

Language immersion charter school OK'd

Will serve Forsyth-north Fulton area

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SOUTH FORSYTH — A language immersion charter school that was first slated for south Forsyth received approval from the state charter school commission earlier this week.

During a meeting on Wednesday, the commission voted to approve an application for the International Charter School of Atlanta from its board.

Now that the facility has received approval from the state commission, officials plan to open it for kindergarten through fourth grade in August 2015, said board member Marisa Kashapov.

"The commission just voted on Wednesday to approve our application, and they voted unanimously," Kashapov said.

The International Charter School of Atlanta, or ICSA, according to its website, will "offer dual-language education to all students in English along with one other language - Spanish, German, Mandarin or French."

The school, which will be located in northern Fulton County, has been in the works for many years, with the board first applying to the state charter commission in 2013.

At that time, Kashapov said, the board thought Forsyth would be the best location for the school.

That application, however, was denied by the commission for four primary reasons, including inadequate governing capacity, a budget that created financial uncertainty and no plan to implement the school's "extremely rigorous" academic program.

In May, Kashapov said she and her other fellow board members used what they learned from that rejection when reapplying this spring.

"We took everything into account that the charter commission recommended," she said. "We said we would improve our model. It's a

learning process and we're a lot stronger, both on our board as well as the education model we're presenting this year."

Kashapov said budget concerns were addressed by relocating the school from south Forsyth to north Fulton.

"When you look at the budget ... a few properties in north Fulton County were ideal for a school, so it wouldn't take a lot of build-out because they were already set for a school building," she said, noting that the school will serve students from several counties, including Forsyth.

At the time the new application was submitted in May, some 550 people had filled out intentions to attend if it were approved.

"And now, I'm sure that number is much higher because we're been getting around 20 more people signing up almost every day," said Kashapov, noting that based on the intentions to attend, ICSA will draw students from Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Cobb, Cherokee and DeKalb counties.

Jennifer Caracciolo, a spokeswoman for the Forsyth County Board of Education, said local school leaders had no comment on the approval of the charter school.

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