

# PLAINFIELD TODAY

*The needler in the haystack.*

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Tuesday, November 18, 2008

**Plainfield readies for a charter school focused on music and excellence**



Plainfielders got a sneak peek Monday evening at a new charter school that will be opening here in September 2009.

The school's unique aspect is the tight correlation of music in every aspect of the school's proposed curriculum, programs and activities.

"We are not selecting for musical aptitude," said founder and board president Dr. Norman Pressman, "but are opening the school to all applicants and will use music and the appreciation of music to enrich the academic and life experience of the students."

Pressman noted that all students would participate in choral activities as part of entering the charter school, and noted that the school was

avoiding preference for aptitude with any particular musical instrument as that often leaves lower socio-economic students at a disadvantage.

The school is named after Pressman's late sister, Dr. Ellen G. Pressman, who was an educator and principal in New Jersey who passed away in 2007 after battling pancreatic cancer.

With a ratio of one teacher to twenty students, the school will offer intensive contact on an instructional basis. Beginning with a projected 160 students evenly divided between grades 6 and 7 in the 2009-10 academic year, the school would expand to 240 students in the 2011-12 year as the 7th graders move up to 8th grade.

As part of the admission process, each student and his or her parents will craft an individualized educational plan, which will include metrics and development of a student portfolio.

In the arena of character development, students will learn about the roots of genocide and the Holocaust, as well as learning to deal with bullying, and with developing processes for making wise life decisions as a lifelong pattern.

At the moment, a fact sheet and application form are available at the Plainfield Public Library as well as on the school's website ([here](#)).

As the state requires with New Jersey charter schools, a blind lottery will be used, and a waiting list developed for those who don't make their first chance at enrolling (if anyone drops out during the year, the slot is offered to the next person on the waiting list).

With applications currently being accepted, Pressman was optimistic that parents who enroll a student in the next two weeks or so, before the first blind lottery, would have an excellent chance of being included in the opening classes.

Charter schools are publicly funded public schools in the state of New Jersey. Their funds are derived from the allocation formulas set up by the state for each school district. While they are public schools and work in close association with the County Superintendent of Schools and the NJ Department of Education, they are governed by an

independent Board of Trustees.

While no firm decisions about a building have been made yet, Pressman said several promising sites had been located in the community and the process of narrowing down the choice would get under way shortly.

A second informational meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 24, at 7 PM at the Plainfield Public Library, where questions may be asked and registration forms picked up.

For more information visit the website ([here](#)) or call (908) 668-7770.

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- Website: "Pressman Charter School"
  - <http://www.pressmancharterschools.com>

-- Dan Damon