



## Charter school buys own building

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Learning Community Charter School has purchased the former Academy of St. Aloysius, a move that will allow the Jersey City school to increase its class size by one-third within the next few years.

The charter school, which currently operates out of the Boys and Girls Club on Canal Street, purchased the 76,000-square-foot building at the corner of Kennedy Boulevard and Kensington Avenue for \$5.7 million from the Sisters of Charity Friday, said Shelly Skinner, the charter's director of development and community research. The Sisters of Charity operated the Academy of St. Aloysius.

The charter school had been looking for a larger, classroom-oriented facility for years, Skinner said.

The school's Boys and Girls Club location has no cafeteria, library, gym or auditorium, and some classes have been taught in old trailers, Skinner said. Storage space at the school is nonexistent. "We don't have a closet in this building," she said.

The new location - which more recently housed Caritas Academy - will give the school all these amenities plus room to expand enrollment. The school, which currently has 324 students, will add another 90 students next year. The student body will ultimately grow to about 486, according to numbers provided by Skinner.

In an effort to get their children into the school, parents have been calling since the sale was finalized to place their children on the waiting list.

The school was able to make the purchase through the aid of the Real Estate Advisory and Development Services Inc., a nonprofit organization that helps charter schools manage facility and real estate needs. READS helped the charter school acquire \$6.5 million in funding from the Reinvestment Fund of Philadelphia and a mortgage plan.

Keith Timko, READS' vice president of real estate and innovative programs, said owning the facility allows the charter school to focus on education without worrying about rent or landlords.

"Learning Community Charter is an outstanding charter school, one of the best in New Jersey. For their next step, they're going to grow a little bit and serve more kids in Jersey City," Timko said.

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