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# Proposed biliteracy school in southern Delaware awaiting approval from state Dept. of Education

A proposed dual-language charter school in Georgetown aims to preserve cultural roots while fostering academic success.



By Johnny Perez-Gonzalez · January 11, 2025



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A proposed new charter school in southern Delaware's Georgetown aims to better serve the area's Latino population, which makes up more than 50% of residents.

The town has become a microcosm of the challenges and opportunities that come with cultural integration. Many Latino families have had to grapple with a tradeoff: sacrificing their language and traditions to secure better educational opportunities for their children.

However, the new dual-language charter school proposed by ASPIRA Delaware aims to change that.

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“Our vision is to create that pathway to [biliteracy](#),” said Margie López Waite, CEO of ASPIRA Delaware. “But not just for the sake of children being able to speak two languages, but it’s the impact that that has on a community. You can’t build relationships with people if you can’t communicate with them. You can’t communicate with them if you don’t speak the language.”

The school is being designed to meet the unique needs of Georgetown's Latino families, many of whom have struggled to maintain their language and traditions while adapting to life in the U.S. López Waite shared heartfelt stories from families who hope the school will allow their children to embrace both their heritage and their new home.

“What I really feel and hear from them from their heart is that they are proud of who they are,” she said. “They’re proud of the countries they come from. They’re proud of the language and the

culture and the traditions that they represent as a family. They want their children to have that

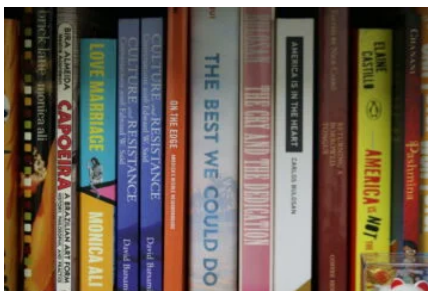
same sense of pride.”

“All of the individuals that came to the first meeting, gave statements of support and shared personal stories and their personal experiences, and made the point as to why they feel the school’s necessary,” she added.

López Waite emphasized that many families struggle with a painful choice.

“They feel that, unfortunately, in order to just survive living here in the United States and navigating the school systems and navigating just life in general, that meant for many of them, their children are making a choice,” she explained. “They’re being forced to make a choice, and in order to assimilate into American culture, I must then sort of distance myself from my identity, my culture, my language.”

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The dual-language immersion model aims to change that dynamic by helping children maintain their cultural roots while excelling academically.

The school will be housed in Georgetown’s historic ice house on Depot Street, which has seen decades of use and disuse. Once a cornerstone of the town’s industrial and commercial identity, the brick structure has been a warehouse, a home to businesses, and even considered for apartment conversions before falling into neglect.

“Right now, the building’s not looking like much, but we have some great plans,” López Waite said. “We’re working with a great architect to really transform that building into a beautiful school.”

Renovations will begin as soon as the project receives final approval from the State Board of

Education. The process will take about 18 months. The first phase will focus on the ground floor to accommodate the initial cohort of students in September 2026.

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“We’re going to renovate the first floor first, and so that’s enough space for us to house kindergarten, first and second [grades],” she said. “Then [we] will continue to renovate the other floors and be able to accommodate the growth each year as we add a grade. And so at our full capacity, we’ll have 400 students in kindergarten through fifth grade.”

Through it all, they aim to serve as a bridge that unites the community, fostering connections across cultures, resources and opportunities. By working closely with local nonprofits such as La Esperanza, La Red, La Plaza, the Sussex Health Coalition, and the Georgetown Town Council, they hope to build a foundation of collaboration and shared progress.

Ultimately, the school’s impact is envisioned as going far beyond education.

“We want us to be able to come and basically help our communities come together because we do believe that the majority of our residents have a desire and are hopeful that that can happen,” Waite said. “But there really hasn’t been, I guess, sort of the catalyst, sort of the gel that brings these things together. And they are optimistic that having their children attending a school together could be maybe that catalyst.”

The State Board of Education is expected to rule on the school’s proposal at its meeting on January 16.

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Johnny Perez-Gonzalez reports on the state of Delaware for WHYY News.

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