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Teachers propose union-run school

By Jeremy P. Meyer

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Denver's teacher union wants to open the state's only union-run school with a preschool through eighth-grade program that would emphasize math and science.

The Denver Classroom Teachers Association outlined its proposal in a letter of intent filed Thursday with Denver Public Schools, as part of the district's outreach to develop new schools.

"A group of teachers came together and we have been meeting about what our ideal school would be like, said DCTA President Kim Ursetta.

Through today, DPS is accepting letters of intent from groups who want to develop innovative new school programs or charter schools by 2009. Final proposals for the early cycle are due May 16.

At least one other charter school is being proposed — a college prep Envision School for sixth through 12th graders who would be the first in their families to go to college. The submission is from the Donnell-Kay Foundation and Piton Foundation.

Amy Berk Anderson of the Donnell-Kay Foundation described the curriculum as "arts and technology." She said the plan is to ultimately have six schools."

The union's program would focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM — subjects that are receiving more emphasis by education officials to keep up with advancements occurring around the world.

The Bush Administration last year called for a national panel to help identify promising STEM practices.

"We'd be on the cutting edge of reform and best practices from across the country and around the world," Ursetta said.

The school would be the only union-led school in Colorado. About 10 years ago, the teachers union in Colorado Springs started the CIVA charter school but it is no longer run by the union, according to the Colorado Education Association.

Union-led schools have been formed in New York, Florida and California.

"The more different types of choices the better," said Alan Gottlieb, vice president for policy and business engagement at the Public Education & Business Coalition. "If they want to try to run a choice school on their own terms and prove that it works along the lines of (Denver School of Science & Technology), great." *Jeremy P. Meyer: 303-954-1367 or jpmeyer@denverpost.com*

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