



## York board approves charter school

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The York City school board voted 9-0 Monday night to approve the York Academy Regional Charter School.

York County's first regional charter school will be open to students in the city, York Suburban and Central York school districts. The city school district was the last of the three to approve the charter school proposal.

"Welcome to the York City school district family," board president Samuel Beard said after the vote.

The school, which was proposed by a YorkCounts committee, plans to open August 2011.

The program will begin with kindergarten, first- and second-grade students.

Over time, the educational institution expects to add higher grade levels with the goal of being a kindergarten to 12th grade school. The aim is to make the program a certified International Baccalaureate program.

"Hopefully, we will do an outstanding job," Dennis Baughman, co-chairman of the YorkCounts committee that founded the school told the board after the vote.

Officials plan to open the school in the city's North West Triangle, with hopes that suburban parents who work downtown will be drawn to the convenient location and academic programs. Students are eligible to attend the program tuition-free.

If too many students from those three school districts apply, officials will host a lottery to determine who attends.

Board member Sandie Walker, who voted yes for the school, said she didn't like the lottery system and the parental involvement requirement.

"That's my main concern," Walker said, "that the kids in the city have a chance regardless of the environment they come from."

Board member Tom Foust, who returned to the board meetings Monday after taking time off for a surgery, said he supported the program because it meets all the state's legal requirements for a charter school.

Foust said he isn't opposed to all charter schools, despite being labeled a charter school critic.

The program, presented by the York Academy founders, has "tremendous" possibilities because

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it mixes urban and suburban students, he said.

Even so, Foust urged the community to continue helping the city's schools.

"We've got to get this community working together," he said.

Not all charter schools up for approval Monday evening made the grade.

The city school board rejected Hope For All Charter School's application 6-3.

That school would have been a restaurant program aimed at teaching students job skills by operating a cafe.

The board rejected the application on the basis that there was no community support, the school would have replicated vocational programs already in place and there was no concrete financial plan.

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