



The Herald

January 2012

A Publication of the MCA Office of Advancement and Development



Marketing Away the Myths

By Lu Ann Browne

The month of January always begins with what I term as “spring rush.” This is the time when many parents of rising kindergarteners begin to decide where they will enroll their children in the fall. At Millennium Charter Academy, we actively market to these parents as well as to others that may be looking for something different in education. As a public school, however, one may question why we would do that.

Although MCA has been in operation for eleven years, certain myths continue, and our marketing helps us to dispel them. First, many parents do not realize they have a choice in their children’s education. Parents often mistakenly assume that their children have to attend the public school in their area, unless they home school or pay for a private education. Regularly, parents contact MCA asking if their child is eligible to attend considering where they live, and many ask how much is the tuition. It is sometimes not understood that MCA is a free public school and that in North Carolina children may attend the charter school of their choice regardless of the district in which they live. Therefore, one of the reasons we market the school is to help people have a better understanding of just who we are.



The home page of our revised website has dynamic link buttons and our new school video on the home page.



Laura and Christopher Willingham, parents of Caleb (3rd grade), Noah (6th grade), and Madison, (7th grade), star in MCA’s first television commercial.

Additionally, during the time that Senate Bill 8, which proposed lifting the cap on charter schools, was before our legislature in 2010 and 2011, the media incorrectly reported that charter schools were selective in student enrollment, creating another myth that needs to be dispelled. MCA is open to any and all students, provided we have seating availability. Marketing is one way we can accurately describe our school in the media.

Like all other public schools, MCA gets its funding from the state on a per pupil allotment. Simply put, the more students we have, the more money that is allocated to our school; however, it should be noted that as our number of students increases, so do our expenses. As a school of choice, it always behooves us to maximize our enrollment. Just as businesses need to pull in new

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customers and keep existing customers in order to flourish, so it is that we need to pull in new students and keep existing students to thrive as a school. Marketing allows us to get the word out about our excellent product.



The new MCA video is about five minutes long and showcases many classes and sights throughout the school. In this shot, our librarian, Mrs. Jennifer Lovill, reads to a group of 5th graders in the library. The video also contains testimonials from parents, students, and teachers, and does a nice job of showcasing MCA in a short amount of time.

We are continuing many of our usual marketing activities, such as newspaper advertisements, fliers to twelve area pre-schools, and our on-going tours. This year, we're excited to have our very first television commercial, which is currently airing on WXII. In total, the commercial will air thirteen times during a three-week period beginning January 24, 2012, either during the 6:00-7:00 AM *WXII Morning News* or during the 4:00-5:00 PM *Dr. Oz* show. The MCA website revision has also been completed and is now live, complete with a brand new video to showcase our wonderful school. If you haven't seen it yet, check it out. Just visit our website at www.mcacademy.com, and click on the play button displayed over the video right on the home page.

We may place ads in the newspaper, print fliers for pre-schools, and run commercials on television, but the very best method of marketing MCA is always through word of mouth. If you have friends with school age children, please tell them about MCA. Help them know that they do have a choice in education, that we do not select students, and that it is free. Recommend that they call to schedule a tour and find out more. We think they'll like what they see.



Mr. Money's Advanced Music class performs in the video (left), Jonathan Lee presents a paper during English class (center) and Miss Sawyers goes over homework with her students (right).

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