



## NJDOE News

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### **Three New Charter Schools Open**

Three new charter schools have opened their doors to New Jersey students for the first time this year. Two of the schools – D.U.E. Season Charter School and the Environment Community Opportunity (ECO) Charter School – are located in Camden. The third, Union County TEAMS Charter School, is in Plainfield.

"Charter schools continue to provide students with distinctive pathways to success," said Acting Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy. "Thousands of New Jersey children and their families have benefited from the choice and distinctive programming provided by our charter schools."

Commissioner Davy noted that the state's role in charter schools is to identify and encourage charter school applicants that show the most promise, and then to remain vigilant to ensure that the schools are operating effectively and in the best interest of their students.

The new openings have increased the total number of operating charter schools in New Jersey to 51. Applications for two additional charter schools have been approved for schools that are scheduled to open in the fall of 2006. New Jersey's charter schools currently enroll approximately 15,000 students in all grades.

**D.U.E. Season Charter School** has opened with an initial enrollment in grades K, 1, 2 and 5. The school is permitted under its charter to serve a maximum of 215 students. In four years, the D.U.E. Season Charter School projects a maximum enrollment of 500 students in grades K-8. The school's acronym stands for Distinctions in Urban Education. The school will use established best practices in classroom instruction, especially in early literacy. It has small class sizes and will develop individual learning plans for all students.

**The Environment Community Opportunity Charter School**, also known as the ECO Charter School, currently serves students in grades K-2 with a maximum enrollment of 185 students. The school's charter calls for serving grades K-4 in four years, with a maximum enrollment of 345 students. Students will be exposed to guiding philosophies that education takes place in a variety of environments beyond the traditional classroom. The school combines the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards with an instructional approach guided by using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Improving Students Learning (EIC) Framework. This approach strongly encourages students to learn from community-based activities and experiences.

**The Union County Technology, Engineering, Architecture, Math and Science (TEAMS) Charter School** serves students in grades K-8, with a maximum enrollment of 180 students. Students are learning within the school's special focus of math, science and technology in hands-on experiences with professionals in the fields of architecture, engineering and construction. The school's motto is: "We are a Community of Builders."

A charter school is a public school funded by taxpayers but operating independently of the district board of education under a charter granted by the Commissioner of Education. New Jersey's first charter schools opened in 1997. Charters are initially approved four years. Each charter school is managed by a board of trustees deemed to be public agents authorize by the State Board of Education.

New Jersey's charter schools law allows for a renewal of the original charter for an additional five years. The renewal process involves a comprehensive review of the school, including an on-site visit.

For more information about charter schools in New Jersey, visit the charter school page on the Department of Education's Web-site:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/chartsch/>