

# Charter school lands in Greece

## Renaissance will move into former Kirk Road Elementary

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Staff writer

The Greece Central School District is getting its first charter school that doesn't prioritize enrollment on the basis of family income. On Aug. 25, the Renaissance Charter School of the Arts will open its doors in the former Kirk Road Elementary School building. For now, the school will offer classes in kindergarten through second grade, but the goal is to open up one new grade level each year until topping out at sixth grade.

While the school's inaugural student body of 194 is predominantly from Rochester, admission is open to any child eligible for public school education in New York.

"We were very fortunate to find this school," said David Silver, former principal of Rochester's School of the Arts and Renaissance Academy's director of arts/operations. "It's just a lovely facility, on 15 acres of rolling hills, the kind of place

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that when you close your eyes, you imagine your child being, where they can go and walk to a pond and nature trail and those kinds of things."

Indeed, the former Kirk Road school, built in 1968, is nestled into a neighborhood of suburban housing tracts in central Greece. Round Pond Creek runs nearby, and the school's ample green spaces have playing fields and a children's playground. The building was closed by the district in 2012 in the midst of consolidations spurred by declining overall enrollment.

It has been up for sale since, with an asking price of \$1.4 million. Initially, Renaissance Charter School of the Arts was slated to open for the 2014-15 school year in the Rochester School District. The state Board of Regents approved the school's charter term in December 2013. But, Silver said, the school couldn't find an appropriate location in Rochester, so the search was expanded. The Board of Regents approved changing the charter school district of location to the Greece Central School District in June.

Details of any pending lease agreements were not provided by the Greece Central School District. Minutes and agendas of Board of Education meetings posted online do not reflect any specifics of the arrangements with Renaissance.

Silver said last-minute details are still being hammered out. The school will contract with Greece for food service.

Documents filed with the state Education Department show Renaissance will use five self-contained classrooms and three spaces in the 55,663 square-foot school's open room design for its classes. Additionally, the school will use an art room, physical education and dance space, computer lab, library and offices. Purchase of the space is anticipated by April 2015.

The academic program at the school will be heavily invested in the arts. During the extended days — and longer school year — kids at all grade levels will have instruction in music, dance, drama and visual arts every day.

"When you think about it, most children going to elementary school are really going to have only 35 or 36 sessions of arts a year, and we will have 191 sessions in each of the four arts," said Silver. "And our art teachers will be part of our academic team, and our

academic classes would see an integration of the arts.”

Additionally, each grade level will have a reading specialist, a speech pathologist and a special educator to work with students and teachers.

And, Silver said, another significant focus at the school will be on character development, on developing strong habits of mind that are critical concepts for children to internalize. Those include loyalty, teamwork, gratitude, honesty, caring, persistence, self-confidence, self-control and dozens of other vital attitudes and attributes. Greece’s first charter school, Discovery Charter School, which largely has a student body of children from Rochester and sorts enrollment by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunches, relocated to the former Odyssey Academy building on Hoover Road in 2013. “The wonderful thing about this school is, every child needs a place to shine, and besides in academics, many schools have found that athletics are a place for children to do that,” said Silver. “What we have done here is multiply the places for children to shine, in art and music and dance.”

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**The former Kirk Road Elementary School building in Greece will house a charter school.**

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