



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

LAMONT O. REPOLLET, Ed.D.
Commissioner

May 23, 2019

Dr. Andrew Nyaboga, Board President
Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School
509 Bramhall Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07304

Dear Dr. Nyaboga:

The New Jersey Department of Education (Department) is committed to ensuring that the State’s charter schools provide students with a high-quality public education and are held to high standards of accountability. The Department addresses low-performing charter schools through corrective and remedial actions and closes charter schools that do not provide students with a high-quality education. After reviewing the results of the 2017-2018 statewide assessments, as well as documentation submitted to the Department by Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School (Dr. Lena Edwards) including, but not limited to, annual reports, fiscal reports and other compliance reports, effective immediately, and pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:36A-17* and *N.J.A.C. 6A:11-2.4*, I am placing Dr. Lena Edwards on probation.

The Department utilizes the Academic section of the Performance Framework, which consists of three academic performance frameworks, to evaluate the relative success of the elementary, middle and high school programs offered by charter schools. Academic performance is assessed by tested grade span, with grades 3-5 representing the elementary program, grades 6-8 the middle school program and grades 9-12 the high school program. Each academic performance framework consists of four categories of metrics: Student Growth (or Graduation Rate for high school programs), Achievement, Leading Indicators and Closing Gaps. Each metric is worth a number of points, and the percent of total points earned determines the Tier Rank for each program. Tier Rank 1 programs are considered high performing, Tier Rank 2 middle performing, and Tier Rank 3 low performing. Below are the results for Dr. Lena Edwards:

Performance Framework	Year		
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Historical Tier Ranking			
Tier Ranking	Tier 2	Tier 2	Tier 3
Summative Score	31.5%	44.2%	29.1%

The 2017-2018 preliminary assessment results suggest that Dr. Lena Edwards earned a Tier Rank 3 at 29.9% of the total points earned. Proficiency in English language arts (Ela) and mathematics (math) decreased from the 2016-2017 statewide assessment to the 2017-

2018 results by 5.4% in Ela and 0.9% in math. Additionally, growth scores from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 also decreased by 8% in Ela and 3% in math. The 2017-2018 preliminary Tier Rank suggests that Dr. Lena Edward's has failed to maintain a high-quality education.

The 2017-2018 preliminary assessment also identified an increase in Dr. Lena Edwards' chronic absenteeism rate to 14.7% from the 2016-2017 assessment which indicated a chronic absenteeism rate of 11.5%. The rate of chronic absenteeism exceeds the state average of 9.1% for students in similar grade spans and exceeds the state target for chronic absenteeism.

On February 25, 2019, the Department conducted an onsite visit of Dr. Lena Edwards. Observed instruction was low level and many students opted out of participation in instruction without attempt from instructional staff to engage or re-engage students. When speaking with representatives of Dr. Lena Edwards, it was brought to the Department's attention that the school had several provisional teachers for the 2018-2019 academic year.

As a condition of probation for the aforementioned reasons, Dr. Lena Edwards must submit a remedial plan to the Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools within 15 days of the receipt of this notice of probationary status in accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:11-2.4*. Therefore, the Department must receive a comprehensive remedial plan no later June 7, 2019. Within 30 days of the receipt of the remedial plan narrative and template, the Department will contact the school to discuss the contents.

Additionally, at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees, this letter must be provided to all members of the board and those in attendance for the board meeting. Board minutes demonstrating compliance with this directive must be submitted to the Hudson County Office of Education and to the Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools within ten days of the board meeting. It is imperative that the Board of Trustees conduct this meeting in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act pursuant to P.L. 1975, c.231 (C:10:4-6 et.seq.). The school must also inform parents and teachers of the school's probationary status and its implications and provide the Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools a narrative description of the procedures used, and copies of related correspondence sent to inform teachers and parents of the school's status.

Furthermore, the school is directed to limit the expenditure of funds to only those expenditures that are reasonable and necessary for the ongoing day-to-day operation of the charter school. These expenditures are limited to salaries, benefits, utilities, rent, insurance and existing accounts payable. The expenditures must be already authorized in the board-approved budget. Any expenditures in excess of those already set forth in the budget, including any necessary expenditures to implement the remedial action plan and the plan must be submitted to and approved by the Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools.

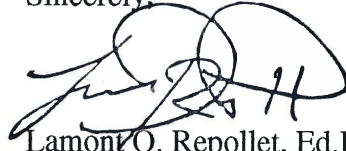
Dr. Andrew Nyboga

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If you have any questions, please contact Julie Bunt, acting director, Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools, at Julie.Bunt@doe.nj.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lamont O. Repollet', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D.
Commissioner

LOR/JB/CMB: O:\Probation Letter\DrLenaEdwardsAcademicCS_Probation Letter_04252019

c: Kellie LeDet
Kevin Dehmer
Nicole Kane
Julie Bunt
Melissa Pearce
Franklin Walker