

City school board approves new charter school

The Learning Academy to open in 2027

NEWSROOM

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A new public charter school is scheduled to open in late 2027 after approval by the Dalton Board of Education during the Feb. 9 monthly meeting.

Known as The Learning Academy of Northwest Georgia, the new school was first discussed following a partnership between Dalton State College and the LEARNING Foundation of Georgia, an independent nonprofit board, in early 2025.

Operating under a charter with the Dalton Public Schools system, The Learning Academy is set to be a public school of choice enrolling students from pre-kindergarten through third grade, with the goal of eventually serving students from fourth grade to

12th grade.

Dalton Public Schools Superintendent Steven Craft said the partnership with Dalton State is an "important investment in the future of" the system and the community.

"By intentionally developing and supporting future educators, we are strengthening our workforce and ensuring our students continue to learn from highly qualified, well-prepared teachers," Craft said.

According to the college, charter schools are "granted flexibility from certain state and local regulations to design unique educational programs in exchange for meeting rigorous student performance goals aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence."

Some of those unique pro-

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grams are set to include foundational elements including classical education, outdoor play and personalized learning plans, as well as English and Spanish dual-immersion instruction.

"The classical education model is a time-tested approach that includes a strong focus on reading, language arts, literature, history and exposure to Latin," said college officials. "It builds a strong intellectual and social foundation at every stage of a student's development."

According to Dalton State, college students in education will also be afforded the opportunity to "actively engage" with students through the collaboration with the academy.

"Meanwhile, Dalton State faculty will collaborate closely with these

students and teachers to refine best practices and share innovative approaches with regional (kindergarten through 12th grade) partners," Dalton State officials stated in a press release.

Alongside English language learners, The Learning Academy will "welcome students of all abilities and backgrounds," including "students with special needs and those from economically disadvantaged communities," the release states.

Students living in several nearby counties, including Whitfield, Murray, Catoosa, Gordon and Walker counties will be eligible to enroll in the academy.



SUBMITTED

The Learning Academy of Northwest Georgia, a new charter school serving students from pre-kindergarten through third grade, is set to open in late 2027 after approval from Dalton Board of Education members in February. Born out of a partnership between the school system, Dalton State College and the LEARNING Foundation of Georgia, the public school of choice is scheduled to eventually enroll students from fourth through 12th grade in the future.

While still in the early stages of development, Dalton Public Schools' Deputy Superintendent Nick Sun said the approval of the new charter school "marks a significant milestone" for the system and community.

"We know we have more work to do, but we are grateful for the strong partnership with Dalton State that has made this possible and we look forward to collaboration as we work together to expand educational opportunities and strengthen outcomes for students," Sun said.

As planning regarding funding, enrollment procedures and governance continues to be developed, LEARNING Foundation board member Sharon Hixon said those at the institution are "excited" to see the enhancements in K-12 education.

Alongside Hixon, the LEARNING Foundation's board includes Chairman John Minor, Dalton State College President John Fuchko III and Vice President for Institutional Advancement David Elrod and community volunteers Cindy Howalt, Tangela Johnson, Julia Patterson, Jessica Trivino and Larry Winter.

"We look forward to building on our multiple partnerships through placement of our education students at the Learning Academy of Northwest Georgia as we work to support the success of the K-12 school systems we serve," said Hixon.