

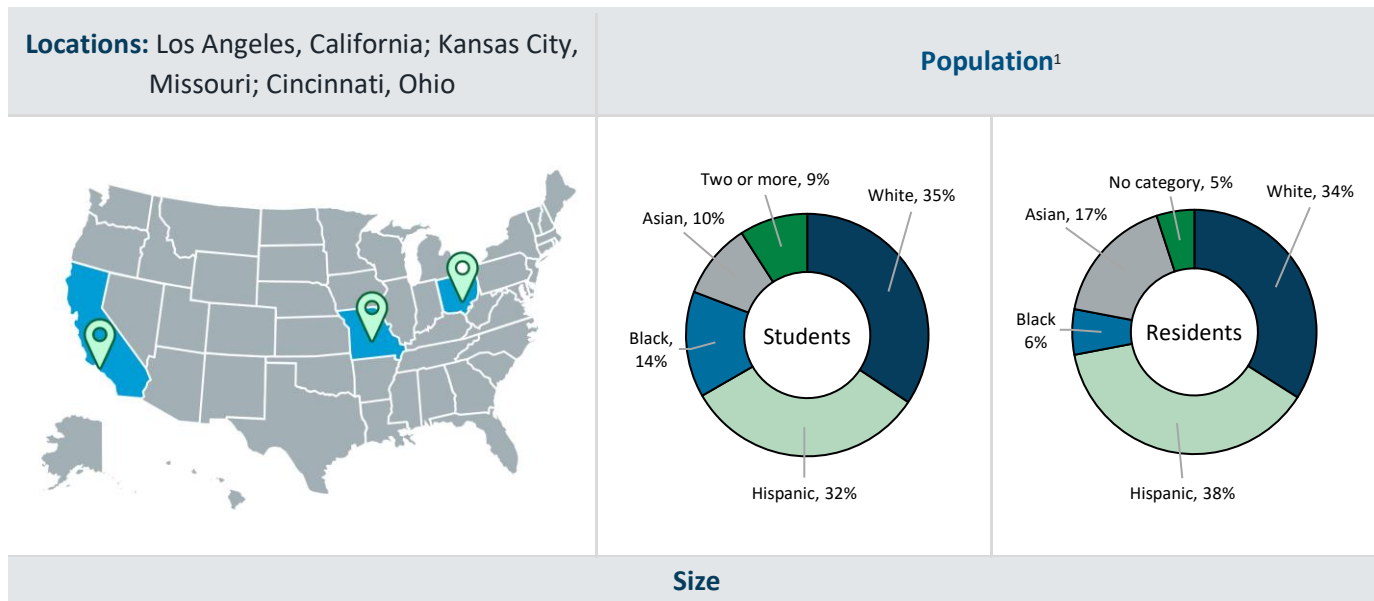
BRIDGES COLLABORATIVE MEMBER PROFILE

Citizens of the World

Charter Schools



Organization type: Charter Management Organization



7 schools in the **Los Angeles region** serving **2,100** students; **1** school in **Kansas City** serving **550** students; **1** school in **Cincinnati** that launched in the 2021–22 school year.

Desegregation/Integration Focus



Citizens of the World Charter Schools (CWCS or CWC Schools) is a national network of charter schools that are “diverse by design,” meaning that each school is intentionally designed through targeted outreach and recruitment strategies to ensure their student population reflects the race/ethnicity and socioeconomic characteristics of the surrounding community.²



CWCS launched its **Leader Institute** in 2019 to develop current and future leaders of diverse-by-design schools, from both CWC Schools and non-CWC schools.



In the Leader Institute, a cohort of fellows work and learn together over the course of 1 year to **develop the key skills needed for leading an integrated school**. Programming focuses on supporting leaders in both social-emotional development and diversity and inclusion dimensions.

¹ The student population statistics are from the 2020-21 Common Core of Data (CCD), administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The resident population statistics are tract-level data from the U.S. Census (2020). The student population statistics include aggregate data from four CWC Schools in the LA region (CWC Hollywood, CWC Mar Vista, CWC Silver Lake, and CWC West Valley) as well as CWC Kansas City, and the resident population statistics include aggregate data from the neighborhoods of those five schools; the resident information for CWC Mar Vista and CWC Silver Lake are based on the location of the elementary campuses. Data from CWC Easy Valley and CWC Cincinnati are not included.

² Visit the CWCS website to learn about their targeted outreach and recruitment process: <http://citizensoftheworld.org/Diverse-Learning-Communities>



Why did Citizens of the World Charter Schools create the Leader Institute?

Inspired by the success of an integrated charter school located in Los Angeles, California, founding members of the Citizens of the World Charter Schools (CWCS or CWC Schools) opened their first school in Hollywood, California, in 2010. This school grew into a national network of schools built on the core belief that “the diversity of our communities, and of the world at large, is a great strength.”³ Modeling this belief, CWCS’s leaders engage in targeted outreach and recruitment to ensure that students and staff reflect the diversity of each CWC School’s surrounding community.

Its Leader Institute makes it possible for CWCS to train current and emerging leaders on how to effectively launch and lead diverse-by-design schools. After almost 10 years of operation, CWCS experienced staff turnover among principals and other school leaders in several of its founding schools while also receiving requests to open new schools across the country. Laura Furlong, chief executive officer of CWCS, reflected on these initial conversations and explained, “*We were looking at how can we cultivate school leaders [who] align with the CWCS’s intentionally diverse model ... trying to meet the needs of our current schools and also developing a pipeline of new leaders [who can] help open up more CWC Schools.*” In response, CWCS began developing the curriculum for its Leader Institute and piloted its first cohort of fellows in 2019. Graduates from the institute have launched seven new diverse-by-design schools to date.



Spotlight: How does the Leader Institute train educators to lead diverse-by-design charter schools?

The Leader Institute is CWCS’s primary mechanism for scaling up its diverse-by-design model. CWCS’s school opening process can take 3–5 years because of the organization’s commitment to building deep community buy-in before starting a new school. Recognizing its own limitations, CWCS launched the Leader Institute to provide current and emerging school leaders, from either CWCS schools or like-minded partner organizations (e.g., New Schools for Alabama), with the tools and skills needed to lead diverse-by-design schools that are student-centered and equity-focused. The Leader Institute participants, known as fellows, include experienced and emerging leaders working in CWCS schools as well as school leaders who are planning to open a new CWC School or a non-CWCS diverse-by-design school.⁴ Fellows complete their training in small cohorts of approximately eight members. After finishing the program, fellows are prepared to successfully lead or launch a diverse-by-design school, whether it be a CWCS or non-CWCS school.

The Leader Institute program occurs over the course of one school year. During the 1-year program, fellows participate in four 2-day convenings as well as book studies, peer check-ins, and capstone projects. Each fellow also meets monthly with an experienced coach who provides specific feedback and resources to help them adapt and apply the diverse-by-design model to their unique school context. For example, some fellows are current CWCS leaders who may be looking to build upon current instructional practices to increase their school’s commitment to whole-child development while other fellows who are planning to launch a new diverse-by-design school may receive coaching

³ Citizen of the World Charter School. (n.d.). Kansas City webpage. <https://www.cwckansascity.org/about.html#/>

⁴ There is no cost for CWCS leaders to participate in the Leader Institute; there is a cost for non-CWCS leaders to participate.

to help them develop a school model that is responsive to the surrounding community's needs. On average, fellows spend five to ten hours per month engaging in coaching or other activities beyond the quarterly convenings.

One Leader Institute graduate remarked, *“As a teacher in a classroom, we look down and we are laser focused on that class, trying to get that growth, trying to get those scores.”* She added, *“The institute widened my lens of thinking outside of the box ... to really zoom out and think big picture about [the] impact of humans. Diversity by design is really strenuous work of [including] all voices.”*



What factors support the Leader Institute's ability to train future leaders to integrate schools?

Designing a leadership curriculum that aligns with CWCS's vision and supports current and new leaders of diverse-by-design schools

The Leader Institute is grounded in four foundational components (i.e., CWCS's "Four Corners") that CWCS believes "any leader requires in order to create, run, and thrive within a student-centered, equity-based school."⁵ These four components are Leadership Foundational Skills, Coalition Building, Personal Development, and the CWCS Model.

According to CWCS, the organization's [graduate disposition framework](#) forms "the backbone of the CWCS learning model – both for students and for adults." The graduate disposition framework includes three categories of skills that CWCS believes diverse-by-design school leaders need to thrive: "self skills", "together skills", and "world skills". Self skills refer to internal qualities and include self-understanding, self-efficacy, critical thinking, and adaptability. Together skills refer to the qualities displayed in relationship with others and include communication, collaboration, cultural competency, and empathy. World skills refer to qualities displayed as individuals engage with the broader world and include systems thinking, global advocacy, and lifelong learning.

A Leader Institute graduate specifically cited the positive effect that two skills from the framework have had on her journey to become a diverse-by-design school leader:

- Lifelong learning: Demonstrates curiosity and the desire to discover new things. Asks complex questions to develop understanding. Has deep and broad content knowledge.
- Cultural competency: Understands one's own identity and story. Can initiate and build constructive relationships with others across lines of difference. Understands issues of privilege and power as well as one's cultural norms and biases. Leads across diverse groups in different contexts using an asset-based lens.

She explained the importance of being a lifelong learner: *“[To] really have a diverse-by-design school, you have to constantly be committed ... all of the normal practices of a school, and why we have [certain] rules ... when you go back and break down those rules and see how those rules are not inclusive to certain populations or leaving out certain families, you have to ask, ‘How are you really being inclusive to all?’”* The fellow specifically described, for example, how she now approaches

⁵ Citizen of the World Charter School. (n.d.). Leader Institute webpage. <http://www.citizensoftheworld.org/Leader-Institute>

decisions about school programs to ensure they are inclusive to all. She said that she now consistently asks, “Are you providing food? Are you charging? Are you providing education programs that the community actually wants?” By focusing on capacity building, the Leader Institute curriculum provides fellows with the opportunity to learn key skills necessary to become a diverse-by-design school leader.

Engaging experts and existing programs that align with the Leader Institute’s mission

CWCS has partnered with a diverse group of facilitators⁶ who provide content expertise aligned with the organization’s mission and an experienced coach who helps each fellow apply learnings to the fellow’s specific context. The facilitators include professors from elite universities and leaders from like-minded organizations focused on addressing issues of equity. Together they develop and deliver curriculum and support institute participants.

The partners work alongside CWCS staff to facilitate in-person and virtual convening sessions and to deliver content aligned with the institute’s mission of preparing fellows to lead diverse-by-design schools. According to a CWCS school leader and Leader Institute graduate, developing these partnerships and having a dedicated coach have been invaluable for maintaining continuity and support for the fellows. Laura Furlong explained, “*We think having consistency in coaching is helpful because that person is able to see trends across all of the school leaders, which helps us to think about how we are developing our curriculum to meet fellows’ needs that arise as well as build upon the strengths of the work.*”



What challenges has the Leader Institute encountered during its first years of implementation?

Differentiating curriculum and supports for participants, based on experience

The Leader Institute presently supports both current and emerging school leaders in mixed-experience cohorts. However, according to an institute graduate, the program could do more to address some of the questions new or emerging school leaders may have about general school operations. CWCS staff also recognize this challenge and are continuing to think about how the institute can better support individuals who are at the beginning of their school leadership journey, beyond the individualized coaching. For example, emerging leaders could be grouped together in a cohort that engages with Leader Institute curricula specifically tailored to their needs, while still interacting with experienced leaders during in-person convenings and other mixed-experience activities.

Balancing Leader Institute activities with school leader responsibilities

According to a Leader Institute graduate, one of the biggest challenges faced by all fellows is being able to prioritize institute activities while also managing their own day-to-day responsibilities, which have expanded for educators in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Laura Furlong

⁶ More information about the facilitators for the 2019-20 cohort can be found here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/lrfea5n5102k5zl/Leader_Institute_Facilitators_Booklet_Final%281%29.pdf?dl=0

explained, “*The role of the school leader has changed dramatically,*” and school leaders have even more on their plates than ever before as they address unprecedented levels of learning loss and social-emotional needs. For exactly these reasons though, Furlong explains, the Leader Institute is more important than ever before: “*It has become even more critical that we have strong, equity-minded leaders who have a strong sense of self and understand how to inspire and lead a team.*”

To address both of these challenges, CWCS leaders continue to revise Leader Institute activities in response to feedback collected from current and past fellows via empathy interviews. CWCS leaders use these interviews to gather feedback on both learning structure and content. CWCS also collects feedback from organizations who send staff to the Leader Institute, such as Opportunity 180, to ensure that fellows emerge with the skills needed to successfully lead diverse-by-design schools.



Lessons learned

- **It is essential to develop a clear vision that can be used to define what it means to be a leader of your organization.** The Leader Institute’s graduate dispositions support the organizational leadership vision by outlining key skills that CWCS school leaders and students should cultivate to be successful.
- **Avoid “reinventing the wheel.”** While designing the institute’s curriculum, CWCS staff identified which topics their own staff had expertise to teach and which topics would benefit from the greater depth of knowledge of outside partners.
- **Gather input from key members of the organization’s community as a means of designing and improving the program.** For example, CWCS staff interviewed fellows from the 2019–20 cohort after they graduated to learn about their experience as a fellow. Those interviews informed curriculum and programmatic adjustments for the 2020–21 cohort.



References

Citizens of the World. (n.d.). *Our schools*. <http://www.citizensoftheworld.org/our-cwc-schools>

Citizens of the World. (n.d.). *Resource material*. <http://citizensoftheworld.org/Resource-Material>

Citizens of the World. (n.d.). *Diverse learning communities*. <http://citizensoftheworld.org/Diverse-Learning-Communities>