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Board OKs three more charter schools in city

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The Baltimore school board approved last night the creation of three more charter schools, including an elementary school to feed into the city's most successful middle school and the replication of a school with a long wait list.

Two of the new charter schools, public schools that operate independently, will open in August 2009. One will open in 2010.

The Knowledge is Power Program, which operates the high-achieving KIPP Ujima Village Academy in Park Heights, was given the go-ahead to open KIPP Harmony Academy. The new elementary school will start with a class of 125 kindergartners and eventually grow to serve 590 students and feed into the middle school.

The popular City Neighbors Charter School in Northeast Baltimore gained approval to replicate itself with a second elementary/middle school and, in 2010, to start a high school serving students from both. The existing City Neighbors, which emphasizes project-based learning in a small environment, has a long wait list. The new elementary/middle school will serve 200 students; the high school will enroll 320.

The board denied an application for what would have been Foundations Charter School, which would have been located in the Oliver neighborhood.

The board also rejected the application of an existing school, The Stadium School, which wanted to convert into a charter. Stadium already operates like a charter, but it is financed like a regular school. School system officials were concerned about the school's failure to meet academic targets in recent years.

Last night's votes will bring the number of charter schools in Baltimore to 30. The city has the vast majority of charter schools in the state.

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