



NJDOE News

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For Release: April 29, 2005

Charter Schools Week -- 2005 Student Performers, Speakers Featured in Week-long Celebration

New Jersey is joining other states from throughout the nation in observing National Charter Schools Week, which runs from May 2-6. The New Jersey Department of Education will present the state's newest charter schools to the State Board of Education on May 4. In addition, the department will host its third annual celebration luncheon on May 5, at which student performers will entertain attendees and three people will receive service awards.

"We know from our experience that charter schools create new opportunities for students and their families to succeed," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "For many of our students, charter schools represent a 'fresh start' in their school careers and create a choice for their future."

The theme for this year's National Charter Schools Week is *Nurture, Teach and Inspire*. More than 3,400 charter schools enroll nearly one million students nationally. New Jersey's 49 charter schools currently serve approximately 14,000 students. Four additional charter schools are scheduled to open in September 2005, and two schools are scheduled to open in September 2006.

New Jersey's two newest charter schools - Freedom Academy Charter School in Camden, Camden County and Ridge and Valley Charter School in Blairstown, Warren County, will be presented at the regular monthly meeting of the State Board of Education on Wednesday, May 4.

The week's activities will culminate on May 5 with a celebration luncheon at the Ramada Inn, East Windsor. Student performers from five charter schools will entertain the attendees and three people will be receive service awards from the Department of Education.

Performing will be a dance troupe from Englewood on the Palisades Charter School, step teams from the Hope Academy Charter School, Asbury Park, and the Jersey City Golden Door Charter School, and Band 2010 from the TEAM Academy Charter School, Newark. In addition, a student from the Hoboken Charter School will sing the *Star-Spangled Banner*.

Student speakers from chARTer Tech High School for Performing Arts, Camden Academy Charter High School and LEAP Academy University Charter School will present their experiences as charter school students and discuss their future plans.

Three individuals will receive Distinguished Service Awards from the New Jersey Department of Education for the significant roles they play in the charter school movement at the state and national levels. The awards will be presented to, Mary Jo L. Kapalko, president of the New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association; Heather Ngoma, director of the Charter School Resource Center; and Melanie Schulz, executive director of the Joint Committee on Public Schools.

A charter school is a public school, operated under a charter granted by the Commissioner of Education, independent of the district board of education and managed by a board of trustees.

Charter school legislation was passed to give choice to all parents for their children's education. The intent of the legislation is to:

- Improve student learning and achievement;
- Increase the availability of choice to parents and students when selecting a learning environment;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods;
- Establish a new system of accountability for schools;
- Make the school the unit for educational improvement; and
- Establish new professional opportunities for teachers.

A list of New Jersey's approved charter schools is available from this link:

<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/chartsch/allcharters.shtml>