

Barbara Carroll, a grandmother of two Palmer pupils, said she is not comfortable sending them to their neighborhood school. She would opt for a private school if Palmer closes, although she hopes that won't happen.

"The bottom line," Carroll said, "is that our children's livelihoods and their education [are] at stake right now."

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**Philadelphia Tribune**

"Palmer charter school finally closes its doors permanently"

Wilford Shamlin III

After more than a year of scrutiny over academic performance and financial soundness, the **Walter D. Palmer** Leadership Learning Partners Charter School announced this week it will not reopen after the Christmas break.

The last day of operation for administrators will be Wednesday, Dec. 31.

The school district said it will immediately enroll about 400 kindergarten through eighthgrade students from **Palmer**. Enrollment sessions to help families with the transition are scheduled at the school district headquarters, 440 N. Broad St., on Dec. 31, Jan. 2 and Jan. 5.

The school collapsed under mounting financial pressure as the city school district, seeking reimbursement of more than \$1.4 million in enrollment-based fees, began withholding monthly reimbursement of roughly \$250,000 since early summer. School officials said the district paid more than it should have because enrollment statistics submitted by the school were higher than actual enrollment.

A vote by the board of trustees stemmed from a court decision ordering **Palmer** charter school to return the millions of dollars in enrollment-based fees to the school district, **Palmer** officials said in a statement.

The school was under pressure from the district for issues relating to students' academic performance, bookkeeping practices and reimbursement of fees from the district. In August, **Palmer** shut down its high school campus, 5502 Harbison Ave., in the city's Northeast section, in order to

keep enrollment within the limits set by its charter. The decision stemmed from the court-ordered repayment, Palmer stated.

In a two-page letter addressing school staff, parents, guardians and community partners and vendors, Palmersaid, "Please know that closing the Walter D. Palmer Leadership Learning Partners Charter School is one of the saddest moments of my life. It is important that you know how much I have valued your dedication and commitment in joining me with the fight for education reform and school choice."

School administrators testified at a revocation hearing in October but both campuses were closed before an administrative officer issued a decision on the matter. Administrators last month invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination 77 times at hearings on its charter.

During the hearing, Palmer testified that the discrepancy was not deliberate but occurred while the school transitioned to a new record-keeping system under a state mandate.

"The board of trustees spent countless hours trying to review options; however, in the best interest of the students and families that we serve; and the dedicated staff, the only option available is to close our school," according the letter send to Palmer school parents.

#### Sidebar

Walter Palmer, founder of Walter D. Palmer Learning Partners Charter School, holds his chin during revocation hearing In the fall. The school district was seeking to revoke the school's charter for issues relating to student performance and school finances, PHOTO BY TRIBUNE CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER ABDUL R. SULAYMAN

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