

Pleasanton, CA  
(Alameda Co.)  
Tri-Valley Herald  
(Cir. 5xW. 34,100)  
(Cir. S. 35,600)

DEC - 4 2009

Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

# Charter looks <sup>350</sup> to boost capacity

■ Livermore school, wanting to serve more than 1,000 students, awaits approval

By Eric Louie

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LIVERMORE — Organizers of the Livermore Valley Charter School's high school expansion, already approved by the state to open next fall, are looking to double their capacity to more than 1,000 students.

Charter school officials said that although they are working with nearby Dublin parents who want to start a charter high school there, it has nothing to do with the plans to expand the upcoming Livermore Valley Charter Preparatory High School.

## IF YOU GO

■ **WHAT:** Meeting of the state Advisory Commission on Charter Schools, an advisory body to the state Board of Education

■ **WHEN:** 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday

■ **WHERE:** California Department of Education, 1430 N St., Room 1101, Sacramento.

The proposal will go before the state Advisory Commission on Charter Schools on Wednesday. The state Department of Education staff has recommended its approval, said Carol Barkley, director of the department's charter school division. The commission advises the state Board of Education, which gives final approval.

This summer the state board, in an appeal after denials from the Livermore school district and the Alameda County Office of Education, approved the high school for up to 540 students with no more than 110 ninth-graders in the first year.

The proposed expansion would allow 270 students per grade level beginning in 2011-12, said Bill Batchelor, chief operating officer for the Livermore Charter Learning Corporation. He said, if approved, the expansion would not change the school's first-year enrollment plans. One additional grade would still be added each following year until reaching all

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high school grades.

Batchelor said the expansion request is in response to concerns from the state.

The high-performing kindergarten-through-eighth-grade Livermore Valley Charter School has been criticized by some for not reflecting the demographics of the city, with some saying it is a public institution for the elite.

The state, in an analysis last summer, noted state charter commission members have been concerned about the high school's ability achieve the district's ethnic

and racial balance since the admission process gives preference to students at the existing K-8 school. The county office of education had similar concerns.

Additionally, the one state board member who voted against the approval was concerned the plan was too structured around high-achieving students, and thought the school's application describing the school's potential students as "highly motivated" sends a message that only those students are welcome.

Further comment from the state on this issue in light of the expansion was unavailable this week.

"It's reality to create space

for students," Batchelor said. He said the K-8 school is full with 905 students this year, with a waiting list of about 500. Next year they will expand to their maximum capacity of 932. "Given the fact we have extensive wait lists there definitely is a demand."

Batchelor said the expansion plans have nothing to do with a group of parents called the Dublin Learning Corporation who want to start the charter Tassajara Preparatory High School beginning in fall 2012. Organizers of that school, who plan to submit their proposal to the Dublin school district this month, have said plans are still being developed. Still to be decided is the number of

students to be served and which high school grades would be included in the beginning years.

Batchelor said while Livermore charter school staff is volunteering to help the Dublin charter school organizers, with collaboration possible in the future, that is common in the charter school community. He said the Livermore high school plans still give preference to students living in the Livermore school district.

"It has nothing <sup>350</sup> to do with them at all," he said. "None of that has anything to do with our high school."