# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board and Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | September 17, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Charter Schools – Voluntary Return of Charter for Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School |

On May 21, 2024, based on my recommendation, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) voted to place Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School (DLA) on probation with specific conditions due to grave concerns about the school’s viability and ability to provide adequate programming for students.

On July 17, 2024, the DLA Board of Trustees voted to voluntarily return its charter effective immediately. As the basis for its decision, the school’s board of trustees cited the impact of decreased enrollment demand on the school’s ability to maintain financial viability. The school has ceased operation and is currently going through the charter closure process. I recommend that the Board vote on September 24, 2024, to accept the voluntary return of the charter granted to DLA effective June 30, 2024.

| Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter Public School |
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| **Type of Charter** | Commonwealth | **Location** | Boston |
| **Regional or Non-Regional** | Non-Regional | **Districts in Region** | N/A |
| **Year Opened** | 2003 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2008, 2013, 2018, 2023 |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 216 | **Enrollment as of July 2024** | 56 |
| **Chartered Grade Span** | 6-8 | **Current Grade Span** | 6-8 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 6 (March 2024)[[1]](#footnote-2) | **Current Age of School** | 21 |
| **Mission Statement:** Our school develops develop high-achieving students of good character who use problem solving, communication, and interpersonal skills to inspire others and to catalyze educational, economic, and political advancement within their communities and the broader nation. |

**Enrollment, Fiscal Viability, and Closing Procedures**

For the past three years, DLA’s enrollment declined precipitously below its maximum allowable enrollment of 216 students. The table below provides three enrollment data points since the 2019-20 school year: pre-enrollment,[[2]](#footnote-3) SIMS collection on October 1, and end of year enrollment.

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| **School Year** | **2019-20** | **2020-21** | **2021-22** | **2022-23** | **2023-24** |
| DLA pre-enrollment(submitted March 15) | 216 | 216 | 216 | 190 | 175 |
| October 1, SIMS enrollment | 207 | 193 | 138 | 114 | 95 |
| End of Year Enrollment | 201 | 187 | 130 | 112 | 86[[3]](#footnote-4) |

DLA’s board of trustees has decided to cease operation due to concerns about enrollment, the school’s budget, and compliance. The school’s weekly enrollment report, submitted by DLA on July 12, 2024, stated the school expected 56 students to enroll for the 2024-25 school year, 26 of whom were returning students. DLA’s board of trustees determined that the school would not be viable with 56 students.

The Department is working with DLA to facilitate an orderly closure of the school. The school is complying with the Department’s closing procedures and has assisted families find new schools for the upcoming school year. BPS and other local schools have been helpful in enabling DLA students to enroll for the 2024-25 school year.

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If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Regina Robinson, Deputy Commissioner (781-338-3104); Alison Bagg, Director of Charter Schools and School Redesign (781-338-3218); or me.

Attachments: Motion to Accept Voluntary Return of DLA’s Charter

 Communication from DLA Board of Trustees

1. As of the submission deadline of March 2024 for reporting waitlists, DLA reported six students on their waitlist. All six of these students reside in districts Lynn and Randolph, both of which are at or above their net school spending (NSS) cap. Lynn and Randolph are not districts in DLA’s charter; due to the NSS caps, DLA placed these students on a waitlist. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. All charter schools submit a pre-enrollment data report to the Department by March 15 of each year to establish the first five monthly tuition payments as well as the maximum number of students upon which total tuition will be calculated for the upcoming school year. The pre-enrollment reports must be based on actual enrollment data, such as applications for admission, admission lottery results, and accepted offers of admission. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. End of Year enrollment is typically verified and reported by June at the end of each school year. DLA reports enrollment numbers each week to the Department. As of March 22, 2024, DLA enrolled 86 students. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)