



February 2020

RE: School Renewal – 2020 - 2025

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Commissioner, Dr. Repollet, has renewed Dr. Lena Edwards Academic Charter School's (DLEACS) October 2019 application for a 5 – year Charter, with continued probation, for a period of 5 years through June 30, 2025. The Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools will monitor and oversee the conditions of our probation as outlined in our renewal letter.

FYI

- All charter schools, including DLEACS, are evaluated in 3 areas of the 3-tiered Charter School Performance Framework – Academic, Fiscal & Organizational Performance areas.
- Tier 1 is the highest. Tiers 2 & 3 are in descending order. Tier 3 is the lowest performance level.
- According to DLEACS is tier 3 school according to the 2017–2018 performance framework based on the results of the 2017 – 2018 New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA).
- Due to the inconsistencies in DLEACS's statewide assessment results since 2015 – 2016 (Tier 3), 2016 – 2017 (Tier 2) and 2017 – 2018 (Tier 3) The Office of Charter & Renaissance Schools placed the school on academic probation. Preliminary results of the 2018 – 2019 statewide assessments (NJSLA) continue to highlight inconsistencies in our students' performance.
- A renewal summary report is forthcoming from the Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools. The school will outline a plan of action to address specific areas for improvement. The Office of Charter & Renaissance Schools will perform periodic visits/checks to monitor progress.

NJDOE Academic Framework Report:

Determination: DLEACS will continue probationary status including fiscal deficiencies



Academic Performance:

- 2018 – 2019 ELA NJSLA results showed an increase of students who either met or exceeded expectations from 2017 – 2018 in grades 3, 6 & 8.
- The greatest increase from 2017 – 2018 to 2018 – 2019 ELA NSLA results was in grade 6 (34.1%).
- In Math five out of the six statewide testing grades either met or exceeded expectations increased form 2017 – 2018 to 2018 – 2019. (Grades 3 – 8).
- Despite the growth in ELA NJSLA results showed a decrease in the number of students who either met or exceeded expectations for grades 4, 5 & 7 from 2017 – 2018 to 2018 – 2019.
- Despite the growth in Math NJSLA showed grade 6 results remained stagnant.

Fiscal Performance:

- DLEACS did not meet the NJDOE unrestricted cash ratio for fiscal 2019.
- DLEACS fell far below the standard for current ratio and 3 – year cumulative cash flow.
- For the first time in the school’s existence DLEACS operated in deficit in 2019.
- Public schools are not permitted to operate at a deficit nor carry long-term debt
- DLEACS reported to NJDOE that DLEACS anticipates a “positive” surplus fund balance at the conclusion of the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year.
- According to the NJDOE, DLEACS has made and demonstrated substantial progress towards compliance with the fiscal corrective action plan since the “on – site” review by the NJDOE and submission of a fiscal corrective action plan to the NJDOE.

Organizational Performance:

- Based on the review of documents, stakeholder interviews & inconsistent standardized test results the NJDOE has concerns about DLEACS’s faithfulness to its mission and organizational capacity.
- During the 11/13/19 renewal the instruction observed by the NJDOE failed to demonstrate an understanding of high quality with aligned pedagogical practices.
- NJDOE observed slow-paced, worksheet based instruction with evidence of opting-out by students
- K – 2 there was evidence of center-based activities as observed by NJDOE on (11/13/19)
- K – 2 activities appeared to be confusing to students; some activities were low – level based on the time of the visit.
- Multiple classrooms NJDOE observed that students were unable to articulate the objective of the lesson.
- Lesson plans were consistently posted throughout the school as indicated on the renewal application.



- NJDOE stated DLEACS’ “deep-seeded” community ties were evident during the visit.
- Interviewed school stakeholders universally acknowledged and provided explicit examples of DLEACS’ supportive school culture & climate.
- While NJDOE recognized the school culture & climate facet of DLEACS’ mission NJDOE is expecting a “renewed focus” on the mission specific instructional elements & evidence and the evidence thereof over the next charter term.
- DLEACS will have 15 days to respond to the NJDOE Renewal Summary Report
- The response must outline the steps DLEACS will take to remedy the aforementioned deficiencies as well as in the Renewal Site Visit Summary (forthcoming)
- DLEACS must set measurable targets and goals for interim progress and describe how the school will measure the impact of the plan.
- With 30 days of the receipt of the school intervention plan the NJDOE will contact/visit the school to discuss the revised remedial action plan.
- The probationary period must demonstrate effective implementation of the remedial action plan

Please note administration, school leadership team and faculty will review, discuss, report the findings from the NJDOE to the board and the school community as well as revise the remedial action plan in order to affect improvement in the areas outlined by the NJDOE.