

One school believes ‘inspired’ teachers are the answer

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Aleta Margolis, founder of the Center for Inspired Teaching, says she is excited to demonstrate the organization's education philosophy in a school setting. (Allyson Byers/Medill News Service)

The Inspired Teaching School isn't your typical charter school. It doesn't offer a groundbreaking educational experience and its founders don't necessarily believe charter schools are the answer to improving education.

“We are a charter [school] because it's a structure that allows us be a public school that serves all kids and also start our own [school], less because we say charter schools are the answer to a particular problem,” says Aleta Margolis, co-founder of the school.

Founded by the Center for Inspired Teaching, an educational organization that trains teachers across D.C., the Center will use the school to demonstrate its philosophy that if every classroom has an

inspired teacher that values and helps develop a child's imagination, intellect, inquiry and integrity equally, students can reach their full intellect and creative potential. Unlike some charter schools, the founders say this school is not geared towards one type of student. "We honestly believe every child can thrive in this environment and that we are looking to demonstrate that," says Margolis. "The kind of child that will thrive is someone who's curious and interested in learning and I would say that's every child. If a child appears not to be curious in learning, something has happened to turn off that innate curiosity."

It does offer a unique approach to teaching instruction and the charter school movement. It will feature a teacher residency program in which new teachers will spend a year in a classroom with a veteran teacher. The founders say this program allows the charter school to work with local traditional public schools.

"We are a charter school that doesn't compete with public schools, but enhance it because we have the residency of the inspired teacher certification program embedded in the charter school," says Margolis, "so the school will be producing new teachers that will be D.C. Public School certified teachers who then will then go out and serve the kids throughout the city,"

The school has held several open houses to answer parents' concerns and share its philosophy and reasons for opening a school. In order to reach parents who may not access the Internet regularly, the board of directors and staff will be going door-to-door and getting out into the community.

"We want to make sure we reach out to a broader spectrum," says Principal Zoe Duskin. "[It's] the kind of strategy that takes a lot of time and energy, but ensures that we reach out to families in all

neighborhoods and all income brackets.”

The Inspired Teaching School will open its doors in August with a target enrollment of 156 students in Preschool-3rd grade.