



NJDOE News

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Commissioner Hespe Renews Charters of [Ten Schools](#)

Commissioner of Education David Hespe has announced his decision to renew for five years the charters of 10 schools that were among the original group of New Jersey charter schools first approved in February 1997. Commissioner Hespe made his decision after reviewing the schools' overall performance since they opened in September 1997.

State law permits the establishment of charter schools by the Commissioner of Education. The law also gives the Commissioner authority to decide whether to renew the original four-year charter granted to each charter school.

"I congratulate these 10 schools for having successfully pioneered the charter school movement in New Jersey," Commissioner Hespe said. "These schools are models for innovative programs and practices that have served students and their families well.

"By the strength and success of their efforts, these schools deserve to continue to provide exciting alternatives to traditional education that have the potential to change all of our public schools in the years to come."

Charter schools are permitted under a state law enacted in 1996. A charter school is a type of public school that is given greater flexibility in curriculum and instruction. The law establishes charter schools as places where educational innovation with fewer regulations can be carried out for possible use of successful programs and practices in schools throughout New Jersey.

The 10 schools whose charters were renewed today are:

- LEAP Academy Charter School, Camden
- North Star Academy Charter School of Newark
- Robert Treat Academy Charter School, Newark
- Elysian Charter School, Hoboken
- Gateway Charter School, Jersey City
- Jersey City Community Charter School
- Learning Community Charter School, Jersey City
- Soaring Heights Charter School, Jersey City
- Princeton Charter School
- Sussex County Charter School for Technology

Eight of the renewed charter schools are located in urban areas. The schools serve a total of 2,210 students in varied grade configurations ranging from kindergarten to ninth grade. (*See [attached list](#) for specific grade and enrollment information for each school for the next five-year term.*)

Among the strengths of the schools are high levels of student attendance, strong parental involvement, strong academic progress and specialized training for teachers. Performance highlights for each renewed charter school follow:

LEAP Academy: LEAP has an extended school day and a 200-day academic year. The school provides special support for families in the form of a parent training center, health and human services clinic and a law clinic for families that may be experiencing difficulties that affect their children's opportunities to learn.

North Star Academy Charter School of Newark: North Star has an 11-month school year. It has a well-executed and coherent academic program, and strong and extensive school-to-parent communication and participation.

Robert Treat Academy: In a survey of parent satisfaction, 98 percent of the parents gave this school a grade of excellent. Students are meeting or exceeding academic performance goals.

Elysian Charter School of Hoboken: The school has strong and extensive school-to-parent communication and participation, and well-executed interventions with students who are at-risk.

Gateway Charter School: The school has adopted the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship program of study, which provides curriculum encouraging the development of workplace strategies and guidance for the creation of student-run businesses. The school incorporates a business-based curriculum in all academic study areas.

Jersey City Community Charter School: Reading assessments administered in the fall and spring of the 1999-2000 show academic improvement in grades one and two. Student and faculty attendance exceed 94 percent.

Learning Community Charter School: Parents indicate high satisfaction with the school, including helping children to build their self-confidence, creating an atmosphere of teamwork among teachers, students and parents, and nurturing the development of the whole child.

Soaring Heights Charter School: This school was commended for a well-executed alignment among curriculum goals, instruction and assessment and a well-executed plan to intervene with students who are at-risk.

Princeton Charter School: The school offers competitive opportunities for students in national challenges. It also emphasizes the development of good writing skills and the use of extensive class time developing writing organization.

Sussex County Charter School for Technology: The school provides its students with a technical program fully integrated into the academic subjects of the school. Student and faculty attendance exceed 95 percent.

In addition to the 10 charters renewed, the Commissioner placed two of the original schools on probationary status to allow for the development and implementation of a remedial plan to improve the schools' academic programs and increase student achievement results. The schools are the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Academy in Ewing and the Trenton Community Charter School in Trenton.

Commissioner Hespe noted that he is responsible for carefully scrutinizing all charter schools and holding them to high standards. The two schools have until February 16 to submit remedial plans and to demonstrate how they will fully implement the plans.

Currently, New Jersey's 54 charter schools enroll 10,538 students from more than 220 communities in New Jersey. In September 2001, 68 charter schools are scheduled to open their doors to 15,945 students.

For more information about charter schools, visit the Department of Education website:

www.state.nj.us/education