

GODDARD SCHOOL SEEKS EXPANSION SITES

By: Kelly Johnson • Thursday, November 11, 2010

The Goddard School®, an early childhood education franchise with 371 locations, wants to add four more locations in the region, the company's top executive says.

Company officials are happy with the results at their one local center that opened in Rancho Cordova in June 2008, and hope to expand in the Sacramento region.

Goddard Systems Inc. would open four more "over a period of a couple years" if it can find the right franchisees, said Joseph Schumacher, president and chief executive officer.

The chain has identified Elk Grove, Granite Bay, Lincoln, El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park as the best sites for expansion, he said. Goddard chose those communities for their income levels, traffic and growth patterns, building or closing of elementary schools and the number of kids under age 6.

Goddard requires about 1.5 acres of vacant land near, but not on a main street, and near a landmark of a school or police or fire station so the location can easily be identified to parents. The company prefers building to its own preferences — centers are usually about 8,400 square feet — but it also will consider a retrofit if a competitor has pulled out of a site, Schumacher said.

Franchisees invest about \$700,000, and often are husband-and-wife teams.

Goddard centers employ 20 to 25 people. Centers charge \$800 to \$950 per month and offer enrichment programs such as yoga, art, manners and Mandarin Chinese, Schumacher said.

Centers serve about 130 kids each, ranging from 6 weeks old to age 6.

Goddard, which has more than 40,000 students in 34 states, added 39 centers last year, and has added 16 so far this year toward its goal of 20.

Expansion has slowed somewhat, he said, because prospective franchisees had found it harder to find financing in this economy.