

Proposed Charter School Promises Bilingual Kids

International Charter School of Atlanta would potentially serve Forsyth, Fulton, Cherokee, Cobb, Gwinnett and DeKalb counties.

By [Ann Marie Quill \(Patch Staff\)](#) Updated February 27, 2013 at 4:45 pm

A group of parents hoping to bring a new charter school to South Forsyth that would potentially serve students in six counties, including Fulton, introduced themselves to the community at a Fowler Park town hall in Cumming on Tuesday.

The International Charter School of Atlanta, if approved, would be open to students from Forsyth, Fulton, Cherokee, Cobb, Gwinnett and DeKalb counties, with the ultimate goal of its students becoming bilingual.



The school would implement a multi-language immersion program in all grades (K-8). Parents would choose a three-language track from English, Spanish, Mandarin, French and German, with English and Spanish being required.

"Our local schools do not provide the training that our students need to compete in the global marketplace," said founding member Marisa Kashapov.

"Understanding the language is understanding the heart of the culture," said Raphael Vandeplass.

The board members also worked to dispel "myths"

surrounding charter schools, assuring parents that charter schools are, in fact, public and free, and that while charter schools are granted more flexibility in their curriculum, they are also more accountable.

"We can have our charter revoked if we don't meet the goals we've set forth," said board member Kristine Evjen, who also addressed how charter schools are funded. As public schools, they receive a combination of federal, state and local money. She said that while there is a perception that charter schools take away money from local schools, in reality that doesn't happen because "we are a district public school."

Evjen explained that the school is planning to accept 300 students, and there are 300 public schools in the six counties. For example, the school might only take one student from each school, which is not significant enough to take money away from their budget, she said.

The school is in the process of petitioning with the state to operate, and expects the process to take at least a year. The members do not expect the school to open this August, as they previously stated.

The school has had some 200 "intents to apply," with spots open for 300 students. If more than 300 apply, a lottery will be held. Board members are scouting school locations in South Forsyth convenient to GA 400.



The board members also answered questions from the standing-room-only crowd of parents in attendance.

Some parents were concerned that there was too much of a focus on language, and not enough on math, science and extra-curricula activities, but board members said the school would offer a full curriculum.

Board members also encouraged parents to submit "intents to apply," as the more interest there is in the school, the more likely it would be approved and could possibly expand the number of students accepted as well as programs and grades.

For more information on the International Charter School of Atlanta, visit www.icsatlanta.org.

