Charter Schools:
Solutions for DoD Family Communities

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The mission of the Belle Chasse Academy is the nurture of the military child..........
Belle Chasse Academy, Louisiana

...in an educational environment focused on academic excellence
...in a replicable model that can be applied in military communities across the country.
Belle Chasse Academy

- First charter school aboard a DoD installation
- Serves 96% military dependents; a de facto DoD school
- Conceived in 2000; opened in 2002
- $12.2 facility
- Opened with 620 K-8 students
- Current enrollment of 905 students
- Annual budget of $13.7 M
- Funded by State of Louisiana and U.S. Department of Education
Shared Core Beliefs

• All children can learn, and every child should be challenged to reach his/her full potential;
• Parents should be actively engaged in their children’s academic learning;
• Dependent children of military parents possess unique stressors which must be addressed in the school environment;
• Students functioning below grade-level proficiency should receive remedial instruction to catapult them forward;

• Students functioning above grade-level proficiency should be allowed to accelerate through the curriculum;

• Nurture of the whole child through arts, athletics, and community service is vital;

• Substantial and direct involvement of all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, support staff, and community) is necessary in the development and realization of the school vision.
Student Demographics

• 905 students, kindergarten through eighth grade
• 42% Reduced-and-Free Lunch ("at-risk") population
• Population reflects the racial diversity of our armed forces. Currently:
  - 48% African American, 40% White, 8% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 1% American Indian
• Special Populations:
  - 60 Students with disabilities, 31 Students with 504 Accommodations, 27 Speech Only, 39 Gifted, 11 Talented, 16 ELL
School Academic Program

- Content Standards, Benchmarks, Grade Level Expectations, Scope and Sequence
- “Comprehensive Curriculum”
- “High Quality” professional development
- Technology rich environment
- Teacher collaboration
- = Making Adequate Yearly Progress
The “Whole Child” Program

- Spanish instruction
- Enrichment instruction
- Extracurricular activities
- Athletics
- “Positive Behavior Supports,” CHARACTER COUNTS!™, and Olweus Anti-bullying Program
- Comprehensive guidance program for the military child
- Aggressive parent involvement strategies
Creation Timeline

- October 2000: “Creation” team assembles
- February 2001: Incorporation; Board of Directors Forms
- April 2001: Preliminary review of charter application
- June 2001: Charter approved contingent upon legislative relief
- July 2001: Senate Bill 57/House Bill 796 passes
Timeline to Inception (Continued)

- October 2001: Ceremonial Groundbreaking
- January 2002: First structural pilings driven
- April 2002: Staffing begins
- August 2002: Staff In-service Training
- September 2002: First Day of School
Catapults

• Economic study
  - Very strong national, state, and local political support
  - Support of business leaders

• Private-Public Venture Housing Project

• Louisiana Charter School Categories
  - Type 2, Chartered directly by the State
  - Title VIII funding → Outstanding facility
Roadblocks

- Local Education Authority (LEA) concurrence
- "Sheltered" enrollment for the military dependent
- Busing across parish (county) borders
- Compliance with LA statutory requirement of "at risk" students
Roadmap to Charter School for DoD Communities

- Ensure support of local command
- Ascertain community support
- Organize team
- Identify “catapults”
- Identify “roadblocks”
- Delegate responsibilities
- Chart course
- Navigate course
Roadmap to Charters as Solutions...in all communities

• Ascertain community support
• Organize team
• Identify “catapults”
• Identify “roadblocks”
• Delegate responsibilities
• Chart course
• Navigate
Challenges

• Mobile population
  - Student achievement
  - Parental commitment
• Coordination with DoD and base command
• Expansion of facility
• Technological “know how” (Maximize Available Technology!)
• Teacher “innovativeness”
• 120 by 2014!
Our School is Special...

because of....

- Our mobile population
  - Students
  - Parents
- Our secure and modern facility on-board NAS
- Our technology rich environment
- Our shared core beliefs
- Our teachers’ “innovativeness”
- Our community support
Our School is Special Because of the Military Child!