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## Uplift Education looking for two new school sites

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Uplift Education is looking for a few good buildings.

The nonprofit charter school operator wants to open two new North Texas schools in time for the 2007-2008 school year.

Uplift got its start 10 years ago with its North Hills School in Irving.

In 2005, the school was rated by Newsweek as the 12th-best high school from among the top 1,000 high schools in the United States. In 2003, the International Baccalaureate Organization accredited North Hills for its rigorous international curriculum.

Its second campus, Peak Academy on Live Oak Avenue in Dallas, opened in 2004. That campus offers kindergarten, fourth- and fifth-grade classes.

"We're entering a growth phase. It's a commitment to our organization to expand our nationally recognized model and our funders," said Philip Montgomery, chairman of the board and president of Dallas-based POBMontgomery, a neighborhood shopping center developer.

The Texas High School Project, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Dallas Real Estate Council and Dallas Social Venture Partners are key funders of Uplift. The charter schools also receive state funding.

Rosemary Perlmeter, founder and executive director of Uplift, says the organization is looking to put the new schools in areas where

families can't afford private school, or in an area with limited educational choices. Charter schools are public schools with individual charters from state or local agencies. They don't charge tuition.

Sites in South Irving, Garland and Mesquite as well as Oak Cliff, Fair Park, and Harry Hines and Royal Lane in Dallas are being considered, said Eliza Solender, president of real estate firm Solender/Hall Inc. She is representing the nonprofit in its search for new locations.

Perlmeier says the new schools can start in a space as small as 15,000 square feet, but she expects enrollment to grow, requiring 50,000 to 80,000 square feet after five years. The new schools will eventually offer kindergarten through 12th grades.

Uplift's operating budget for its schools for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31 was slightly more than \$6 million. Next year, that budget will top \$8 million, because of some major expansions.

With the opening of a \$3 million, 30,000-square-foot addition to the 1,000-student North Hills campus, there'll be room for an additional 200 students.

At the Peak campus, 250 new students will join the 110 who attended last year. A three-story building will house Peak Advantage, a charter school for grades six, seven and nine set to open this fall.

**Cynthia D. Webb**

Staff Writer