



[NJDOE News](#)

Contact: Peter Peretzman
For Release: October 2, 2001

Commissioner of Education Submits [Charter School Evaluation Report](#)

Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. has submitted to the Governor, Legislature and State Board of Education an evaluation report and recommendations for New Jersey's charter school program. This report is required by the Charter School Program Act of 1995, as amended in November 2000. The Commissioner's evaluation report is based on public hearings and an independent, comprehensive study.

The evaluation's findings indicate that:

- students in charter schools, as a whole, are making substantial progress in some areas of the statewide assessment, and in those areas charter schools are outperforming their comparable districts of residence;
- charter schools, on average, have lower class sizes, lower student-faculty ratios, lower student mobility rates, longer school days and academic years, greater instructional time, and higher faculty attendance rates than their districts of residence; and
- parental and student demand for and satisfaction with charter schools are all extremely high. There are approximately 11,300 students attending 51 charter schools in New Jersey, and there are more than 5100 students on waiting lists.

"Our charter school program has been extremely successful and has produced many schools of very high quality," said Commissioner Gagliardi. "I am pleased that since the first charter school opened in 1997 we have been able to provide the educational choices that many parents desire for their children. However, this does not mean our work is done. Although I am recommending that the charter school program continue, I also am making several recommendations aimed at improving our program to the Governor, Legislature and State Board."

These recommendations include:

- Provide charter schools state aid for facilities;
- Allow charter schools to incur long-term debt with appropriate controls and restrictions;
- Allow the use of public funds for facilities construction;
- Revise the mechanism for providing aid to charter schools to provide a more stable revenue stream;
- Provide state funding to establish a charter school support center;
- Provide state-funded grants to founders and/or lead persons of charter schools immediately after the charter school is approved;
- Require that all newly approved charter schools engage in a comprehensive planning phase; and
- Provide added relief from mandates for charter schools.

The amendments to the Charter School Program Act of 1995 require that if the Commissioner of Education recommends continuation of the program then the report to the Governor, Legislature and State Board must also include recommendations for changes in the structure of the program. The Commissioner may not implement any recommended expansion, modification, or termination of the program until the Legislature acts on that recommendation.