

THE YORK DISPATCH

New Hope Academy deserves hearing

Article Last Updated:03/07/2007 10:45:45 AM EST

The York City School board was scheduled tonight to hear a proposed new charter school for the district's seventh- and eighth-graders with more than a touch of clinging bias toward the charter school concept.

The board's clashes with the operators of the Lincoln-Edison School on West King Street seem never to end and have led to several court confrontations that clearly have distracted board members from ongoing academic and building problems that have plagued the district for decades.

Isiah Anderson, the former William Penn Senior High School basketball coach who is spearheading the New Hope Academy Charter School clearly is aware of what he's up against in dealing with the school board.

He told The York Dispatch that he doesn't want that conflict hanging over his head and that he wants "a fair shot," noting that there is a clear difference between his project and Lincoln-Edison.

He deserves that fair shot, and the school board would be remiss not to go into the comment-gathering without leaving its clearly demonstrated bias against such facilities behind.

Board vice president Tom Foust's nitpicking of Anderson's application is uncalled for. His opposition to the Lincoln-Edison Charter School is well-established, and to carry that prejudice over to a new initiative is not in the best interests of the board nor of the students who may be attending the new school.

And board president Jeffrey Kirkland's anti-charter school attitude especially is not needed as the board hears comment on Anderson's proposal. As Anderson put his case, there is no way to respond to criticism from sitting board members except to prove the school will perform as promised.

It's clear that the York City schools are not meeting their goals, nor are they meeting the goals of the state or the federal No Child Left Behind program.

Bias against an existing charter school -- one that has successfully defended its existence despite board criticisms -- does not justify extending such views toward a new concept.

The New Hope Academy, to be operated out of the former St. Rose of Lima School at 459 W. King Street, would, according to Anderson, provide smaller class sizes, a longer school day, and immersion in electronic media for learning.

It is incumbent on the York City School board to give Anderson and his supporters a fair and open hearing -- and to give new ideas the chance they deserve.

The old ways, as they say, clearly are not working.