

Borough's 2nd charter school awaiting approval

New institution would be called New World Prep and open next September

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Life as a middle school student is tough enough, what with getting used to a new building, changing classes at every bell and dealing with the social challenges of adolescence.

Add a language barrier to the mix, and focusing on schoolwork becomes nearly impossible.

The New World Preparatory Charter School is hoping to alleviate some of those challenges, with bilingual educators, dual-language instruction and additional supports for every student's family, organizers said. The school, under the management of Victory Schools Inc., would serve students in grades six through eight and would accept 125 students in its first year, with a total enrollment of 375. Students would be selected through a lottery.

2010 OPENING

The school was granted approval by the State University of New York and is awaiting final approval from the state Board of Regents, officials said. Approval could be forthcoming as early as next month but will likely take longer.

If approval is granted, New World Prep will be the borough's second charter school and will open in September 2010. The first charter school, the John W. Lavelle Preparatory Charter School, opened its doors earlier this month.

Charter schools are publicly funded but privately

run, with more flexibility in their operations than traditional public schools. State officials recently raised the cap on such facilities from 100 to 200, with 50 designated for the city.

There are currently 99 charter schools throughout New York City, city officials said. The idea for New World Prep came from several nonprofit groups that work with lower-income and immigrant families on Staten Island.

"With poor immigrants, there's more pressure on them to leave school," said John Tobin, chairman of the New World Prep school board. "They become embarrassed by their inability to understand what's going on around them or to fully understand what their assignments are. We want to give them the skills to be more productive members of our community."

INFUSING CURRICULUM

That involves infusing the curriculum with themes of social justice and civic leadership, Tobin said. He said the school will use poet Emma Lazarus' lines on the Statue of Liberty as inspiration, with the goal of fully integrating students into society.

"In order to do that, they have to fully understand society and their rights and responsibilities," he said. "We saw social justice as the basis of that."

The curriculum is still in the planning stages, and teachers and a principal are being sought. For information about openings or about the school, call 212-786-7900.

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