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Lincoln Academy adds another grade and 50 more slots for students

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer
Jan 19, 2021



Construction on The Lincoln Academy, a three-story 112,000 square-foot school on the Eclipse Campus, is about 90% complete. Enrollment runs Feb. 1-28.

Hillary Gavan



BELOIT — The Lincoln Academy will be adding one additional grade, or 50 more slots for students this fall.

The Kids First Board of Directors approved adding grade 6 to the school plan at a December meeting in order to better prepare students for higher level courses in high school.

Original plans called for 4K to second grades and seventh through ninth in the first year. With the addition of sixth grade, the school will go from being able to take 350 students in the first year to 400, Cole said.

A press release from Kids First Beloit cited data from the Wisconsin Forward exam in math for sixth graders 2018-2109 which found only 16.1% of all Beloit School District students were proficient in math. The figure was 2.8% for Black students; 10.8% for Hispanic students; and 31.9% for White students in the district, data which was verified on the portal of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction website, <https://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov>.

Given the data, The Lincoln Academy Chief Instructional Officer Kari Flitz said those at the school must assume students may need the sixth grade foundational year to meet grade-level expectations and to prepare them to take higher-level courses in high school. Without it, certain careers could be out of reach.



CEO Kristi Cole said the academic data for math as well as other subjects illustrates the need for the school.

The Lincoln Academy in Beloit is a K4 to grade 12 independent charter school opening in fall of 2021 on the Eclipse Campus at 608 Henry Ave. It will be a public school authorized through the University of Wisconsin System and has finalized contract negotiations with the University of Wisconsin Office of Educational Opportunity. Tuition will be free to families, and enrollment is open to any Wisconsin student.

In an interview on Monday, Cole shared some of the latest updates on construction, academic and sports offerings, staffing and what the independent charter can add to the education options in the community.

Cole said construction on the building is about 60% complete.

“Several classrooms are already constructed within the facility. It’s really progressing quickly and it will be ready for occupancy in July,” she said.

Each year the school will add two additional grade levels and four additional classes, or 100 students a year until it reaches 700. When asked if the school could go beyond 700 students, Cole said it’s possible.

“It depends on growth and the desire of the community. We have to take it one step at a time,” she said.



The school is looking to hire 60 staff members the first year and has hired five as of Monday. Positions were posted online on Dec. 20.

The Lincoln Academy is applying for the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association. Sports planned to be offered include: volleyball, cross country, track and field, golf, basketball and baseball. The Lincoln Academy has not had any formal conversation with the Beloit School District regarding partnerships on sports or other activities yet but hopes to have discussions in the future.

It's working on partnerships with the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club for activities and may consider reaching out to other smaller districts in regards to sports and activities.

Extra-curricular activities will be determined after students are enrolled and their interests are determined. Ten advanced placement classes will be offered.

When asked what the Lincoln Academy can offer the Beloit School District, Cole said those at the school would be open to sharing the practices it uses for professional development and may be able to offer the district more in the future.

“The opportunities for partnering could be endless. We are open,” Cole said.

For now, she said the school is working to establish itself and show results.



At the Lincoln Academy there will be a policy of no social promotion. It will also have a longer school day, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. due to a block added to the schedule for intervention and enrichment. With all the different grades in one building, Cole said there will be the potential for mentorships with older students and a family environment. Students will also wear uniforms.

As far as discipline, Cole said there will be clear consequences for specific actions. All staff, students as well as parents will have a clear set of expectations set forth in the “commitment to success” document which is signed by a parent/guardian, teacher and student.

School board meetings will be public and posted, however there will be no public comment at meetings, according to information from Lisa Furseth, secretary to the board of directors.

Furseth added the Lincoln Academy will have a parent advisory council which will be a council of our parents of enrolled students who will be able to provide input and feedback for staff and provide updates to the board. The school’s charter contract requires a climate survey be conducted each year.

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