

Moreno Valley charter school wins OK on fourth try, will open in September

The Riverside County school board's approval follows a 'marathon' of petitions, meetings and appeals.



Tiffany Gilmore, founder and chief executive officer of the Garvey/Allen Visual and Performing Arts Academy for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, is seen after the Riverside County Board of Education voted 6-0 Wednesday, April 3, to clear the way for the Moreno Valley charter school to open. (Courtesy of Tiffany Gilmore)

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After being **rejected three times** since September, the persevering proponents of a Moreno Valley charter school have the green light to open in September.

On Wednesday, April 3, the Riverside County Board of Education voted 6-0, with one abstention, to clear the way for the Garvey/Allen Visual and Performing Arts Academy for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics to serve students in fifth-through eighth-grades the next four school years.

County school board member Susan Rainey said by phone Thursday the approval doesn't mean Moreno Valley Unified School District is failing to meet the needs of area youth, but is a recognition of the community's desire for a wider selection of education choices.

Board President Barbara Hale said: "Although the Moreno Valley school district is doing some fabulous things, parents want some other options."

And, Hale added, “we support parent choice.”

The Moreno Valley school board twice **rejected supporters’ plan** — in September **and February**. And, twice, academy founder and Chief Executive Officer Tiffany Gilmore appealed. **The first appeal to the county board fell just** shy in December of the votes needed to overturn the Moreno Valley school board’s decision. Gilmore received plenty of votes Wednesday.

“Perseverance is one of our pillars,” Gilmore said. “We wanted to show that to our families.”

“I know it felt like a marathon,” she added.

Gilmore first proposed a fifth-through-12th grade school, but later scaled back plans. She now projects first-year enrollment of 225 students, including 25 fifth-graders, 125 sixth-graders, 50 seventh-graders and 25 eighth-graders.

The academy will have nine teachers, she said. Its location will be announced in a few days, once a lease is finalized.

The school will have more sixth-graders in the beginning because those children are coming out of elementary school and it will be easier for them to transition to a charter school, she said. Enrollment will increase each year, reaching 475 by year four, Gilmore said.

Enrollment is open now via **the academy’s website** through May 24, she said. The first day of school is Sept. 4.

“Our vision is to be able to affect the lives of the historically disenfranchised minority students in our community,” Gilmore said.

Rainey, who voted against the academy during the earlier appeal, said she still has concerns about whether proponents can deliver on promises.

“But they have done their homework, and they were prepared (at Wednesday’s meeting),” she said. “I wish them well and I look forward to observing the school as it rolls out.”

Information: 951-387-8326 or **www.garveyallenacademy.com**.