

The Denver Post - education

2 new charter schools OK'd

The approvals followed DPS's request for new education proposals.

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Denver's school board Thursday approved two charter schools for 2009, including the expansion of the successful West Denver Preparatory Charter School.

The board gave tacit approval to two other programs, deferring votes until organizers can address some issues.

The board's approval was part of the district's early cycle for new school programs — a new initiative by Denver Public Schools to provide varied educational programs.

Early this year the district issued a request for proposals and received 20 plans. That number was cut to seven and finally to these four.

DPS officials said they were pleased with the programs that made the cut, which include schools by the teachers union, education foundations and parent organizations.

"We have begun to create a marketplace of ideas in Denver," said Superintendent Michael Bennet.

Charters approved Thursday were West Denver Prep and Envision Academies.

West Denver Prep, already a successful middle school, will add another middle school starting with a sixth grade in 2009 and adding a grade every year. The new school will have 300 students by 2011.

Envisions Academies, supported by the Donnell-Kay and Piton foundations, will have two sixth-through 12th-grade schools for kids who would be the first in their families to go to college.

One school will start in 2009 and the other in 2010, with full capacity at both schools at 1,400 students. The board narrowly approved Envisions because of concerns about approving two programs at once.

The board also delayed approving two other programs that are "innovation schools," a new classification of separate district programs within a typical district school.

The district said both plans needed more time to develop.

The programs included one designed by the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, which wants to offer a K-8 STEM model with a focus on science, technology, engineering and math.

The other program is a language-immersion model created by the Stapleton Foundation and two parents, Camilla Modesitt and Kristy Fantz.

The Denver Language School, a preschool through eighth grade probably located near Park Hill, would immerse students in Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.

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