

## Plan for Afro-centric boys charter school

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A longtime counselor in the Rochester School District hopes to start an all-boys charter high school with an Afro-centric curriculum.

The school would be called JABEA Boys Academy Charter School. The word means "gift" in Duala, a language spoken in Cameroon, where prospective school founder Jane EwaneSobe was born. She was a teacher in Cameroon for six years, then came to the United States in 1981 and has been a school counselor in Rochester since 1991, most recently at East High School. In Cameroon, she said, classes often had 45 or 50 students for one teacher, but were seldom unruly.

"I had no fights because the children knew what was expected of them," she said. "I know that when you care about children and have high expectations, they do well."

JABEA would be an allboys school for grades 7-12, beginning in its first year with about 120 seventh- graders, according to an excerpt of its letter of intent to the New York State Education Department.

It would provide career- focused education for students starting in middle school, hold classes six days a week and place particular emphasis on "self-identity," she said. "When students understand themselves a little bit more, I'm sure they'll value education more," EwaneSobe said. "Right now as a school counselor, I have a pain in my chest because our children don't look at education as freedom. They look at it like punishment." The Baobab Cultural Center would provide arts and cultural programming as well as culturallyresponsive professional development for teachers.

EwaneSobe previously attempted to advance to an administrative position in the city school district, then sued when she was passed over, alleging discrimination based on national origin. A federal court dismissed her claim in 2011. To open a charter school in New York is a lengthy process. The first step is a letter of intent, which school organizers said has been submitted. Successful applicants are then guided through a series of more rigorous steps, usually over the course of several years.

Valerie Nolan, a Buffalo- based charter school consultant who has worked with Discovery Charter School in Greece, is helping with JABEA's application. Moka Lantum, a medical consultant, is a co-founder, along with EwaneSobe.

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