

Governor Christie Highlights Charter School Commitment At North Star Alexander Street School In Newark

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Improvements, Investment and Innovation Providing Life-Changing Educational Opportunities in Urban Districts

Trenton, NJ - Reaffirming his strong commitment to students and families in failing urban school districts, Governor Chris Christie today visited with students and faculty of Uncommon School's North Star Alexander Street Elementary School in Newark to see first-hand the groundbreaking work being achieved in charter school classrooms across the state. Under the Christie Administration, charter schools have experienced significant growth with the opening of 39 new schools and the doubling of the number of students attending charter schools in New Jersey to over 40,000 since the 2009-10 school year.

"We must continue to improve our charter schools in New Jersey by providing the investments needed to support the innovation and results they are bringing to our most in-need children and families in our education system," said Governor Christie. "At North Star, their formula for learning is outperforming and exceeding expectations at every level. They are a true example of the kind of achievement we want to replicate at charter schools throughout the state to ensure that students and their families who live in urban communities have increased opportunities for success."

North Star Academy, for instance, surpassed the Newark District's pass rate on state tests in both language arts and math by more than 30 percentage points between 2010 and 2014. For the 2014-15 school year, North Star outperformed the state average on every subject of PARCC in grades 3-8.

At Alexander Street Elementary School, which became a part of the North Star family in 2014, the educational turnaround is equally impressive. Student math results in the PARCC exams far outpaced New Jersey's average scores and narrowed the gap with affluent students in the state.

"The results at Alexander, as well as the rest of North Star Academy, show what students can achieve when we help them set and reach high expectations, support and develop teachers in their craft, and ensure we provide the right combination of rigor and joy in our classrooms," said Brett Peiser, CEO of Uncommon Schools.

North Star Academy Charter Schools, part of Uncommon Schools – which also has schools in Camden and elsewhere in the Northeast, currently serve 4,000 students in grades K-12 at 11 campuses. By the 2020-21 school year, North Star is anticipated to have 14 campuses that will serve approximately 6,550 students.

It is these kinds of results in urban communities in New Jersey that has Governor Christie leading the effort to facilitate the expansion and growth of charter schools:

- Last month, Education Commissioner David Hespe approved the expansion of 16 charter schools, renewed the charters of 19 schools, and approved 3 new schools to open in the 2017-2018 school year.
- 3 new charter schools that were approved last year will open for the next school year.
- The Department of Education has increased its accountability standards, strengthened its authorizing process, and closed underperforming schools due to academic, operational or financial deficiencies.

At the direction of Governor Christie, the Department of Education is also in the process of prioritizing regulatory relief for charter schools by:

- Exploring ways to create greater flexibility in the teacher certification process for charter schools;
- Exploring ways to make it easier for charter schools to find facilities;

- Pursuing regulatory reforms to encourage development of more charter schools to serve our most vulnerable students, such as those with autism or development delays.

Since 2010, the Christie Administration has increased the overall number of charter schools in New Jersey to 89 in fiscal 2016. The fiscal year 2017 budget supports more than 49,000 charter students.

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