision: intentionally diverse schools as a powerful force for educational equity. Their goal was to combine forces to obtain dedicated support for their unique model—and to unlock the potential of integrated learning.

Ten years later, DCSC has grown dramatically, and boasts 255 member schools serving over 100,000 students across 25 states and Washington, D.C. The appeal of the DCSC vision is clear, yet the challenge of segregation persists.

“It means that the work you do to create intentionally diverse schools is one of the only hopes we have.”

PEDRO NOGUERA, PH.D., EMERY STOOPS AND JOYCE KING STOOPS
DEAN OF THE USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

---

In the 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, DCSC outlines four strategic priorities that are designed to transform the organization’s impact. The first is to **Support Our Membership Coalition**. Sharing promising practices of high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools, member schools are supported by a community to improve the academic, social, and emotional success of a diverse student population. The second strategic priority is to **Promote the Promise of Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools**, by advocating for policies that create, expand, and sustain the conditions for high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools to increase the number of students they serve. The third strategic priority is to **Distinguish Our Work**. DCSC will develop a high-quality, intentionally diverse charter school framework, and future support will align to its core components, improving and expanding the impact of member schools. The fourth strategic priority is to **Structure for Impact**. This priority will align organizational structures, operational planning, and fiscal decisions to reflect our strategic priorities and ensure that DCSC remains a sustainable organization that serves and supports current and future members.

**The Promise of Integration**

During and after the Civil Rights Movement, school integration became a broadly shared ideal. A 1969 *Newsweek* survey found that 80 percent of Black Americans wanted their children to attend school with white children. Research shows that school segregation declined significantly between the 1960s and 1980s, most often due to courts maintaining oversight over desegregation efforts. At the height of the desegregation efforts in the 1980s, the achievement gap in both math and English language arts had decreased by nearly half for Black thirteen-year-old students, suggesting that the school improvements that occurred as a result of desegregation — such as increased per-pupil funding and smaller class sizes — led to increased educational outcomes for Black students. Academic improvements such as these provided early proof that something was working within integrated classrooms.

Yet schools began to de-integrate in the 1990s — even as the American student body became more diverse than ever before. Today, the demographics of public school students are far more diverse than in the 1960s. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), the racial demographics of public school students in grades K–12 are 45% white, 28% Hispanic, 15% Black, 5.4% Asian, 0.9% American Indian/Alaska Native, 5% of two or more races, and 1% Pacific Islander.

But many public schools continue to be isolated by race and socioeconomic status. A 2023 Department of Education report found that three in five Black and Latino students and two in five American Indian/Alaska Native students attend schools where at least 75 percent of the enrollment is students.

---

of color, while only a little more than half of white students attend schools in which students of color make up more than a quarter percent of the student population. Even Black and Latino families with higher incomes are more likely than white families to live in neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty. Research paints a stark picture: while the student population diversifies, access to diverse school environments remains unequal.

DCSC Takes Action

Since its founding, the DCSC acknowledged the progress that court-ordered desegregation efforts brought, starting in the 1960s, and recognized their initial positive impact. However, the situation in American schools showed that there was a need to go beyond mere desegregation.

DCSC initially focused on research and best practices for “diverse-by-design” schools, recognizing the importance of reflecting community diversity and ensuring equal opportunities for all students. As a national membership coalition, it championed this specific charter model. It also found that charter schools are best positioned to create and effectively serve intentionally diverse student populations.

2 Ibid.

From left to right: Dan Rubenstein (Founding Board Chair), Veronica Brooks-Uy (Former Board Chair), Sonia Park (Executive Director), Mike Chalupa (Former Board Chair), Derrick Johnson (Former Board Chair).
because charter schools have the necessary autonomy to deliberately act in the areas that are crucial to achieving diversity: recruitment, admissions policies, and school design.

The DCSC model doesn’t just focus on bringing diverse populations together — it fosters truly inclusive environments that address historical inequities and empower all students.7 Research has proven that the benefits of socioeconomically and racially diverse school settings include academic achievement improvements, reduced achievement gaps, increased college attendance rates, and enhanced critical thinking skills.8 For the past ten years, DCSC has maintained a strong focus on promoting, supporting, and expanding diverse-by-design charter schools, with a few of the impacts highlighted below:

- **Expanded reach** to 255 member schools serving over 100,000 students in 25 states and D.C., representing 7x growth from our founding.
- **Grew the sector** by supporting the launch of 17 new schools through our new school fellowship, UnifiEd, with the potential to create 8,830 new seats at full enrollment.
- **Supported strong academic outcomes** through relevant and high-quality programming. Some 80% of our member schools’ students outperformed their neighborhood district in English Language Arts, and 82% of our member schools’ students outperformed their neighborhood district in math.
- **Developed and shared best practices** through 10 member-developed toolkits for the field.
- **Served our members well**, as evidenced by our 41 Net Promoter Score and high engagement in programming.
- **Established our brand as thought leaders** in diverse-by-design schooling through features in state and national media outlets, including CharterFolk, Ed Post, New York Post, NJ.com, and The 74 Million.

With these achievements as a foundation, the next five years hold great promise for the spread of the DCSC vision and its implementation in more schools across the country.

---


Our Definition

Intentionally diverse charter schools are proof points of the promise of integrated schools and communities.

Rooted in that purpose and grounded in their local context, these schools define and establish clear and adaptable criteria to cultivate diverse student populations. All aspects of the school are intentionally designed to promote belonging, joy, and respect, recognizing the fundamental role these qualities play in achieving academic, social, and emotional success.

Ultimately, intentionally diverse charter schools are dedicated to providing excellent and equitable inputs, striving for consistently high outcomes for all students, and preparing their alumni to thrive.

Our 2024–2029 Strategic Priorities

To effectively implement the Theory of Action, Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC) has four strategic priorities that represent critical areas we will focus on over the next five years. Each priority includes a set of strategies we believe are required to successfully support the priority. Strategies are specific actions we plan to take to advance these priorities and help us meet our goals.
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1: Support Our Membership Coalition

STRATEGIES

- Establish Communities of Practice aligned to the components of the High-Quality, Intentionally Diverse Framework.
- Design the Annual Convening to share and improve practices aligned to the components of the High-Quality, Intentionally Diverse Framework.
- Align UnifiED to the High-Quality, Intentionally Diverse Framework.
- Establish a data collection system to understand the impact of DCSC support on the outcomes of the membership coalition.
- Collaborate with strategic partners to provide complementary services to enhance membership benefits.
- Codify the benefits and value of membership, highlighting exclusive resources and networking opportunities.
- Ensure the retention of member schools.
- Recruit new member schools.

OUR FOCUS

Our shared vision for high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools drives the support we provide to our members so that they may implement and sustain transformative education experiences.

OUR 2029 VISION

Our membership coalition receives differentiated, flexible and responsive programming aligned to our high-quality, intentionally diverse charter school framework. Our members feel connected and inspired to work towards our shared goal of continually improving.

“We now have the opportunity to ensure our Native Hawaiian children receive the best learning experiences. I cannot wait to further our learning as a collective community.”

RYAN MANDADO
CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, DREAMHOUSE EWA BEACH
**STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2: Promote the Promise of Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools**

**STRATEGIES**

- Identify advocacy-ready states where DCSC can work with members to advance policies that promote and create the conditions for high-quality, intentionally diverse schools.
- Establish relationships with localized advocacy organizations within advocacy-ready states to support state/local advocacy.
- Establish relationships with localized media within advocacy-ready states.
- Establish relationships with authorizing entities to create an ongoing working group to collect research and resources to help charter school authorizers understand, support, advance, and expand intentionally diverse charter schools.
- Share impact stories of the coalition to communicate the positive impact of intentionally diverse charter schools on students, families, and communities.
- Execute a community of practice to train leaders in designing and implementing state and/or local advocacy strategies.
- Formalize partnerships with aligned organizations to author and support a shared advocacy agenda.
- Provide responsive support to member schools to support their advocacy efforts.

**OUR FOCUS**

We advocate for policies that nurture the growth and sustainability of intentionally diverse charter schools.

**OUR 2029 VISION**

Local, state, and national leaders champion the positive impact of intentionally diverse charter schools by adopting critical policies that promote and create the conditions for high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools to thrive.

“We don’t have a choice; we must use our voices to advocate for equitable, public education for all students. Like Summit, DCSC members are powerful examples of what is possible in intentionally diverse schools and together, we can win.”

**TIFFANY REYNOLDS**

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3: Distinguish Our Work

STRATEGIES

- Establish a clear and actionable definition of “Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools.”
- Research and develop a High-Quality, Intentionally Diverse Charter School Framework to improve the quality and design of intentionally diverse charter schools.
- Embed the High-Quality, Intentionally Diverse Charter School Framework as a new member requirement.
- Establish comprehensive internal and external branding and communication protocols for publishing and sharing research, data, member school outcomes, and the impact of DCSC’s work.
- Conduct, analyze, and publish, in collaboration with various organizations, including school districts, charter schools, policy centers, research institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and funders, meaningful research on the impact and outcomes of intentionally diverse charter schools and the impact of the support of DCSC.

OUR FOCUS

We steward a shared understanding of high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools across the education sector through our research, data collection, and codification of strategic partnerships.

OUR 2029 VISION

Our high-quality, intentionally diverse charter school framework is used to share intentional practices and insights across our coalition to increase the quality of our member schools.

“Who’s actually eradicating achievement gaps within their schools? Who’s seeing success like that on scale? That is our charge. And we need to be in community with others who are moving the needle on that.”

TRESHA WARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PROSPECT SCHOOLS
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4: Structure For Impact

STRATEGIES

- Utilize a funding landscape analysis to identify additional sustainable funding sources.
- Develop a sustainable funding model.
- Articulate compelling messaging to cultivate and maintain relationships with potential and current funders.
- Reconfigure the organizational structure to align with the strategic plan.
- Collaborate with strategic partners to provide additional capacity for work related to the strategic plan.
- Develop an organizational succession plan.
- Prioritize DCSC staff development through ongoing performance evaluations.
- Utilize an established data collection process to analyze and measure the organization’s progress towards goal attainment.

“Having participated in DCSC programming and advocacy efforts since 2017, I’ve realized that this work is not quick and easy. It takes time, trust, relationships. As members, we know that we can count on DCSC for the long haul.”

CHRISTIE HUCK
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OUR FOCUS

We align our organizational structure and operations with our strategic priorities, diversify sources of revenue and partnerships to support key initiatives and sustainability, and promote strong staff effectiveness, commitment, and satisfaction to drive organizational longevity.

OUR 2029 VISION

Our organizational structure, operational planning, and fiscal decisions reflect our strategic priorities.
Acknowledgements

We would like to extend thanks to the City Fund for supporting Diverse Charter Schools Coalition (DCSC)’s strategic planning process.

We would also like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their thought partnership throughout the strategic planning process.

Diverse Charter Schools Coalition Leadership
• Sonia C. Park, Executive Director

Diverse Charter Schools Coalition Staff
• Seon Britton, Program
• Dave Bryson, Operations
• Ashley Heard, External Relations

Diverse Charter Schools Coalition Board of Directors
• Dr. Kristina Kyles-Smith, Vice Chair, Chief Executive Officer, Lillie May Carroll Jackson Charter School
• Raul Alarcon, Chief Academic Officer, ISANA Academies
• Rhonda Broussard, Founder and CEO, Beloved Community
• Mike Chalupa, Executive Director, City Neighbors Foundation
• Amanda Fenton, Partner, Capitol Advocacy Partners
• Natalie Hester, Co-President of External Affairs, Washington State Charter Schools Association
• Dr. Chanel Hampton, Founder and CEO, Strategic Community Partners
• Felix Li, Chief Operations Officer, Summit Public Schools
• Ron Rice, Senior Director, Government Relations, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Our Strategic Plan Consultant
• The Educated Approach, LLC

Our Adhoc Strategic Planning Committee
• Dr. Kristina Kyles-Smith, Vice Chair, Chief Executive Officer, Lillie May Carroll Jackson Charter School
• Raul Alarcon, Chief Academic Officer, ISANA Academies
• Dave Bryson, Diverse Charter School Coalition
• Sonia Park, Executive Director, Diverse Charter School Coalition
• Halley Potter, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation

Our Thought Partners
• Aasimah Navlakhi, Build. Excel. Sustain
• Antonio Pares, Brightbeam
• Christie Huck, City Gardens Montessori School
• Hanifi Oguz, Beehive Academy
• Jana Wilcox Lavin, Opportunity 180
• Josh Edelman, Transcend Education
• Melissa Reynolds, Walton Family Foundation
• Naomi Shelton, National Charter Collaborative
• Stefan Lallinger, The Bridges Collaborative
• Tess Vigil, Promise 54
• Todd Dickson, Valor Collegiate
• Tresha Ward, Prospect Schools
• Valerie Braimah, New Schools Venture Fund
• Veronica Brooks-Uy, National Association of Charter School Authorizers
Mission · Vision · Core Values

Mission
We catalyze and support the creation and expansion of high-quality, diverse public charter schools through strategic research, advocacy, membership activities, and outreach.

Vision
Our vision is that an ever-growing number of American public schools, including charter schools, will embody the diversity of our nation’s people across race, socioeconomic status, language, and abilities while preparing the children in their care to pursue higher education, meaningful and sustainable work in a global economy, and an equal role in a cohesive & connected participatory democracy.

Our Core Values

COMMUNITY
We accomplish more together when we build trusting, collaborative, and honest relationships with one another and our members to foster/create integrated schools. By creating strong relationships with each other, members, and partners, we hold ourselves accountable to our mission.

BOLDNESS
We honor the hard work of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools while acknowledging that it requires system-level disruption. We set ambitious goals to dismantle systemic racism, oppression, and marginalization and work with other individuals and organizations to challenge the status quo.

LEARNING
We maintain a sense of humility and curiosity. We listen to and learn from each other while centering on the people directly affected by the challenges of creating school integration, equitable achievement, and inclusive school environments.

STRATEGY
We select how we use our time, resources, and energy. We acknowledge that systems of oppression are stubbornly calcified over many years. Thus, our work toward dismantling systems of racism requires an approach that includes multiple perspectives.
If DCSC:

1. **Stewards a shared vision** for high-quality intentionally diverse charter schools.
2. **Convenes members** to unearth the promising practices aligned with our shared vision for high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools.
3. **Supports members** in building capacity for implementing and disseminating promising practices.
4. **Cultivates strategic** advocacy to ensure optimal conditions for high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools.

Then, our Membership Coalition will be able to:

1. Engage with a community of schools that implement and share promising practices of high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools.
2. Increase the number of students served by high-quality, intentionally diverse charter schools.
3. Improve the academic, social, and emotional success of a diverse student population.
4. Amplify a collective voice, influencing public policy to create, expand, and sustain the conditions for intentionally diverse schools.

So that students:

1. **Are equipped** with academic excellence, social-emotional intelligence, and intercultural competency to thrive;
2. **Experience a learning environment** that affirms their unique identity;
3. **Experience belonging**, joy, and respect in school; and
4. **Live, learn, and lead** with empathy and understanding in a diverse, interconnected world.
Our Coalition

Our membership currently represents 255 individual schools serving over 100,000 students across 25 states and DC.
Our Member Schools

Academie Lafayette
Academy of the City Charter School
Altura Preparatory School
Amani Public Charter School
Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School
Atlas Public Schools
Aventura Public Schools
Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School
Beehive Science and Technology Academy
Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy
Boston Collegiate Charter School
Bricolage Academy
Brooklyn Urban Garden School (BUGS)
Buffalo Commons Charter School
Capital City Public Charter School
Central Park School for Children
Central Queens Academy Charter School
Charlotte Lab School
Citizens of the World KC
Citizens of the World LA
City Garden Montessori
City Neighbors Foundation
Community Roots Charter School
Compass Charter School
Crossroads Charter Schools
DC International School
Design Tech High School
Detroit Prep
Downtown Denver Expeditionary School
DreamHouse ´Ewa Beach Charter School
DSST Public Schools
E.L. Haynes Public Charter School
East Bay Innovation Academy
Elmwood Village Charter School
Elsie Whitlow Stokes Public Charter School
Epic Academy
Gateway Public Schools
Genesee Community Charter School
Global Preparatory Academy
Great Lakes Academy
Growth Public Schools
Hebrew Charter School Center
Hellenic Classical Charter School
High Tech High Schools
Hoboken Charter School
Homer Plessy Community School
Hynes Charter School
iLearn Schools
Impact Charter School
Inspired Teaching Demonstration School
Integration Charter Schools
International High School of New Orleans
International School of Louisiana
Kairos Academies
Kenner Discovery Health Sciences Academy
Kindle Education Public Charter School
Lafayette Preparatory Academy
Larchmont Charter School
Learning Community Charter School
Lee Montessori Public Charter School
LEEP Dual Language Academy Charter School
Liberty STEAM Charter School
Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle-Orleans
Memphis Street Academy
Milestone Democratic School
Momentum Academy
Montessori for All
Morris Jeff Community School
Multicultural Learning Center
Museum School of Avondale Estates
Nashville Classical Charter School
Nevada Rise Academy
New York French American Charter School
Odyssey Charter School
Our World Neighborhood Charter School
Philadelphia Hebrew Public Charter School
Phoenix International School of the Arts
PRIDE Schools
Prospect Schools
Purdue Polytechnic High School
Rainier Valley Leadership Academy
Rooted School
Social Justice School
Success Academy Charter Schools
Summit Public Schools (CA)
Summit Public Schools (WA)
Susie King Taylor Community School
Tapestry Public Charter School
Tennessee Nature Academy
The Gathering Place
Thrive Community School
TLC Public Charter School
Tulsa School of Arts and Sciences
Two Rivers Public Charter School
Urban Montessori Charter School
Valley Charter Schools
Valor Collegiate Academies
Vida Charter School
Washington Latin Public Charter School
Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School
Watershed Public Charter School
Yu Ming Charter School

Browse our members online
Take Action!

Scan the QR code and subscribe to our newsletter.