

# The Center for Education Reform

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## **New Jersey Charters Get Green Light from State Board**

Despite the efforts of school districts to prevent charter schools from opening their doors in their New Jersey communities, the New Jersey State Board of Education heard and sanctioned thirteen of the fourteen charters challenged by school boards there. The last one was asked to clear up some governance issues before it could receive final approval.

New Jersey school districts have been, perhaps, among the most hostile to the charter concept, and have launched costly battles in an effort to deny charters a place in these communities. This is especially true in more affluent suburbs, where the districts argue they will lose money.

Last year, appeals of two school boards were upheld, and many believe the State Board did not understand their proper role in reviewing appeals. The two charters denied last year have now been sanctioned.

It is unclear whether the local boards will file suit. Legal action would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars; and likely more than the money they claim would be lost to their schools if children choose charters over district schools. In a show of protest two days prior to the State Board of Education vote, district opponents could muster only about two dozen school board members from several districts for a protest rally. Many of those same board members decried the state board's action. Said Highland Park, NJ school board member Judith Goldberg, "This is a sad day for the schoolchildren in New Jersey." (We wondered silently if she thought happiness meant being consigned to a failing school.)

One of the charters scheduled to open next year in Trenton, the Granville Charter School, already has 1,107 applications for 500 slots. Along with the 23 approved by the Commissioner this year, 13 have been operating since last September, serving about 1,400 children. Trenton alone will have 7 open by next year, which observers are predicting will have an enormous effect once they are fully operating.

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