



NJDOE News

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Department of Education Receives 45 Charter School Applications

The Department of Education today announced its receipt of 45 new applications for charter schools in New Jersey. The applications will now undergo a rigorous review, which will include scrutiny by department staff and input from local boards of education and superintendents of the state-operated school districts. The process will culminate on or about January 15, 2000, when the Commissioner will announce which charters he will approve from this round of applicants.

"I am pleased that New Jersey's charter school program continues to attract an increasing number of applicants," said Governor Christie Whitman. "I strongly believe that parents should be able to choose the most appropriate educational program for their children. Charter schools offer the opportunity to provide such choice."

"I look forward to having my first opportunity to review these applications," said Commissioner of Education David Hespe. "Charter schools, which are part of our public school system, are intended to be places where innovation can flourish. When the Legislature adopted the law that authorized the creation of charter schools in 1995, it envisioned them as places where novel ideas in education can be tested, refined and perhaps, expanded to use statewide.

"In my review of these applications, I will be seeking candidates who show the greatest promise in fulfilling this vision," Commissioner Hespe said.

The 45 applicants announced today are 10 more than applied last year and represent the greatest total of candidates in any single year.

Charter school teams from the Department of Education will immediately begin to review the applications submitted. In addition, the applications will be reviewed by local boards of education that would be affected by the prospective charter schools, as well as by the state superintendents in affected state-operated school districts. Recommendations from the districts must be submitted to the Commissioner within 60 days of receipt of the applications.

The Department of Education may request subsequent information from the applicants if it feels such information is necessary to complete its review. In such instances, the local districts will have 30 days to submit their comments on the addenda.

Forty-nine charter schools will be serving nearly 10,000 students during the 1999-00 school year. Five additional charter schools have been approved for operation but have chosen to open in the 2000-01 school year. The Commissioner of Education has the authority to grant a charter for a four-year period and to renew initial charters for a five-year period.