

## It's National Charter Schools Week. Help us celebrate!

This week, May 9 – 15, 2021, recognizes the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first charter school law in the United States. Since that time, almost 7,500 public charter schools have been created throughout the nation, with 201 of them in North Carolina, serving over 120,000 North Carolina students. Millennium Charter Academy is proud to be one of those public charter schools. Founded in 2000, our school started in a rented facility serving just over one hundred students in grades kindergarten through four. Today, we thrive in a beautiful 120,000+ square foot facility, serving over 800 students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Some families send their children here because of the curriculum. Some send their children because of the small size and the family-like atmosphere, and some send their children because of the classical school philosophy. All these reasons, and many more, are simultaneously possible because we are a public charter school.

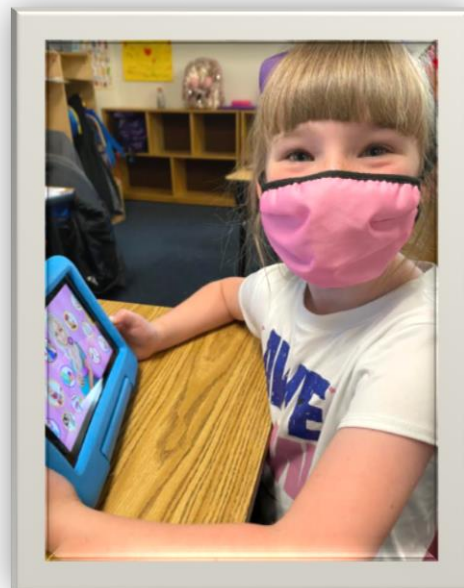
Public charter schools are schools of choice. A “one size fits all” approach does not always work when it comes to education. Charter schools offer a choice, putting students first, giving personal attention from teachers who are passionate about teaching students. As a public charter school, we are free and open to all, and we help strengthen the local public school systems by offering this additional choice for students in our area. A public education is the very core of the American dream, and public charter schools help ensure every student has the opportunity to grow in a way that best meets his or her need.

Let's consider some of the benefits of charter schools.

**Diversity.** Some critics and even statistics claim that charter schools do not have enough diversity and tend to segregate students. Most charter schools actually promote diversity because they are open to all students – not just those in a nearby geographical area - creating the ability for a more diverse student body. Although only North Carolina residents may attend a North Carolina public charter school, MCA draws students from Surry, Wilkes,

Stokes and Forsyth counties, and from within the Cities of Mount Airy and Elkin within Surry County.

**Accountability.** As a charter school, Millennium Charter Academy is freed from some of the rules and regulations the State of NC places on traditional public schools. However, with increased freedom comes increased responsibility, or in this case, accountability. North Carolina public charter schools are responsible for administering state end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) tests, and they are required to be fiscally responsible by maintaining a balance sheet that is never in the red. As a charter school, we must achieve our goals or risk losing our charter. Not only are we accountable to the State of North Carolina, we are accountable to our students, parents, and our community. If we do not run our school well, you as our parents will choose to send your children elsewhere. As a school of choice, we are very accountable.

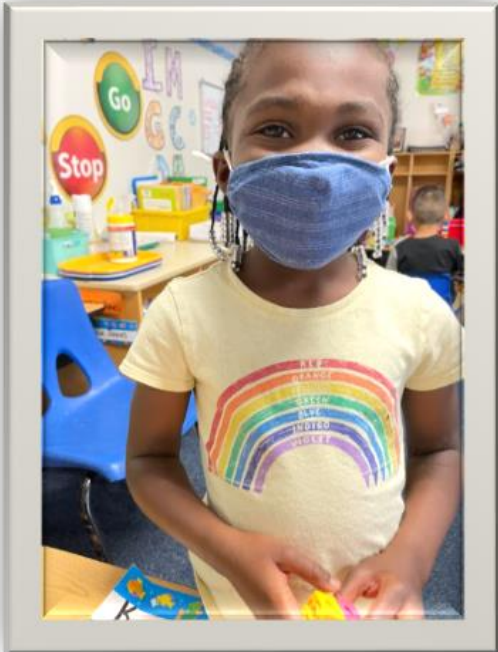


**Greater Curricular Freedom.** Because we do not have to follow all the rules and regulations of conventional public schools, Millennium Charter Academy and public charter schools in general are able to devote resources to implementing higher academic standards and more rigorous curricula. For example, Millennium Charter Academy does not have to teach the Common Core curriculum. Instead, we are able to offer the Core Knowledge curriculum to



our students, which is a proven curriculum providing rich and wonderful content to our students. Our expanded Core Knowledge curriculum includes Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA), which incorporates rich content into reading and writing activities for students in grades kindergarten through five. This rich content is not typically available in conventional public schools. Examples of curricular freedom can also be seen with our Everyday Math, sixth through eighth grade exploratory courses, and our high school offerings. In addition to great classroom content, we additionally offer a rich exposure to art and music, which at some conventional public schools, have been cut through budget reductions.

**Community Involvement.** As one of our three pillars of existence, “community” means that we learn from the area around us by exploring it through field trips and inviting community leaders into our school for classroom presentations, and also that we give back through various events such as food and clothing drives or clean-up days. Exploring and helping the community around us gives our students a sense of belonging and pride in their hometown areas.



**Real Time Learning.** In conventional public schools, teachers are held to strict timelines and a rigidly approved state curriculum. There is no time for adapting the curriculum to real-world issues or classroom “teachable moments” that might spontaneously arise. Our teachers are able to quickly adapt to learning opportunities for their students since our curriculum is self-imposed and not mandated by the State.

**Core Philosophy.** As a public charter school, Millennium Charter Academy is able to set our own course and live by our own philosophy. As such, we are a classical learning school, focusing on the rich past and traditions of Western Civilization. We teach the whole child, with the vision of creating intelligent, virtuous citizens who can lead in a 21<sup>st</sup> century constitutional republic, who seek truth, goodness, and beauty in all that they do. With that, we teach according to the model of the Trivium, which guides us to teach along three major areas of childhood development. First, there is the grammar stage, which correlates to the developmental stages of children in grades kindergarten through five. At this stage of development, children are like sponges, able to quickly “soak up” whatever information is placed before them whether it’s good or bad. As a result, we offer good, rich, meaningful content like the previously

described Core Knowledge curriculum. As children reach the sixth through eighth grades, developmentally they begin to reason and argue, learning to think for themselves. Our teachers take advantage of this dialectic or logic phase, by helping our students learn how to process information and to think well. Students learn logic and philosophy, and they are offered courses in which they can explore various personal interests. The next stage of teaching is referred to as the rhetoric stage. Here, in high school, as students begin to develop into young adults, the focus shifts on how to speak and write well, how to engage in civil discourse and to make a persuasive, well thought out argument.

As you can see, there are many benefits to public charter schools. At MCA, we are proud to be a part of the charter school movement, and we are humbled by the caliber of our teachers and students who pass through our doors daily. Thank you to our parents for your support and the entrustment of partnering with us for your children’s education. Help us spread the word about MCA and all the benefits we offer to our students by talking to your friends and neighbors and following and sharing us on Facebook.

Have a great National Charter Schools week!