

# Latin Big Part of Proposed New South Loop Charter School

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Students at Savannah Classical Academy in Savannah, Ga. A group of Chicago parents want to bring the Classical charter network to the South Loop.

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Savannah Classical Academy

**SOUTH LOOP** — South Loop parents could have a new option for their children's education: a charter school.

Chicago Classical Academy shares the philosophy of other similar schools in New York, Georgia and Texas with curriculum that includes Latin and liberal arts. Backers say they intend to apply to open a school in the South Loop.

The effort is led by Alice Epstein and Heidi Schroeder, who say the school is sorely needed in the burgeoning neighborhood. Epstein used to drive her daughter from their Canaryville home all the way to Taft Academic Center on the city's Northwest Side.

"That was miserable," she said.

Even now, her daughter travels to East Garfield Park to attend Westinghouse College Prep.

Classical Academy would require at least two years of Latin courses in high school and more throughout middle school. Teachers also aim to coordinate their curriculum: for example, a student could learn about ancient Egyptian society in history class then study hieroglyphics afterward in art.

"Classes work for each other," Epstein said.

Teachers "will emphasize the mastery of basic content (grammar), development of abstract thought (logic) and the art of expression (rhetoric)," according to the proposed school's [website](#). Students "will be introduced to the great works of art, music and literature, to heroes and to legends, to scientific discoveries that have advanced our civilization."

The board putting together the proposal hasn't yet found a location for the school, and Epstein said big-ticket fundraising won't start until the city approves the plan. The group plans to apply to open the charter school by the April 28 deadline, and expects to conduct neighborhood meetings on the proposal afterward.

If the Chicago Board of Education OKs plan by the November deadline, Chicago Classical Academy would go through a year-long "incubation" period before it opens, Epstein said. The school would open in fall 2018 if things go as planned.

Chicago Classical would admit students from across the city and, like other publicly-funded charter schools, there would be no tuition. The school would open for kindergarten through fifth grade at the beginning, but eventually middle- and high-school grades would open as enrollment rises.

Schroeder, a former school teacher in Chicago, said the school plans to have two classes of 25 pupils per grade to start.

Charter schools have been controversial in recent years in Chicago, where their [expansion is opposed by the Chicago Teachers Union](#) and their [claims of outperforming public schools have been scrutinized by various studies](#). Residents on the [Far North](#) and [Southwest](#) sides have balked at recent charter school proposals.

Supporters, like Mayor Rahm Emanuel, say charter schools provide parents with an alternative to typical public education and create competition that forces all schools to be better.

In the South Loop, where parents lament the lack of a neighborhood high school and [\(for now\) struggle with their overcrowded elementary school](#), families with young children often leave the neighborhood, she said.

"As a parent I'm simply saying that this is a public school that is offering a different choice to you and your children," Epstein said. "Education is clearly not working right now for a lot of students in the city and it behooves us to try something new."

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