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July 2, 2010

Mid-City Gets Its Own Charter School

By Jessica Pauline Ogilvie, Mid-City Press Contributing Writer

WASHINGTON BLVD.—New Los Angeles Charter School, a middle school currently located in a church in the Mid-Wilshire area, will move to the Mid-City area this fall.

The school, which currently has 150 students in grades 6 and 7, will also welcome their first 8th grade class, with a total enrollment for all three grades of 300.

Matt Albert, the school's executive director, said there was a distinct need to open a school in the area.

"There is no middle school in Mid-City," he said.

Currently, Albert said, local students have only two options: two endure early morning bus rides to schools out of the area, or try to get into the highly popular Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies (LACES) Magnet School.

The school first opened in 2008. But once Albert and other staff members realized that the school—with a current waitlist of approximately 80 students—would continue to grow, they began scouting other locations.

Eventually, they came across an abandoned brick warehouse on Washington Boulevard and Burnside Avenue.

The 24,000 square-foot building was unoccupied at the time. Since then, construction crews have gutted it. The interior now features a large skylight, nine classrooms and two science labs. Across the street, a 99-seat theater will house the school's arts program.

In the new location, there will be 12 full-time teachers with a teacher to student ratio of 1:25, as opposed to the typical 35-plus classrooms of many Los Angeles Unified School District schools, according to Albert. Students are accepted to the school based on a random lottery.

So far, New Los Angeles Charter is reporting above-average academic performance. Based on the state's academic performance index, or API, the charter school ranks 7th out of 107 Los Angeles middle schools.

Many charter schools create and teach curriculum centered on a concept or discipline, like the arts, science or technology. New Los Angeles' focus is on social justice.

"We want to prepare our students for college, community engagement, and to go out and volunteer," said Albert. "Part of the goal is to make the student aware that they live in a larger society."



HOPEFUL—Tonikaa Orange, with one of her twin 5-year-old daughters, listens to a presentation about the new school which is currently under construction on Washington Blvd.