



State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

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*Governor*

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
*Lt. Governor*

LAMONT O. REPOLLET, ED.D.  
*Commissioner*

January 16, 2020

Mr. James Brewer  
Principal  
Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School  
509 Bramhall Avenue  
Jersey City, New Jersey 07304

Dear Mr. Brewer:

The New Jersey Department of Education has completed a review of funds received and disbursed from one or more federal programs by the Board of Education. The funding sources reviewed include titled programs for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The review covered the period July 1, 2019 through October 31, 2019. The resulting report is enclosed. Please provide a copy of the report to each board member. All issued Federal Monitoring Reports will be posted on the department's website at <https://www.nj.gov/education/compliance/monitor/collaborative/>.

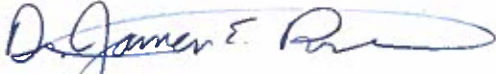
Utilizing the process outlined in the attached "Procedures for LEA/Agency Response, Corrective Action Plan and Appeal Process," Board of Education is required, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6 to publicly review and discuss the findings in the report at a public board meeting no later than 30 days after receipt of the report. Within 30 days of the public meeting, the board must adopt a resolution certifying that the findings were discussed in a public meeting and approving a corrective action plan which addresses the issues raised in the undisputed findings and/or an appeal of any findings in dispute. A copy of the resolution and the approved corrective action plan and/or appeal must be sent to this office within 10 days of adoption by the board. Direct your response to my attention.

If you would like to pursue an appeal further than the initial review, you have the right to file an appeal to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3-1. et seq. Papers are to be submitted to the following address: Commissioner of Education, c/o Director of Office of Controversies and Disputes, New Jersey State Department of Education, 100 Riverview Plaza, Trenton, NJ 08625.

Also, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6(c), you must post the findings of the report and the board's corrective action plan on your district's website.

By copy of this report, your auditor is requested to comment on all areas of noncompliance and recommendations in the next certified audit submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education. If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hoffmann at (609) 376-3593.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jamar E. Purnsley  
Director, Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

Enclosures

c: Lamont O. Repollet, Ed. D.  
AbdulSaleem Hasan  
Kathleen Ehling  
Peggy McDonald  
Julie Bunt  
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Stephen M. Eells  
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State of New Jersey  
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*New Jersey K to 12 Education*

Collaborative Monitoring Report  
January 2020

**District:** Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School  
**County:** Hudson  
**Dates On-Site:** November 19 and 20, 2019  
**Case #:** FM-007-20

**Funding Sources**

Program	Funding Award
Title I, Part A	\$286,179
IDEA Basic	88,485
IDEA Preschool	1,366
Title II, Part A	20,178
Title IV	17,842
Total Funds	<u>\$414,050</u>

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**Background**

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The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and other federal laws require that districts provide programs and services based on the requirements specified in each of the authorizing statutes (i.e., ESSA and IDEA). The laws further require that state education agencies such as the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitor the implementation of federal programs by subrecipients and determine whether the funds are being used by the school for their intended purpose and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

**Introduction**

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The NJDOE visited Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School to monitor the schools use of federal funds and the related program plans, where applicable, to determine whether the school's programs are meeting the intended purposes and objectives, as specified in the current year applications and authorizing statutes and to determine whether the funds were spent in accordance with the program requirements, federal and state laws, and applicable regulations. The on-site visit included staff interviews and documentation reviews related to the requirements of the following programs: Title I; Title II, Part A; Title IV, Part A and IDEA Basic for the period July 1, 2019 through October 31, 2019.

The scope of work performed included the review of documentation including grant applications, program plans and needs assessments, grant awards, annual audits, board minutes, payroll records, accounting records, purchase orders, a review of student records, classroom visitations and interviews with instructional staff to verify implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEP), a review of student class and related service schedules, interviews of child study team members and speech-language specialists and an interview of the program administrator regarding the IDEA grant, as well as current school policies and procedures. The monitoring team members also conducted interviews with school personnel, reviewed the supporting documentation for a sample of expenditures and conducted internal control reviews.

**Expenditures Reviewed**

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The grants reviewed included Title I, Title II, Title IV and IDEA Basic from July 1, 2019 through October 31, 2019. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries was taken from each program reviewed.

**General District Overview of Uses of IDEA Funds**

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**Title I Projects**

The district operates a Title I schoolwide program and uses its Title I funds for the following activities: teacher salaries for in-class, pull-out, and extended day/year activities; instructional supplies and materials; and administrative activities to support the Title I schoolwide program.

**Title II-A Projects**

According to the 2019-2020 ESEA Application, review of the school's professional development plan and interview with the school ESEA coordinator, the Dr Lena Edwards Academic Charter School plans to use the ESEA Title II-A allocation for professional development.

**Title IV-A Projects**

According to the 2019-2020 ESEA Application, observation at the school and interview with the school ESEA coordinator, the Dr Lena Edwards Academic Charter School plans to spend their allocation on social-emotional learning interventions for students and training on these supports for teachers.

**IDEA Projects (Special Education)**

The FY 2019 IDEA Basic funds are being used to offset the salary and benefits for a special education teacher and for the provision of related services to students with disabilities.

There were no findings with the IDEA grant.

**Detailed Findings and Recommendations**

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**Title I**

**Finding 1:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School is authorized to operate a Title I schoolwide program and, therefore, required to develop and implement an Annual Schoolwide Plan (ASP) for each grant period under which it operates such a schoolwide program. The ASP serves as the basis for all associated Title I expenditures and details how the charter school is upgrading the educational program of the entire school through implementation of a Title I schoolwide program. Although, the charter school submitted its ASP, multiple sections in the plan were incomplete. In addition, the ASP was not certified or approved by the charter school Lead Person.

**Citation:**

ESEA §1114(b): *Schoolwide Program Plan*

**Required Action:**

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The charter school must complete, certify, and submit in its entirety the required FY 2020 Annual School Plan (ASP) via the ASPS link in the NJDOE Homeroom no later than close of business, Friday, January 31, 2020. Included in this submission, as uploaded documentation, must be all ASP team agenda, sign-in sheets, meeting minutes, and invitational flyers and/or meeting notifications.

**Please Note:** Upon submission of the FY 2020 ASP, the Title I staff member who participated in the 11/19/19 Collaborative Monitoring visit will review and provide feedback to the charter school's Lead Person, Principal, School Business Administrator, and Title I Project Coordinator.

**Recommended Action:**

It is recommended that the ASP team meetings occur on a quarterly basis, rather than occurring in the last two (2) months of the preceding school year. In this way, the ASP team ensures the annual school planning process occurs throughout the school year.

**Finding 2:**

As articulated in the charter school's FY 2020 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application, the Needs Assessment indicated Title I funds would address the following identified needs:

- "At risk student support" through the implementation of the program entitled, "Playworks;" and
- "Access to high-quality early childhood education" through the provision of special need instructors who utilize data to inform the delivery of instruction for all students in grades K through 8.

Unfortunately, the selected allowable uses and budgeted costs did not directly align with the above referenced identified needs. Without a direct connection among identified needs, allowable uses, and budgeted costs, there is no evidence that implemented activities are necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient performance and administration of the charter school's Title I schoolwide program.

**Citation:**

*ESEA §1112 Local Educational Agency Plans; Uniform Grant Guidance Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments (Necessary and Reasonable).*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must revise its Needs Assessment in the FY 2020 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application, to show a more direct alignment of the identified academic needs, with the proposed allowable uses and associated budgeted costs.

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**Recommended Action:**

It is recommended the charter school ensure the information contained in the Needs Assessment is more specific and quantifiable in nature. This may be accomplished by providing more exact and specific details regarding each identified need (e.g. grade levels, student groups, etc.).

**Finding 3:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School staff indicated that students were pulled from the general computer class to receive instructional intervention services in English language arts (ELA) and/or mathematics. This action prevented these students from receiving benefit of the same computer instruction as their peers.

**Citation:**

ESEA §1114(b): *Schoolwide Program Plan*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must ensure that students requiring additional ELA and/or mathematics instruction are not prevented from receiving the same computer instruction as their peers. Since the charter school operates on a block schedule, it should identify an 'open time' in which general computer instruction is not provided to an entire class and designate this time for the provision of instructional intervention services in ELA and/or mathematics. The charter school must submit documented evidence, such as class schedules, to delineate how it will restructure its Title I schoolwide program to ensure all students receive benefit of general instruction with their peers prior to being 'pulled' for additional instructional intervention services.

**Recommended Action:**

It is recommended that the charter school staff, in conjunction with the ASP team members, re-examine how greater emphasis can be placed on extended learning opportunities (i.e., before/after school, summer, or weekend programs).

**Finding 4:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School did not provide documented evidence of its district-school level parent and family engagement policy for the FY 2020 ESEA project period, to include when this policy was distributed to parents and families. Per the ESEA legislation, parents and families must be involved in the development of the written district-school level parent and family engagement policy, as well as be informed of ways they can further participate in the academic performance and achievement of their children.

**Citation:**

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*ESEA §1116 (a)(2) School Parent and Family Engagement Policy*

**Required Action:**

For the FY 2020 ESEA project period, the Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School must engage parents and families in the development of a district-school level parent and family engagement policy and provide documented evidence of such policy to the NJDOE for review. In addition, the charter school must ensure it distributes its written district-school level parent and family engagement policy to all parents and families. Documented evidence of the distribution of this parent and family engagement policy must be submitted to the NJDOE for review.

**Finding 5:**

While the Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School provided documented evidence of its school-parent compact for the FY 2020 ESEA project period, this evidence did not include the following detail:

1) A description of how the school will provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment. The school-parent compact must be complete in its details, to show:

1. How parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement; and
2. The means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the challenging State academic standards.

**Citation:**

*ESEA §1116 (d) Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must rewrite its FY 2020 school-parent compact, with assistance from parents, to include a description of how the school will provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment. This revised school-parent compact must be redistributed to all charter school parents and families.

Documented evidence of this redistribution must be submitted to the NJDOE for review.

**Finding 6:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School did not provide documented evidence of its Annual Title I Parent and Family meeting, to include: 1) invitational letter/flyer; 2) meeting agenda; 3) meeting minutes; and 4) sign-in sheets. Per the ESEA legislation, a Title I served school must convene an annual meeting, to inform parents and families of the school's Title I, Part A program(s), legislative requirements, and ways in which they can be engaged actively in helping their children succeed academically.



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**Citation:**

ESEA §1116(c) *Parent and Family Engagement: Policy Involvement*

**Required Action:**

In order to meet this ESEA legislative requirement, the Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School must submit the following documentation as evidence of its FY 2020 annual, Title I Parent and Family meeting to the NJDOE for review: 1) invitational letter/flyer; 2) meeting agenda; 3) meeting minutes; and 4) sign-in sheets.

**Finding 7:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School did not provide documented evidence of the name of the Educational Stability Point of Contact (Liaison) for the district. The ESEA legislation stipulates that the district plan shall provide an assurance that the district will designate a point of contact, who will collaborate with the local child welfare agency regarding services for children in foster care.

**Citation:**

ESEA §1112(c)(5)(A) *Assurances – Point of Contact*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must immediately designate a staff person to serve as the Educational Stability Point of Contact (Liaison) for the school (if such person has not been designated, already), and submit documented evidence of this designation to the NJDOE for review.

**Finding 8:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School did not provide documented evidence of the development and implementation of clear written policies and procedures on the educational stability of children in foster care, especially in regard to how transportation for these children will be provided, arranged, and funded for the duration of their time in foster care.

**Citation:**

ESEA §1112(c)(5)(B) *Assurances – Written Policies and Procedures*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must immediately develop and implement clear written policies and procedures regarding the educational stability of children in foster care. These written policies and procedures must be submitted to the NJDOE for review.

**Finding 9:**

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The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School budgeted \$36,063 for the salary and benefits of a Title I secretary. As articulated in the charter school's FY 2020 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application, the listed duties of this position represent administrative functions, only. Given these listed duties, the Title I funds to be used for this purpose should have been budgeted under the Indirect Cost/Administrative Costs line in the Title I budget. The amount of Title I funds to be budgeted must be in direct proportion to the amount of time spent on administrative functions as performed by the person holding this position.

**Please Note:** Administrative costs are capped at 5% of the charter school's total, FY 2020 Title I allocation (i.e., \$286,179 X .05% = \$14,308.95). The charter school already budgeted \$9,162 for administrative costs; therefore, only \$5,147 can be budgeted for additional administrative costs.

**Citation:**

2 CFR §200.404 and §200.405 *Cost Principles: Subpart E (Reasonable Costs and Allocable Costs)*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must revise the Title I budget in its FY 2020 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application, to show the amount of Title I funds budgeted for this Title I secretary position under the Indirect Cost/Administrative Costs line in the Title I budget. The charter school is reminded that the budgeted amount of Title I funds always must be in direct proportion to the amount of time spent on the associated position duties.

**Recommended Action:**

It is recommended that both program and fiscal staff work collaboratively on future, ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Applications, especially regarding completion of each title's budget section. In these joint discussions, administrative functions for all funded positions must be clearly identified in each title's budget; in this instance, the Title I budget.

**Finding 10:**

The Dr. Lena Edwards Charter School allocated and budgeted \$318 for Instructional Supplies and Materials for a computer program - iReady. Given the total charter school population of 393 students, \$318 appears to be a low dollar amount to reasonably implement the iReady program for the purpose of impacting student learning and achievement. This situation was discussed with the administrative staff, who indicated they would adjust the Title I budget, accordingly.

**Citation:**

2 CFR §200.404 and §200.405 *Cost Principles: Subpart E (Reasonable Costs and Allocable Costs)*

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**Required Action:**

The charter school must revise the Title I budget in its FY 2020 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application, to show the amount of Title I funds actually budgeted for the iReady program.

**Recommended Action:**

It is recommended that both program and fiscal staff work collaboratively on future, ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Applications, especially regarding completion of each title's budget section. In these joint discussions, if it is determined that one amount of funding is not sufficient to adequately fund a proposed program, service, and/or activity, a more representative amount will be budgeted, based on the collaborative discussions.

**Finding 11:**

The district did not provide the required supporting documents to verify the time and activity for the three teachers who provide instructional services for the in-class support program, as well as the pull-out program. Title I funds in the amount of \$240,636 were budgeted for the salaries and benefits of all three teachers. Although some time and activity reports were submitted, it was impossible to determine which reports represented the time and activity for the above-mentioned teachers. In addition, each provided time and activity report was signed by the associated staff member on 11/18/19 (the day before the 11/19/19 on-site visit).

**Please Note:** Time and activity documentation must reflect what Title I-funded staff are doing, when and where they are working, and it must match their funded percentage, as well as be signed by the staff member and supervisor. This documentation is necessary to verify that Title I-funded-staff are performing allowable Title I activities.

**Citation:**

2 CFR §200.404 *Cost Principles: Subpart E (Compensation – personal services)*

**Required Action:**

The charter school must submit the time and activity documentation for the above-referenced teachers (3 in total), to reflect the actual time allotted to Title I activities, including the staff member's and supervisor's signatures.

**Recommended Action:**

It is recommended that both program and fiscal staff work collaboratively on future, ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Applications, to ensure a process is in place so that all time and activity reports are completed accurately and in a timely manner.

**Title II**

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No expenditures were recorded for the 2019-2020 school year as of the time of the New Jersey Department of Education visit on November 19, 2019.

**Title IV**

No expenditures were recorded for the 2019-2020 school year as of the time of the New Jersey Department of Education visit on November 19, 2019.

**IDEA (Special Education)**

**Finding 12:**

The charter school did not consistently conduct reevaluations within three years of the previous classification date for students referred for special education and related services.

**Citation:**

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.8(a)

**Required Action:**

The charter school must ensure reevaluations are conducted within required timelines. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the charter school must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation listed above. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to interview staff, review documentation of eligibility meetings held as part of the reevaluation process between February 2020 and May 2020 and review the oversight procedures.

**Finding 13:**

The school did not consistently conduct all required sections of the functional assessment as a component of initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services and for students referred for special education and related services.

Initial evaluation reports for students referred for speech-language services did not contain: an observation in other than a testing session; interview with the student's parents; interview with the referring teacher; review of developmental history; a review of interventions, and one or more informal measures. Initial evaluations reports for students referred for special education and related services did not contain observations in a non-testing setting and review of prior interventions.

**Citation:**

N.J.A.C.6A:14-3.4(f)4(i-vi)

**Required Action:**

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The charter school must ensure all components of the functional assessment are conducted as part of all initial evaluations. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the charter school must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. Monitors from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to interview staff, review initial evaluation reports for students evaluated between February 2020 and May 2020, and review the oversight procedures. For additional guidance, the charter school is referred to the sample report form located at:

[www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form](http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form).

**Finding 14:**

The charter school did not consistently conduct multi-disciplinary initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services by obtaining an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher.

**Citation:**

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.6(b)

**Required Action:**

The charter school must ensure that a multidisciplinary evaluation is conducted for students referred for speech-language services by obtaining a statement from the general education teacher that details the educational impact of the speech problem on the student's progress in general education. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the school must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation listed above. A monitor from NJDOE will conduct a site visit to review initial evaluation reports for students referred for speech-language services whose eligibility meetings were held between February 2020 and May 2020.

**Administrative**

**Finding 15:**

The monitors noted several deficiencies in the school's financial records at the time of the on-site visit:

- Budget amounts for federal grants had not been posted to the school's general ledger;
- Salaries and benefits of grant funded staff were not being charged to the grant in the general ledger;
- Expenditures were being charged to accounts which had no funds budgeted in the school's approved grant applications;

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- Invoices supporting expenditures charged to federal grants were not available for review;
- New Jersey TPAF and FICA reimbursement form was not available for review;
- The most recent board secretary report was not available for review.

**Citation:**

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302.

**Required Action:**

Budgeted grant allocations should be posted to the general ledger; grant related expenditures should be posted to grant accounts in the general ledger as incurred; expenditures should only be charged to grant accounts with budgeted funds available; supporting documentation for expenditures charged to federal grants should be maintained and be readily available, New Jersey TPAF and FICA reimbursement should be filed timely and supporting documentation retained.

**Finding 16:**

The school did not comply with required timekeeping standards for federally funded grants. Employees with 100 percent of their salary paid with Title I funds must complete a semi-annual certification attesting to their performance of Title I related duties, and employees with less than 100 percent of their salary paid with Title I funds must complete monthly personal activity reports.

**Citation:**

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302

**Required Action:**

The school must ensure that employees submit personal activity reports that have been verified by supervisors, as required.

**Recommendation 1:**

The school does not have a purchasing manual that details procedures for the procurement of goods and services.

**Citation:**

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302; N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-6.6 Standard operating procedures for business functions.

**Recommended Action:**

The district should prepare and adopt a detailed purchasing manual to ensure compliance with current state and federal procurement regulations.

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The NJDOE thanks you for your time and cooperation during the monitoring visit and looks forward to a successful resolution of all findings and implementation of all recommendations contained in this report.

If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hoffmann via phone at (609) 376-3593 or via email at [steven.hoffmann@doe.nj.gov](mailto:steven.hoffmann@doe.nj.gov).