



The Herald

January 2018

A Publication of the MCA Office of Advancement and Development



School Choice

For the eighth consecutive year, the third week of January celebrated National School Choice week, in which participation has seen exponential growth. Americans enjoy many freedoms, and one of these is the freedom to choose the educational solution they deem best for our children. Choices include traditional public schools, public charter schools, public magnet schools, private schools, online learning, and homeschooling.

If you're reading this, then you're more than likely a parent, student, or friend of a student at MCA, and as a result, have direct experience with choosing a school that is not the traditional public school experience. Charter schools ARE public schools, and charge no tuition, and they differ from traditional public school in several ways. Charter schools are usually not created or managed by a school district, most often being ruled by an independent board of directors, or even universities, or non-profit organizations. Charter schools sometimes have specific goals or missions, and they have some freedoms from some state regulations, which allow the opportunity to be more innovative with curriculum, philosophy, teaching methods, and attention to students.

According to Public Schools First NC, the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) and WRAL TV in Raleigh, there are more than 170 North Carolina charter schools educating over 100,000 students. Although this represents around 6% of the total student population in NC, the number of students in charter schools has doubled over the last five years. In the 44 states allowing them, there are around 7,000 charter schools serving about 2.6 million students. Charter schools offer parents a different alternative at the no-tuition price of traditional public schools, even though there may be some complexities to solve such as transportation to the school, for example. These charter school alternatives provide choice for parents, allowing them to determine what may be a better educational solution for their children.



Katherine Brinkley, first grade, smiles as she learns about word families in her Core Knowledge Language Arts lesson. This lesson is focusing on "aw" sounds and words.

Interestingly, "enrollment has also changed at private schools. The earliest data available show more than 17,000 students enrolled in 166 private schools in North Carolina in 1961. Now, more than 100,000 students are enrolled in more than 750 schools in the state. North Carolina's home school population has surged from about 800 children in the mid-1980s to more than 127,000 in 2017." The numbers show that people are taking advantage of school choice.

Why choose MCA as an independent school??

There are many benefits of choosing an independent school such as Millennium Charter Academy. At MCA, we quite frequently hear parents talk about the family-like atmosphere. This may be attributed to our smaller class sizes, all grades at one location, and that faculty and staff try to give students as much individual attention as possible. Teachers here can provide more individual attention because we are not obligated to the rigid schedule of state-mandated testing, which drives their curriculum. For example, if the schedule says language arts ends and math begins at 11AM, in some traditional schools, that switch-over must happen right then. But what if the class is



Lizbeth Sanchez-Flores literally bends a stream of water using static electricity during a lab about electricity in 7th grade.

really in a learning moment in language arts? What if there is a spirited discussion, or if the class is actively engaged in a learning activity? At MCA, teachers are allowed to continue the lesson, taking advantage of the teachable moment, knowing there will be time later to complete the math lesson. Our independence allows us to actively invest in our students and help them succeed.

Some features that stand out at independent schools, and are often cited as advantages for independent schools, could very well be implemented at any school, but because of various reasons they are not implemented. Independent schools, such as MCA, readily invite parents to be involved. Whether it's by volunteering or through direct communication with faculty and staff, parents (and even grandparents) are encouraged to be a part of the educational process, benefiting not only the student, but the family as well.

Independent schools offer many opportunities for students to stand out from the crowd. At MCA, the athletics program gives students the chance to succeed where that might be more difficult in a larger environment. Our participation in the Carolina Athletic Association of Schools of Choice allows students to reach top positions in state conferences, such as our girls' track team who took first place in the state last year. Clubs and competitions offer students chances for success whether it's participating in the NC Science and

Engineering Fair, the spelling bee, or Math Olympiad, performing as a defense or prosecuting attorney in Mock Trial, or building towers and bridges in engineering challenges. MCA participates in many academic competitions not readily available in other area schools. These opportunities will make a college application glow, but more importantly, they allow students to discover interests, abilities, and strengths.

One of the most important advantages of independent schools such as MCA is the attention given to character development. Discussion often centers upon our vision, which says we want to create intelligent, virtuous citizens who seek truth, goodness, and beauty in all that they do. Even with extra discussion and focus on being a good citizen, there are always times for personal growth. Just as the school tries to differentiate between students academically, we work diligently to differentiate when it comes to discipline and character growth. If two students commit the same questionable activity, consequences are not always the same for the two students. We strive to look at the background of the situation, examining the history and motive of why something happened, and then adjust consequences to each student which would promote the most personal growth for that student, all the while ensuring we maintain a safe environment for all our students.

These differences help us encourage our students to focus on what is important, such as academics and character development. We encourage them to try new things, such as athletics, clubs, and competitions. We encourage them to learn to think well and speak for themselves in a professional and courteous manner. Even more, we encourage them to build proper relationships with each other, their parents, their teachers and their coaches, and to learn how to build relationships with others as they develop into adults.

If you'd like to know more or discuss the advantages of independent schools, or charter schools in particular, we invite you to contact us. If you've never had a tour or experienced the MCA culture firsthand, please call and schedule a tour. We'd love to have you!