

New Hope Academy Dreams Up Opportunities for Students

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The solution sounds simple enough:

Dream big.

Too often, though, the phrase has been dismissed as a slogan for commercials sandwiched between Saturday morning cartoons. But Isiah Anderson understands its value. He envisions a sign at his school's entrance that reads, "The Dream Center."

"Kids aren't dreaming enough," says the President of Three Cord Youth Services and head administrator of New Hope Academy Charter School. "We have to train kids to understand that we live in a global society in which the possibilities are limitless. It's important to prepare students to become leaders, not managers. And you need to be a dreamer in order to think like a leader."

Anderson developed the plan for New Hope Academy

Charter School with the intent of creating a small and diverse learning environment that fosters close relationships and helps children reach their full potential. As a charter school, New Hope Academy is an independent, nonsectarian public school that children may attend free of cost. The charter, granted by the state, ensures that the school has greater accountability for its performance.

New Hope Academy Charter School utilizes the educational model developed by High-Tech High School in San Diego, CA, as a starting point. This proven school design will be adapted to fit the needs and conditions of the York community.

The school's curriculum is founded on the use of technology, community interaction, and character education.

"We aim to have a strong technology base, and use it to accomplish our mission,"

Anderson says. "With the proper support, kids will meet expectations. Those from less-than-ideal backgrounds can be successful."

A Different Model

More and more students today experience little or no connection between the lessons taught in their classroom and the world around them. While the traditional, mainstream educational model works for average and above average students, it allows others to slip into patterns of poor performance and disconnectedness. New Hope Academy Charter School is focused on helping those students in particular who are either underperforming or not being served by their current educational situation.

"Students are put into boxes too easily," says Anderson. "We want to target those who are not living up to their potential, and who are at risk for becoming faceless

and disengaged with their education."

New Hope Academy Charter School aims to keep learning environments small, with no more than 20 students per classroom. Anderson says that this size will help develop stronger connections between students and teachers.

"Many schools have become too large, too impersonal," he says. "I'm not surprised that students are lashing out—we're not reaching them effectively. There must be an examination of the current system. Studies have shown that smaller environments work better, and produce real changes in kids. And having an attitude of partnership is so important to that process."

New Hope Academy Charter School will set high goals for academic achievement, including PSSA test scores. Anderson is quick to acknowledge that standardized test scores must not be regarded as the ultimate end, but instead as a byproduct of success.

"It's not our job to just increase test scores," he says. "We have to concentrate on the students, concentrate on building relationships. If we are able to engage them with the curriculum, test scores will naturally improve."

The school will incorporate a number of different assessment methods. Students will be evaluated by community and peer review panels; on project-based exhibits and portfolios; and state assessments.

New Hope Academy Charter School also emphasizes leadership and entrepreneurial spirit. Students are required to become involved in community service projects, planning and engaging themselves in areas that will increase their

graders job shadow leaders in the community, and twelfth graders select internships and experience different career tracks.

"When you scratch beneath the surface of many under-achieving students, you realize that they have those natural leadership qualities and an entrepreneurial spirit," says Anderson. "I believe strongly that every student should graduate to something, whether it's college, technical school, a job—and we have to begin that dialogue early on. It doesn't mean just approaching the topic in their senior year."

Open Registration

New Hope Academy Charter School currently has an open registration policy. The school has 168 slots available for seventh and eighth grade for the 2007-2008 school year. York city residents receive first priority, and county residents may fill any remaining slots. If the number of applicants exceeds maximum capacity, the school will hold a lottery to determine enrollment.

"We expect to grow to seventh through twelfth grade in the coming years, and hopefully become a model of a successful, small community charter school," Anderson says. "Eventually we would like New Hope Academy Charter School to be a learning lab for the rest of the country, a place that educators can visit and then take ideas back to their own communities."

Anderson is confident that the school will develop strong bonds with the area.

"The thing is, York is small enough that what we're doing will have an effect on the community," he says. "A lot of people out there are going

A Smart Choice.

charter school (n.)

A public school operated independently of the local school board, often with a curriculum and educational philosophy different from the other schools in the system.

Choose to put them on the right path!

QUICK FACTS

- NHACS will begin with grades 7 and 8 in 2007-2008.
- NHACS will enroll York City School District applicants prior to admitting county students.
- The focus of NHACS will be rigorous academic, scholarship classes, state-of-the-art technology, real world experiences, character education and small classroom settings.
- Community service, job shadowing and internships are an integral part of the school design.
- Students will be required to complete in-depth projects on each grade level.

Tuition is FREE, NHACS is a public school.



Where Dreams Begin

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