ST LOUIS — Carondelet Leadership Academy, an elementary school with 400 students between kindergarten and 8th grade, will close after the school year that ends in June because of poor academic performance. The school’s sponsor is immediately implementing a plan to help parents find new schools for their children to attend in the fall, and to help the Carondelet school board consider its options, which range from closing down the building altogether to allowing another charter school to take over the building and hold classes in the fall.

After consulting with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Missouri Charter Public School Commission declined to renew Carondelet’s charter because the school did not meet the educational standards in its performance contract. “The Board of Directors started Carondelet Leadership Academy to provide a quality education to children in their community” said Commissioner Delbert Scott, with the Missouri Charter Public School Commission, CLA new sponsor for the last year. “We applaud CLA, its board, teachers and staff for their commitment to children. And we know closing this school is and painful to each of them. However, the promise charter schools make to the children and to the community is provide a quality public school option or close.”

Carondelet opened in 2010 under the sponsorship of the University of Missouri. It agreed a year ago to transfer its sponsorship to the Missouri Charter Public School Commission, a state agency that sponsors charter public schools. The Commission reviewed the school and found it to be operationally and financially viable, but found its educational performance to be well below state standards. The Commission had a tough choice to make. The school meets an important need for parents living nearby. But, its academic performance was poor. The Commission decided to renew the charter to give the school a chance to improve and present a restart plan. The Commission staff conferred with officials with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. While DESE acknowledge the Commission’s rationale for a restart, they made it clear that the school’s poor academic performance was a paramount concern. State statutes governing charter schools require schools to meet their performance contract. CLA did not. The Commission agreed, and this week voted in a public meeting to decline to renew Carondelet’s charter. That effectively will force the school to close after this school year.

Carondelet Leadership Academy will continue to provide educational services for the rest of this school year. CLA board and leadership will begin working with parents to help them find a good school for next year. They are currently exploring the possibility of finding another charter school to serve students in the current CLA building.

The Commission staff has created and will implement a written plan on how to close its schools. That will include helping the Carondelet school board unwind its financial affairs, explore the option of another charter school taking over the building, and, above all else, helping parents find a viable option for their children.