



Press Release

The South Carolina Public Charter School District

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Enrollment Increasing Quickly at New School with Focus on Learning Chinese Language

South Carolina's first public charter school to offer an immersion program for learning Chinese has already caught on with many parents and students. The Cayce-based East Point Academy is opening August 2011 and will begin by serving students in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. The school administration will be adding third grade next year and additional grades in future years. The language immersion system allows students to learn a foreign language through the integration of the language into the curriculum throughout the school day. Since starting enrollment a few weeks ago, over fifty families have already pre-enrolled their children, and interest continues to grow.

"We're extremely excited about East Point Academy," says Dr. Wayne Brazell, Ph. D., Superintendent of the South Carolina Public Charter School District, which is the authorizer for the public school. "Foreign language immersion programs in other states have demonstrated extraordinary results, including highly successful outcomes for young students who have learned Chinese at such schools. We're fortunate to have this public school choice option for parents in South Carolina. Solid research shows that students who become bilingual can gain significant academic benefits lasting a lifetime."

The academic approach at East Point Academy will facilitate learning for many types of students, including those who have no prior knowledge of Chinese or foreign language learning in general. In contrast to a public magnet school, a public charter school does not have admissions requirements. Parents and students choose public charter schools, which are free for students of public school age. Under most conditions, opening a school based around Chinese language immersion would be cost-prohibitive, but the Confucius Institute of South Carolina is helping to underwrite the costs of starting the school through a generous donation.

The new school is located at 1340 Knox Abbot Drive in Cayce, SC. Because it is authorized by the state-wide public charter school district, students residing anywhere in the state can attend. The East Point Academy school board continues to hold information meetings for anyone who would like to learn more about the school. Interested parents can access the web site for the school, which is www.eastpointsc.org or call 803-719-1655.

"This public school will offer the same state-wide curriculum as any other public school in South Carolina, but the lessons will also gradually develop Chinese language skills for the students" says Clay Eaton, Director of Special Programs for the charter school district. "It's really inspiring to see public education in South Carolina continue to educate the business leaders, diplomats, and global citizens of tomorrow," Eaton adds.

A recent report on international business from the South Carolina Department of Commerce states that China is one of the top five export markets for the state. In 2009, China purchased over \$869 million of goods from South Carolina, which was up forty percent over the past five years, per the report.