



Start a School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

New Jersey

Charter Schools

A charter school is a public school that operates as its own Local Education Agency (LEA) under a charter granted by the Commissioner. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is the sole charter school authorizer in New Jersey.

The NJDOE authorizes charter schools consistent with national best practices in charter school authorizing, offering school operators autonomy and opportunities for innovation in exchange for accountability for student outcomes. As of June 2025, there are 84 charter schools currently operating in New Jersey.

You can also contact the [New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association](#) for more information.

Steps to Start a Charter School

The first step in creating a Charter school is to register as a corporation. This is usually a non-profit LLC. Register with your state's Division of Corporations.

If you are planning to operate as a non-profit, you will need to obtain your IRS Non-Profit status by submitting [IRS Form 1023](#).

Submitting an Application to the Department

The NJDOE administers two application rounds for charter schools – one in March and another in October for experienced operators of educational institutions. Additional information can be found on the [Application Rounds](#) section of the website.

New Jersey education regulations [N.J.A.C. 6A:11-2.1](#) have a full description of the application process.

To submit an application for a new charter school, download the application form and follow the instructions included.

Application Review

The NJDOE evaluates each application to determine whether the applicant has the capacity to open and operate a high-quality charter school. The application process is conducted in two phases. After the NJDOE reviews the Phase One Applications, the Commissioner invites qualified applicants to submit Phase Two Applications. Subsequent to NJDOE's Phase Two review, the Commissioner notifies applicants of whether or not they have been invited to interview. Following the in-depth interviews, the Commissioner notifies applicants regarding approval or denial of applications.

Preparedness Review Process

Approved charter applicants must successfully complete the NJDOE's [preparedness review](#) before being granted a final charter and allowed to open. This review process occurs in June of the year the applicant is scheduled to open and is designed to determine whether approved applicants have the structures in place to ensure academic success, equitability, financial viability, and organizational soundness. After a thorough review, the Commissioner will render a final decision in July for charters to open their doors in September.

New Jersey education regulations [N.J.A.C. 6A:11-2.1](#) have a full description of the preparedness process.

Application Rounds

March and October

The New Jersey Department of Education administers two application rounds for prospective charter schools — the March Application Round and the October Application Round. In the March round, applications are due on March 31, and decisions are made on September 30 for charter schools that may open the following fall.

In the expedited October round, applications are due on October 15, and decisions are made by February 15 for charter schools that may open in the fall of the same year. The October round is only for proven operators. Pursuant to [N.J.A.C. 6A:11-2.1\(g\)](#): "For phase one of the October 15 expedited application, the Department will review applications received from founders with demonstrable experience operating an education institution."

Example March 2026 Charter School Application Timeline

Date	Event
February 10, 2026, 1:00 p.m.	Technical Assistance Training Broadcast. To join, go to Microsoft TEAMS (link may be easiest to access using Google Chrome).

Date	Event
March 31, 2026, 4:15 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline to submit the Phase One Application (hard copy and electronic copy) to the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools. Deadline to submit the Phase One Application (hard copy only) to the appropriate New Jersey Department of Education County Offices, and district(s) of residence. <p>Please contact allie.cobb@doe.nj.gov with any questions or concerns regarding application submission.</p>
June 15, 2026	Tentative date for notification of qualified applicant status and eligibility to submit the Phase Two Application.
July 15, 2026, 4:15 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline to submit the Phase Two Application (hard copy and electronic copy) to the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter and Renaissance Schools. Deadline to submit the Phase Two Application (hard copy only) to the appropriate New Jersey Department of Education County Offices, and district(s) of residence.
August 13, 2026 – August 14, 2026	Tentative, applicant in-depth interview dates
September 30, 2026	Charter application initial decision
June 30, 2027	School preparedness process deadline
July 15, 2027	Final approval, granting of Charter, for approved applicants who have successfully completed the School Preparedness Process. Approved applicants who did not successfully complete the Preparedness Process will be notified of their status by the NJDOE.

Statutes and Rules

Subchapter 1. General Provisions

- [§ 6A:11-1.1 Purpose](#)
- [§ 6A:11-1.2 Definitions](#)

Subchapter 2. Application and Approval, Reporting, Renewal, Probation and Revocation, Appeal, Amendment, and Conversion Processes

- [§ 6A:11-2.1 Application and approval process](#)

- [§ 6A:11-2.2 Reporting](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.3 Renewal of charter](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.4 Probation and revocation of charter](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.5 Charter appeal process](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.6 Amendment to charter](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.7 Nonpublic conversion charter schools; applicable law](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.8 Eligibility of a nonpublic school to convert to a charter school](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.9 Application of a nonpublic school to convert to a charter school](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.10 Enrollment of students in a nonpublic conversion charter school](#)
- [§ 6A:11-2.11 Employment of staff in a nonpublic conversion charter school](#)

Subchapter 3. School Ethics Act

- [§ 6A:11-3.1 Board of trustees and administrators](#)

Subchapter 4. Program Implementation

- [§ 6A:11-4.1 Local education agency](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.2 Student records](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.3 Student attendance](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.4 Initial recruitment period](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.5 Lottery](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.6 Waiting list](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.7 Age eligibility for kindergarten](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.8 Multilingual learners](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.9 Students with educational disabilities](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.10 Home instruction for students](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.11 Pupil transportation](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.12 Board of trustees and Open Public Meetings Act](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.13 Charter school operations](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.14 Sports programs](#)
- [§ 6A:11-4.15 Facilities](#)

Subchapter 5. Certification Requirements for Staff

- [§ 6A:11-5.1 Certification](#)

Subchapter 6. Streamline Tenure

- [§ 6A:11-6.1 Tenure acquisition](#)
- [§ 6A:11-6.2 Acquisition of streamline tenure](#)
- [§ 6A:11-6.3 Process for tenure disputes](#)
- [§ 6A:11-6.4 Appeals of tenure dispute](#)

Resources

- [National Association of Charter School Authorizers \(NACSA\)](#)