



Department of Education Continues Aggressive Oversight of Charter Schools to Ensure Students are Getting Results

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ – Continuing the Christie Administration’s commitment to aggressively oversee charter schools operating throughout the state, the Department of Education today announced the renewal of 16 existing charter schools for additional 5 year charter terms and the closure of 2 charters that have chronically failed to produce acceptable results for their students. Under the Christie Administration, the Department of Education has put a renewed focus and commitment on ensuring that the state’s charter schools are of the highest quality and held to high standards of accountability, including swiftly addressing low-performing schools through corrective and remedial actions and closing those that are not effective.

“We are deeply committed to making sure that all children have a high-quality school option available to them, and the expansion of high-performing charter schools is a critical component of that effort,” said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. “However, a critical part of our oversight efforts to ensure students are being served at the level they deserve is enforcing accountability. We can and must continue to be impatient and hold all schools to account for results. Under this Administration, these efforts are being taken seriously and given the proper resources to be effective.”

Under the leadership of Governor Christie and Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf, the Department of Education has greatly expanded and improved its Office of Charter Schools – strengthening the charter application process, the rigor and transparency of performance contracts with charter schools, and putting a focus on oversight and accountability for authorized charters. Under the Christie Administration, the Department has strengthened charter operations by:

- Working with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, the nation’s leading support organization for authorizers, to ensure that its charter school policies and practices are as strong as possible;
- Expanding the Office of Charter Schools to 10 employees, to ensure staffing levels meet school oversight and monitoring needs and to address the understaffing issues under the Corzine Administration when the office had a low of only 5 employees;
- Developing new charter agreements with all new approved applicants and successful renewal schools to set forth common terms and conditions for operating charter schools in New Jersey and containing school-specific accountability plans for achievement; and
- Following a careful and stringent three-stage review and approval process for new charter school applicants to evaluate the quality of the proposed educational program, the capacity of the founding team to implement that program, and the need for the proposed school in the community.

“According to data over the past several years, charter schools are, on average, outperforming other district options for students in high-need communities. But the basic promise of charter schools is that they gain increased autonomy in exchange for increased accountability,” said Acting Commissioner Cerf. “We will continue to be impatient when any school – charter or district – does not provide its students with a high quality education.”

In addition to the 80 charter schools open this year, there are an additional 26 new charter schools eligible to open in September, pending approval during the Department’s readiness review. In New Jersey, approved charter schools open with an initial 4 year term.

The Department conducts annual reviews of each charter school, and completes an extensive renewal review before the end of a charter’s term. Renewal decisions are based on a number of factors, including: demonstrated student achievement, fiscal and organizational viability, and capacity of school leadership and the board of trustees to sustain that progress in the coming charter term.

In evaluating student achievement, the Department looks at trend lines of a school’s performance, including:

- Proficiency rates on state-wide assessments
- Mean scale score on state-wide assessments
- School-wide growth over time on state-wide assessments
- Comparisons to the state average
- Comparisons to the charter school’s host district
- Comparison to demographically similar charter and traditional schools
- Graduation/drop-out rate
- Student retention rate
- Student progress as measured using student growth percentiles (when data is available)

In addition, the Department evaluates the school’s recruitment and enrollment processes, to ensure that the school is accessible to all students, actively targeting the highest-need student body, and that the school does not have any

screening criteria that would discourage any qualified student from attending the school. A school's enrollment policy is considered when awarding charter renewals.

In each of the two non-renewed schools, the charter schools were performing in the bottom 5% of schools in the state for each of the past three years and are largely underperforming their home districts. In addition, the schools each had operational or fiscal issues and had demonstrated leadership capacity concerns. The schools are: Emily Fisher Charter School, Trenton and PleasanTech Charter School, Pleasantville. Two other schools were placed on 90 day probation and a renewal decision will be made at the end of that period. Classical Academy Charter School in Clifton was placed on probation for operational deficiencies, and Paul Robeson Charter School of the Humanities in Trenton was placed on probation for operation and academic deficiencies.

Below is a list of charter schools that received a 5 year renewal today:

County	District	School
Bergen	Englewood City	Englewood on the Palisades Charter School
Bergen	Teaneck	Teaneck Community Charter School
Camden	Camden City	Camden's Pride Charter School
Camden	Camden City	Camden's Promise Charter School
Essex	East Orange	East Orange Community Charter School
Essex	East Orange	Pride Academy Charter School
Essex	Irvington Township	Burch Charter School of Excellence
Hudson	Hoboken	Hoboken Charter School
Hudson	Jersey City	Jersey City Golden Door
Mercer	Trenton	International Charter School Trenton
Middlesex	New Brunswick	Greater Brunswick Charter School
Monmouth	Lake Como	Academy Charter High School
Monmouth	Red Bank	The Red Bank Charter School
Morris	Morris School District	Unity Charter School
Passaic	Paterson	Community Charter School of Paterson
Passaic	Paterson	Paterson Charter School for Science and Tech

After the initial 4 year term, a charter school can be renewed for additional terms in 5 year increments. Since 1995, when the first charter began operating in New Jersey, 16 charter schools have been closed by the Department of Education, and 8 others have surrendered their charters and have closed.