



NJDOE News

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Granville Charter School Trustees Relinquish Charter, Effective June 30; D.O.E. Makes Students and Their Families Top Priority in Transition

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced that the Granville Charter School has relinquished its charter, effective June 30, 2004. The Board of Trustees of Granville Charter School decided on March 19 to relinquish control of the 530-student, Trenton-based school after weighing its options in the wake of concerns expressed by the state about the school's fiscal health, as well as concerns about declining enrollment and its impact on school programs.

State officials informed the school on March 2 that it had 45 days to significantly address the concerns raised, or to prepare to relinquish control of the school at the conclusion of the current school year. The department officially received notice of the board's action late yesterday.

The Department of Education is now working closely with the Granville Board of Trustees, the Trenton Public Schools and the school community to ensure a smooth transition, as Granville students and their families prepare to decide on where their children will go to school in 2004-05.

"We accept the decision of the Granville Board of Trustees with sadness and with the understanding that this difficult decision was made in the best interest of its students," said Commissioner Librera. "William Granville and the co-founders of the Granville Charter School have dedicated their time and resources to reach out to all students in Trenton to give them maximum opportunities and choices for success.

"The business of running a charter school is a complex and difficult endeavor," Commissioner Librera continued. "I commend Granville Charter School for its efforts over the last six years and appreciate the decision by the trustees to act responsibly to assure that every student at the school has the opportunity to continue his or her quest for a high-quality education."

Alex Allen, president of the Granville Charter School Board of Trustees, said, "It was a hard decision for us to relinquish the charter, but in the long run we realized that it was the best decision for the students and families involved. We are asking for the Granville community to stick together as we work with the Trenton district toward trying to keep the students and staff together at the current site.

Dr. Lytle is working with us to see what we need to do to make that happen, Allen continued. I want to stress that the staff, students and families are wonderful and have performed extremely well and achieved tremendous results as a cooperative learning community. Unfortunately, it is mainly the fiscal concerns that have brought about this decision to give up the charter."

Staff from the Department of Education's Office of Innovative Programs and Schools have been in contact with the Trenton Public Schools to ensure a smooth transition for Granville students who will be returning to the public schools. The Trenton Public School District has pledged its cooperation and interest in participating in a transition that will create a minimum amount of disruption.

"The Trenton Public Schools are working closely with the Granville Charter School Board, parents, and staff to make this transition as smooth as possible," said Dr. James Lytle, superintendent of the Trenton Public Schools. "We recognize that the Granville students are Trenton children and that we want them to be as well served as all of our students."

Commissioner Librera commended Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer for his interest and concern for students and families that make up the Granville Charter School community. "Mayor Palmer played an important role in this process by ensuring that all entities responsible for the school and for the needs of its students kept each other informed of the process with timely and accurate information," Dr. Librera said.

"I recognize that we have a lot of work ahead because of all the obstacles, but we can overcome them with teamwork and dedication," said Mayor Palmer. "I am very appreciative of the concern that already has been shown by our parents, the Trenton Board of Education, and Commissioner Librera and his staff.

"As mayor, I will continue to work with all of the parties as we join forces to ensure that the best opportunities exist for our children," Palmer continued. It is important that Trenton parents have as many options as possible. We need to look at what is best, not just for now, but for the long run, and to consider the full set of options, including magnet and charter schools."

The Granville Charter School was first approved in 1998 as a school serving 500 students in grades K-5. Over the next two years, the school expanded to serve students in the middle and high school grades. The three separate schools consolidated into the Granville Charter School in 2001, serving 1,400 students in grades K-12.

In June 2003, Granville Charter School lost the lease of one of its two sites from Edison Schools. As a result, the Department of Education approved plans for a K-9 school serving a maximum of 600 students at its remaining site. Plans to restore additional grade levels after the current school year were contingent on the school demonstrating adequate fiscal and programmatic capacity.

Since September 2003, the Department of Education has visited the school several times. The visits have resulted in requests for the school to address concerns regarding attendance and recordkeeping procedures, student health and safety, student discipline, classroom management, governance, staff certification, student assessment and delivery of instruction.

Meanwhile, enrollment of the school has gradually declined during the current school year. In addition, the school's annual audit and other fiscal documentation indicate that the school is operating at a deficit.

"We have never doubted the interest expressed by Granville Charter School's founding members to provide their students with a solid education, as they have struggled to carry out their mission," said Commissioner Librera. "Despite these good intentions, however, we agree that it is now in the best interest of the students and all parties concerned to cease operations of the school as it now exists."

Charter schools are public schools operated under a charter granted by the Commissioner of Education. Each charter school is independent of the district board of education and is managed by a board of trustees. They have the flexibility to experiment with innovative strategies and techniques in order to improve student achievement.

Charter schools are held accountable for student performance and for meeting objectives delineated in their charters. Founded by parents, teachers, and/or community leaders, charter schools offer a viable model for building public schools that encourage parental involvement in determining the educational needs of children.

New Jersey currently has 48 operating charter schools that enroll approximately 14,000 students. An additional five charter schools are scheduled to open in September 2004 and one school is scheduled to open in September 2005.