



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:

Richard Vespucci
Kathryn Forsyth, Director
609-292-1126

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Commissioner Davy Approves Applications for Six New Charter Schools

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy today announced her approval of six new applications for prospective charter schools. Three of the schools have scheduled September 2007 openings, and three have opted to take a planning year and open in 2008.

Scheduled to open this September are: **Community Charter School of Paterson** in Paterson, Passaic County; **Mercer Arts Charter High School**, serving students in six communities in Mercer County; and **Pride Academy**, serving three communities in Essex County.

Applications approved for schools opening in 2008 are: **The Burch Charter School of Excellence** in Irvington, Essex County; **Camden's Pride Charter School** in Camden, Camden County; and **Capital Preparatory Charter High School**, serving two communities in Mercer County.

"I congratulate this year's successful applicants," Commissioner Davy said. "They have completed a rigorous initial phase covering critical aspects of their proposed academic program, fiscal operations and governance. We wish them well as they roll up their sleeves to transform their ideas into schools that will provide choice for students and their families in the communities they intend to serve."

A charter school is a type of public school that is given greater flexibility in curriculum and instruction. New Jersey's charter school law establishes charter schools as laboratories of innovation in education, where new practices can be developed and considered for implementation in schools throughout the state. Currently, nearly 16,000 students are enrolled in New Jersey's 53 operating charter schools.

The six charter school applications approved today were among 30 applications received by the Department of Education in July. Unsuccessful applicants are invited to reapply in the next round of the selection process. They may also request a meeting with staff from the Office of Vocational-Technical, Career and Innovative Programs to discuss the applications before they reapply.

Community Charter School of Paterson will enroll a maximum of 400 students in grades K-3, with a four-year maximum enrollment of 500 students in grades K-4. The school's intended focus will include personalization and individualized instruction, hands-on and project based learning, character education and community connection. Sense of community will be the central theme of the school, in which students, families and staff will engage in programs and activities that will connect them closely to their school community and to the larger Paterson community.

Mercer Arts Charter High School has announced its intention to serve students from Princeton, Lawrence Township, Hopewell Valley, West Windsor-Plainsboro, Trenton, and Ewing. It will open with a maximum enrollment of 300 students in grades 9 and 10, with a four-year projected maximum enrollment of 600 students in grades 9-12. The school's mission is to emphasize equally the arts and academics in three "houses" - music performance, theatrical and dance performance, and visual arts production.

Pride Academy Charter School will serve a maximum enrollment of 240 students from East Orange, Newark, and Orange in grades 5-8. The school's mission is to help students achieve success through a curriculum rooted in the values of peace, respect, integrity, determination and empathy. Key components of the school will include a focus on higher order thinking skills, a dedication to professional growth and respect for the interconnectedness of community, in which students will be challenged to investigate and respond to community issues such as health, violence, poverty and education.

These three schools are expected to join three additional prospective charter schools that were approved in 2006 and are currently in a planning year. Those schools are: **Bergen Arts and Science Charter School**, Hackensack, Garfield and Lodi, Bergen County; **Adelaide L. Sanford Charter School**, Newark, Essex County; and **Foundation Academy Charter School**, Trenton, Mercer County.

Beginning in September 2008, the **Burch Charter School of Excellence** is expected to open with a maximum enrollment of 108 students in kindergarten and first grade. The prospective school's fourth year maximum enrollment will be 270 students in grades K-4. The school's mission is to help its students become lifelong learners and effective contributors to society. Many of the school's activities will stress the importance of the community and the need to address the challenges of the city.

Camden's Pride Charter School is expected to open in September 2008 with a maximum enrollment of 84 students in kindergarten and the first grade, with a four-year projection of serving a maximum number of 210 students in grades K-4. The school is planning a

special academic focus on literacy, mathematics and technology, and will operate within a children's museum environment, allowing students more opportunities to learn through play, experimentation and creation.

Also taking a planning year and scheduled to open in September 2008 will be the **Capital Preparatory Charter School**, which is expected to serve secondary school students from Ewing and Trenton. The school will have a first-year maximum enrollment of 200 students in grades 9 and 10 and a four-year maximum enrollment of 400 students in grades 9-12. The school will be dedicated to preparing students for educational experiences beyond high school, and will feature a longer school day and school year.

Charter schools were established under a state law enacted in 1996 to expand public school choice and encourage school reform. For more information about charter schools in New Jersey, visit the Department of Education's Web-site at:

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