

# Teen Learning Community (TLC) Empowers Teaneck Middle School Students through Innovative Community Service Program

By: Aminata (Kendra) Gakou and Charlie Koslowe



Teen Learning Community (TLC) is a new community service program in Teaneck. TLC aims to build bridges within the Teaneck community, offering free, personalized assistance to middle school students in three critical academic areas: mathematics, language arts, and executive function skills. The enrolled students benefit from a broad view of the Teaneck community thanks to more than twenty tutors in public and non-public high schools. The tutors from both diverse backgrounds and various educational experiences generously volunteer their time for this community service and embody the spirit of mentorship. TLC strives to create a supportive network that transcends traditional boundaries. According to Rabbi Daniel Fridman, one of the originators, “This program is a reflection of the deep ties that exist between diverse elements within the broader Teaneck community. We all wish to see the success of our children. In particular, we are deeply appreciative for the early support and shared vision of Councilwoman Karen Orgen and Deputy Mayor Danielle Gee in helping bring this concept to fruition.”

Led by Teaneck High School math teacher, Mrs. Adina Lefkowitz, Teaneck High School junior Aminata Gakou, and The Frisch School senior Charlie Koslowe, dozens of volunteer tutors dedicate their time to this program, not only addressing the academic needs of students but also fostering a sense of community and camaraderie.

The heart of TLC lies in the invaluable contributions of these young adults. It is their leadership, unwavering dedication, and selfless commitment to lifting up their younger peers that lays the foundation for the program’s success. Dennis Klein of the Teaneck Board of Education has encouraged and supported TLC since conception. Klein is passionate about building bridges in the Teaneck community and notes “The program is a reminder of what younger generations are

capable of.” Equipped with a passion for teaching and a deep understanding of their subjects, these high school students are poised to make a profound impact on their proteges. By providing high school students with opportunities to share their knowledge and experiences, TLC hopes to inspire a new generation of confident, motivated learners.

Teaneck's middle school students gain access to a wealth of knowledge and guidance tailored to their unique needs. As Ferial Ibrahim, a TLC tutor attending Teaneck High School remarks, “It opens them [middle schoolers] to the idea that they can ask for help.” Together, they embark on a journey of academic growth, personal development, and mutual inspiration. Students benefit both academically and socially through the building of new habits. “It’s incredible to both have the opportunity to teach and contribute to their [the middle school students’] growth in addition to watching them succeed through collaboration,” says Ella Chalamish, a junior at The Frisch School. This program provides an enduring mark on the educational journey of every student involved, a learning experience that exists beyond the confines of the classroom.

The TLC program offers a safe space for learning, free from the typical pressures of a classroom setting that may hinder students from asking for assistance. Whether it's incorporating a game or affirming a job well done, students feel supported and comfortable at TLC. During the session, both tutors and middle schoolers can grab a slice of pizza or a cold beverage at their leisure. Ferial Ibrahim also shared her thoughts on the atmosphere noting, “Everyone was calm but also cheerful. You felt like you belonged.”

Parents are an integral part of the TLC community and welcome to attend sessions, contribute to session structure, and provide input on topics beneficial to their child’s needs.

The Teen Learning Community's schedule is included below. All sessions take place at the Rodda Center. Public and non-public Teaneck students in grades five through eight are eligible to partake in this influential and impactful program.

Sign your middle schooler up here: <https://form.jotform.com/adinalefkowitz/MSregistration>

**For more information email: [tlcteaneck@gmail.com](mailto:tlcteaneck@gmail.com)**

Program Dates	
<b>October 15<sup>th</sup> - Opening Event Parents, Students, Tutors</b>	
October 24 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> session - Parents join first 15 minutes
November 21 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> session
November 28 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> session
December 5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> session
December 19 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> session
January 9 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> session - Parents join first 15 minutes
January 30 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup> session
February 6 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup> session
<b>February 25<sup>th</sup> - Closing event students, tutors, MS &amp; HS parents</b>	

