



Christie Administration Announces the Approval of Two New Charter Schools

For Immediate Release

Contact: Mike Yaple
Rich Vespucci
609-292-1126

Date: February 21, 2014

Trenton, NJ – Continuing the Christie Administration's commitment to ensure high-quality school options for New Jersey students, the Department of Education today approved two additional charter applications during the February approval round. The two schools include Excellence Charter School in Camden and Link Community Charter School in Newark.

Both schools will be eligible to open in the fall of 2014, pending final charter approval from the Department.

This round of charter school applications provides an expedited process for applicants with proven track record of success that are seeking to replicate an existing program or seeking a conversion from a private school to a charter. There were six applicants submitting proposals for this round.

In order for the two successful applicants to be granted a final charter, they must first complete a "preparedness review" to ensure they have the academic, operational, leadership and organizational capacity to successfully meet the needs of children through high quality academic programs, financial viability, equitability, and organization soundness. After a review of the applicants' submission of this information in June, the Commissioner will render a final decision on July 15, with the charters to begin operation in September 2014.

Under the Christie Administration, a total of 50 schools have been approved for a charter, with 31 schools receiving final approval to open their doors. During this time, another 10 charters have been closed due to poor academic performance or organizational and fiscal issues. There are currently 87 charter schools operating in New Jersey.

"The number of high quality charter schools is one example of how we have been expanding public school options for families throughout New Jersey," said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "However, it should be noted that our focus is on providing families in underserved communities with *high quality* charter schools that meet the accountability standards set in our approval process. We believe the schools approved today will provide students with excellent educational opportunities."

Under the Christie Administration, the Department has taken significant steps to improve its charter-approval responsibilities, including the approval of only high-quality new school applications as well as holding existing charter schools accountable for results. Moreover, the Department partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to strengthen its new-school approval process and align it with national best practices. This process includes a multi-stage review that consists of in-person interviews; a thorough review of school plans and the capacity to implement those plans; a requirement for applicants to demonstrate the need for the school in the community; and obtaining public input.

The approved charter applications include:

Name	District	Grades served (at scale)	Enrollment (at scale)
Excellence Charter School	Camden	K-12	1,944
Link Community Charter	Newark	5-8	288