

## Learning HQ puts focus on teachers

By Christine Laue

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Amy Coacher calls her new business a teacher specialty, not supply, store to emphasize that teachers can get more than just workbooks and bulletin-board decorations.

They will get special attention, ideas and support, she said.

"We want to be more than a place they will just come and get physical supplies," she said.

Coacher plans to open Learning Headquarters in late April in Aksarben Village. Its 2,500-square-foot space is north of Wohlner's Grocery, which is at the northeast corner of 67th Street and West Center Road.

In 2006, Coacher, a graduate of Gross High School and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, had sold COBRA Outsourcing Company, a health-benefits administration business that she started in 1998 with partner John Jenkins. She went to work for the buyer, Payflex Systems USA Inc., but left a year and a half later.

"After having gone back to being an employee in the corporate world, I really missed the environment of running my own business," Coacher said. "I was ready for something different from the insurance world."

Coacher thought she could blend her entrepreneurial skills with teaching expertise in her family: Her sister, Christy Coacher, teaches second grade at Bancroft Elementary School; and her mom, Maureen Coacher, is a retired Omaha Public Schools teacher with 30 years' experience who still substitute-teaches. Coacher saw a need for a teacher specialty store in the midtown area. She said other such stores sit on Omaha's edges or in suburbs, making it inconvenient for some Omaha teachers who want to stop on the way home from work.

"With Aksarben Village, it just seemed like an ideal spot to set up shop, especially with it being a mixed-use development with all the residential and pedestrian traffic," she said. She's investing about \$250,000 in the business and is relatively unconcerned about opening a retail business during a recession.

"Brand new teachers always have to stock up," she said.

And, more important, she knows of teachers' passion. Even though school districts may have to cut back, teachers still spend money out of their own pockets for learning materials, she said.

"They really don't want to shortchange their students."