

Army Charter School Idea

Contributed by Scott Kessel
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West Point Community,

I've not posted any correspondence through this e mail service. Mostly because I want to respect the time and consideration it takes to weed through the many e mails that we must go through on a daily basis and I do not want to waste your time. So I would only do so for a matter that I considered most important for your view. I feel that this is such a case.

I work for the Department of Education in Delaware in the area of charter schools. Since the election of Barack Obama you have probably heard of his interest and emphasis on charter schools as a viable and productive choice for public school students. I have been intimately involved in the charter movement in Delaware over the past few years and have grown fond of this alternative for parents.

The people I have met that take the risk to initiate these schools have been no less than inspiring. It's not been perfect but innovation involves a lot of trial and error. Currently in Delaware, there is a charter school that has been in operation for the past 9 years and it is modeled after the United States Naval Academy. It really is something to behold. It is a high school that runs like the academy. I visited several times and it always makes me proud to see these young people so committed at such an early age. This school is currently producing the most candidates for the academies than any other high school in the United States.

If you know anything about the state of education in the United States you know that it is at times dismal. The school, named the Delaware Military Academy, does not even employ custodians because the cadets take care of that school from top to bottom. The commandant would welcome any visitor to view this operation. It is quite impressive.

I have been asked to look into the possibility of opening a similar school modeled after the United States Military Academy. The Navy committed to supporting the Delaware Military Academy and establishing it as a school wide junior ROTC program. I am not well versed in the areas of junior ROTC, hence my e mail to you. I am hoping to gain some guidance/interest in our West Point community in developing Army charter schools where the state laws permit.

I am well versed in the charter laws in Delaware and can shepherd this process easily in this state as the first Army (West Point modeled) charter school. Our goal would be to replicate this model in other communities to meet this need. We are working to replicate both the Navy and Army models. Both would work in somewhat close proximity. How cool would it be to have Army Navy games all over the United States? Perhaps then we could at least celebrate a few Army victories each year right in your own community.

But really that's not the focus of this e mail. I am looking for guidance on how to do this through the Army or West

Point. If you have any thoughts or suggestions, please email them to me as soon as possible as I am working on a deadline of application submission 12/31/2009. All commitments need to be in place by then for the first charter school modeled after West Point.

In case you are not familiar with charter schools, they use public funds to operate. They are a public school of choice. There is no tuition. It's just like going to a public school. If enough kids want to go to the school there is a lottery to see who gets in. If a kid wants to go to this charter school, the money that would have gone to the traditional public school would go to the charter school. That's why the traditional schools don't like charters. It's a good thing though for education and there is definitely a market for an Army charter so … send me your thoughts. Thanks.

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