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New High School Option May be Coming to Montclair

By Diane Lilli

Whether or not you believe in an elected or appointed board of education in Montclair, a new choice for your child's education may be coming soon.

Families in Montclair have begun receiving letters from people who wish to start a new Charter School in the township.

The new school would be called 'Quest Academy' and would be a secondary school.

Currently, there are more than 6,000 students residing in the township, and only one public high school.

In New Jersey, charter schools are public schools open to all students, but selection is based on the availability of space.

Charter schools operate totally independently from the district's board of education.

The Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education, Lucille Davies, would have to approve the new charter.

Once approved, the charter would be governed by a board of trustees that are closely monitored by the New Jersey State Department of Education.

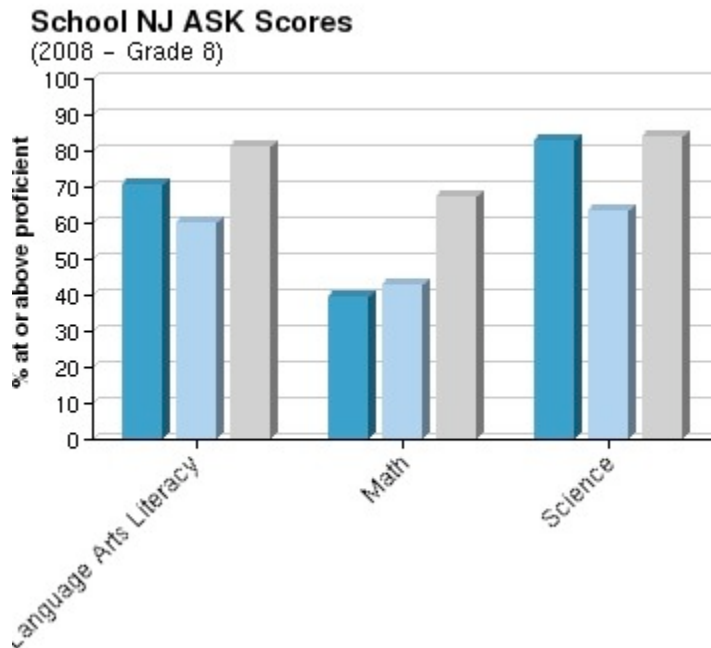
Currently, charter schools are approved for a four year time period, and can then be re-approved for five year time periods thereafter.

In the garden state, during the 2008 – 2009 school year, there were 62 charter schools open with more than 17,000 students. As of this September, 6 new charter schools have been approved and are slated to open, brining the total number of charter schools in New Jersey to 68.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education, " the Charter School Program Act of 1995 (N.J.S.A. 18A:36A) specifically exempts charter schools from public school facility regulations except those pertaining to the health and safety of the students."

So why were these schools founded in the first place?

The department of education notes that "Charter school legislation was passed to give choice for all parents for their children's education. The intent of this legislation is to:



Jersey City Community Charter School Jersey City Public School District New Jersey * In 2007-2008 New Jersey used the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) to test students in the Charter Schools. The results? The dark blue shows the high level of scores in the charter schools.

- Improve student learning and achievement;
- Increase the availability of choice to parents and students when selecting a learning environment;
- Encourage the use of different and innovative learning methods;
- Establish a new system of accountability for schools;
- Make the school the unit for educational improvement;
- Establish new professional opportunities for teachers”

Published reports show the level of education in charter schools in existence in the state today show remarkable scholastic achievement and diversity, perhaps because of the competition they endure with the established public schools established in their district.

In Montclair, a Charter School would be an alternative high school for students to attend, without any involvement from either the board of education or the township council members.

However, many Charter Schools have a pleasant and positive relationship with their local school boards.

As more details of this new venture become available, thejerseytomatopress will be sure to bring you the latest news.