


# Buckeye charter school opens Goodyear campus

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Southwest Valley

by **Eddi Trevizo** - Nov. 7, 2011 10:38 AM

The Arizona Republic

More than 600 students are attending the Goodyear campus of Odyssey Preparatory Academy, which opened in August.

Officials of the Buckeye-based charter school said a new campus was needed to accommodate 620 students who were on a waiting list for the charter school's Buckeye campus.

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## **New campus**

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Odyssey Preparatory operates one preschool and a middle school in Buckeye.

The new school in Goodyear teaches kindergarten through eighth grade and has 620 students enrolled in its first year, said Stephanie Crawford, a spokeswoman for the Odyssey schools.

The Goodyear campus, which opened Aug. 22, is near Citrus Road and Harrison Street, and has 28 classrooms and 50 teachers.

"We had a large wait list last year and many of our families commuted from Goodyear. We have doubled our enrollment every year," said Stephanie Crawford, a spokeswoman for The Odyssey Preparatory Academy.

The Odyssey Preparatory Academy started Aug. 31, 2009, in a small building near Miller and Broadway roads in Buckeye. That building is now the Iliad Academy Preschool, which offers full- and part-time classes to younger students.

A second campus in Buckeye was completed in August 2010 that accepts kindergarten through eighth-grade students. The two kindergarten through eighth grade schools specialize in International Baccalaureate programs for middle school students, offers corrective reading courses for children who struggle with comprehension skills, "responsive classroom" approaches that focus on emotional and social growth in education, and "Singapore math curriculum" that combines traditional textbook learning with hands-on math-skills learning.

The three Odyssey Preparatory Academy schools have a combined enrollment of about 1,500 students, Crawford said.

That makes Odyssey schools one of the largest charter schools in the West Valley, according to the Arizona Charter Schools Association.

Average enrollment at most charter schools ranges from 220 to 250 students, said Eileen Sigmund, president and CEO of the association.

Sigmund said the charter school's growth can be attributed to word of mouth and parent demand for high-quality educational programs such as the school's IB program.

"Their roots are deep there. The school leaders have been in the education community for quite a bit longer than three years and they are meeting parent's demands," Sigmund said.

Karen Haggard, a Buckeye resident whose three children attend the new school, said she and her husband took a leap of faith in their children's education in 2009. Haggard took her children out of the Liberty Elementary School District and enrolled them in the charter school, which was then in a strip mall. The family has moved to each of the charter school's new campuses since 2009. They said logistically, the newest campus is closer to their home.

"The school we're currently attending has brought excitement back into learning. My kids have joy in their hearts for learning," Haggard said.

Haggard said the school offers extensive electives including Spanish courses, daily physical education and mandatory music lessons.

Lunch time and recess at the school are organized by teachers; children play sports activities that are competitive and designed to keep them busy.

Haggard said the charter school has allowed her to see how her children can grow academically.

"My youngest son who is a second-grader had to give a verbal report on family comparisons in front of his class in Spanish," Haggard said of the progress her youngest child has made.

Odyssey Preparatory Academy officials said they plan to keep expanding with more West Valley campuses. Next year, Odyssey Preparatory Academy plans to build a school between the Goodyear and Buckeye campuses. "The school would cater to middle school and high school students from both cities," Crawford said.

Enrollment is application-based, students are selected based on a lottery-draw and those that are not selected are wait-listed.

School officials said the charter school has advanced learning programs and strict discipline and that the programs are always the right fit for all students.

The future campus, which will be named the Odyssey Institute for Advanced and International Studies, is expected to open in fall 2012. The Buckeye and Goodyear schools would become elementary schools once the new high school opens. Odyssey plans to incorporate Advanced Placement programs into the future high school curriculum and offer an IB Diploma program.

"Studies (at the future campus) will offer both a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and a comprehensive athletics program," Crawford said.

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