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## NJDOE News

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### **Commissioner Librera Approves Applications for [Five New Charter Schools](#); Announces Five-Year Renewals for Three Additional Charter Schools**

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today announced that he has approved the applications of five new charter schools. The successful applicants are:

- o Central Jersey Arts Charter School, Plainfield, Union County;
- o Ecole de la Mer: French Immersion Charter School of New Jersey, Upper Township, Cape May County;
- o Environment Community Opportunity Charter School (ECO Charter School), Camden City, Camden County;
- o Union County TEAMS (Technology, Engineering, Architecture, Math & Science) Charter School, Plainfield, Union County; and
- o University Heights Charter School, Newark, Essex County

Three schools have indicated that they intend to welcome their first students in September 2005. Two schools were approved by the Commissioner with the understanding that they would open in September 2006, upon successful completion of a year of planning.

Commissioner Librera also announced that he has renewed for five years the charters of the following three charter schools: Camden Academy Charter High School in Camden, Camden County; Hope Academy Charter School in Asbury Park, Monmouth County; and Lady Liberty Academy Charter School in Newark, Essex County.

"Charter schools play an important role by providing school choice for many New Jersey children and their families," said Acting Gov. Richard J. Codey. "I congratulate the founding members of our newest charter schools and wish them success as they prepare for their first year."

"Our overall experience with charter schools has been quite positive," said Commissioner Librera. "Over the years, many students have benefited from the opportunities offered by charter schools to give them an optional path for success."

"We will continue to concentrate our efforts at the state level to ensure that our charter schools provide all students with a high quality education," the Commissioner said.

The five applications approved were among 16 applications received by the Department of Education in July in the latest round of the charter school selection process. Four applications were disqualified because their applications were incomplete. The remaining 12 were subjected to an extensive review. Each application consists of a detailed fiscal plan and a program plan, as well as information about the founding members of the school.

The following three schools are scheduled to open in September 2005:

**Ecole de la Mer:** French Immersion Charter School of New Jersey, will be the first school in New Jersey to offer a full immersion second language program when it opens. The school is scheduled to open in September 2005 with an enrollment of 105 students in grades kindergarten through four, with a four-year projected enrollment of 195 students in grades K-7.

**The Environment Community Opportunity Charter School** (ECO Charter School) is scheduled to open in September 2005 with an enrollment of 185 students in grades K-2; with a four-year projected enrollment of 345 students in grades K-4. The school will emphasize the theme of environmental studies in the Camden community.

**Union County TEAMS** (Technology, Engineering, Architecture, Math & Science Charter School) is scheduled to open in September 2005 with an enrollment of 180 students in grades K-8. The school's founders project serving the same number of students for the same grades, four years from now. As its name indicates, the school will enhance its academic program by emphasizing technology, engineering, architecture, math and science

instruction across all subject areas.

The following two schools are scheduled to open in September 2006, pending successful completion of a planning year:

**Central Jersey Arts Charter School**, Plainfield, Union County is scheduled to open in September 2006 with an enrollment of 248 students in grades K-5. The school projects an enrollment of 383 students in grades K-8 for its fourth year of operation.

**University Heights Charter School**, Newark, Essex County, is scheduled to open in September 2006 with an enrollment of 120 students in kindergarten and first grade. The school projects an enrollment of 240 students in grades K-5 for its fourth year of operation.

Unsuccessful applicants are invited to reapply in the next round of the selection process. New applications will be available in April 2005 and must be submitted to the Department of Education by July 15. Unsuccessful applicants may request a meeting with staff from the Office of Vocational-Technical, Career and Innovative Programs to discuss the applications prior to reapplying.

Charter schools were established under a state law enacted in 1996 to expand public school choice and encourage school reform. A charter school is a type of public school that is given greater flexibility in curriculum and instruction. The law establishes charter schools as laboratories of educational innovation where new practices can be developed and implemented in schools throughout New Jersey. Currently, 50 charter schools in New Jersey serve a combined enrollment of approximately 14,000 students.

### **Charters Renewed**

Commissioner Librera praised the trustees and staff of the Camden Academy Charter High School, Hope Academy Charter School, and Lady Liberty Academy Charter School for their successful completion of a rigorous renewal process that led to his granting of a five-year renewal for all three schools.

"I congratulate these schools on their accomplishments and support the efforts they are implementing to strengthen academic progress and student success," the Commissioner said. "These schools have earned the privilege of having their charters renewed based on academic progress, desire to improve their operations in all areas and the commitment exhibited by the schools' administrations and boards."

State law allows initial charters to be granted for four years. Two intensive monitoring reviews are conducted during the first contract period: a program review in year two of the charter and a second review during year four in which the Commissioner is charged with determining whether the initial four-year charter should be renewed for another five years. The year four review requires a formal application by the school that details its accomplishments during the first three years of operation as well as its plans for the next five years. It also provides for an intensive review of the school's educational and fiscal activities, including day-long site visits conducted by Department of Education staff.

Attached is a list of the successful charter school applicants.