

Christie Administration Approves Two Charter Applications, Including the First Charter Conversion Under New Administration Reform

Along With 13 Previously-Approved Charter Schools and Additional Schools To Be Approved In the Fall Expedited Approval Round, These Schools Will Be Eligible To Open In September 2013 Pending Final Approval From the Commissioner

For Immediate Release

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Date: October 1, 2012

Trenton, NJ - Continuing its commitment to increasing the number of high-quality school options for underserved students, the Christie Administration today approved two charter applications during its September approval round - International Academy of Camden Charter School (Camden) and Phillip's Academy Charter School (Newark, East Orange, Irvington). Phillip's Academy Charter School is the first school to be approved under the recently enacted charter conversion law, N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-4.1, approved by Governor Christie in November 2011. That law allows for the conversion of high-performing private schools located in failing school districts into charter schools. These schools will join 13 applications approved in prior application cycles that are currently in a planning year, along with additional applications to be approved in February 2013, as eligible to open in September 2013.

In order for any of these schools to open, they must first complete a "preparedness review," to ensure they have the academic, operational components, and capacity to successfully meet the needs of children through a successful academic programs, financial viability, equitability, and organization soundness. After a review of the applicants' submission of this information in June of 2013, the Commissioner will render a final approval decision in July for charters to open their doors in September.

"We are deeply committed to ensuring that every student in New Jersey has access to a high-quality public school that is a good fit for them, and we strongly support charter schools as one public school option for underserved students," said Commissioner Chris Cerf. "By holding a high bar for any new school we approve, we are following through on our commitment to ensuring that we not only provide options for students, but that we provide high-quality options for students."

Over the past two years, the Department has taken significant steps towards improving its charter authorizer responsibilities, which include both approving only high-quality new school applications as well as holding existing charter schools accountable for results. In partnership with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA), the Department has strengthened its new school approval process and aligned it with national best practices. This includes a multi-stage review that consists of an in-person interview, a thorough review of both the school plan and capacity to implement that plan, the demonstrated need for the school in the proposed community, and the solicitation of input from the public.

To ensure that the quality of applications is strong, the Department's Charter Schools Office has invested in recruiting high-performing charter operators from across the country to expand into New Jersey, encouraging charter operators in New Jersey with a strong track record to grow, and conducting a needs analysis to identify other areas of the state where charter schools could offer choice in underserved communities.

Over the last two years, this collective work has resulted in the Department opening 18 new charter schools, closing 5 schools for poor academic performance or organizational and fiscal issues, and placing another 13 schools on probation.

Under the charter conversion law, all currently enrolled students in an approved conversion school shall be eligible to continue in the school after the conversion. As with any public school, the converted charter school must prohibit religious instruction, events, and activities that promote religious views. The school cannot display any religious symbols, nor can the school name contain any religious references.

The approved charter applications are:

Name	Districts	Grades served (at scale)	Enrollment (at scale)
International	Camden	K-6	698

Academy of Camden Charter School			
Philip's Academy Charter School	Newark, East Orange, Irvington	K-8	378