

FresnoBee Article

News > Local News > Education > Eye on Education

Rodolfo Garcia: People with a choice in schooling work harder

BY RODOLFO GARCIA
Special for The Bee March 20, 2015

Southwest Fresno has a gem of an elementary TK-6 charter school, Edison Bethune Charter Academy (EBCA), authorized under the Fresno County Office of Education since 1999.

This year we are enjoying our highest enrollment of 560 students. We earned an Academic Performance Index (API) of 809 during the last state test of spring 2013. Our K-6 students receive a well-rounded education including Common Core standards, physical education, art, and music. We offer reading intervention, tutoring, before- and after school programs.

We are fortunate to have a four-year partnership with Accent on Access violin program, and this year, Sloane Stephens Tennis Foundation is enriching our students with tennis.



Rodolfo Garcia PICASA

Our vision is: "We, the learning community of Edison Bethune Charter Academy, believe all children can learn. By receiving a world-class education, all students will be academically prepared to compete globally."

I came to EBCA four years ago after 26 years in public education. Sixteen of those years were in administration with experience at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The pleasant surprise of working in the charter school structure was the contagious positive attitude of all stakeholders in the charter school community.

The parents and staff are at this school because it is their choice. When people have a choice of where they want to be, they tend to work harder to achieve success, and there is also a sense of family and unity.

At EBCA we are all in for the sake of providing an effective learning environment for all students.

The charter choice is an alternative for parents if they find their children struggling in their current traditional-school setting. Having worked many years in the traditional public school system, I can proudly say both charter and traditional school settings have the same target destination at the end. We just choose to take different paths.



The charter path has its challenges, but there seem to be fewer political agendas. The charter school can take advantage of the autonomy it is allowed under charter laws. For a charter to exist, you need happy parents, happy students, happy staff and happy results.

Accountability is huge in education today. It is not going away anytime soon. It is in the forefront of all decisions being made to improve results across America. Charter schools welcome accountability; we don't make excuses or find something to hide behind.

Charter schools exist because of failing schools. It doesn't matter what neighborhood children are coming from; they deserve a world-class education. Parents expect it!

With all the constant changes in the education world, we can patiently sit and wait to see where the changes take us or we can lead the change. Being in a charter school as a principal, I finally feel like I *am* the principal. Now I can help lead the change. In a charter school, it is not I lead the change or you lead the change; it is *we* lead the change.

As the leader of the school, I build on the strength each staff member has to offer. We don't demand change; we inspire change through our actions. At EBCA, we collaborate as a leadership team and strive for buy-in to changes before any top-down decisions. We constantly monitor our direction and do not hesitate to stop and redirect our laser-like focus.

The staff also respects the fact that some things are nonnegotiable, and they simply get the job done without complaint. The biggest nonnegotiable at our charter school is we strive to do what is best for our students.

The students are our guiding light. We all check our egos at the door and implement best practices that are data-driven and research-based. We are constantly sharing resources and pride ourselves on a compassionate drive to be the best school in Fresno County.

We have recruited students by mailers and with a commercial shown at a local cinema a couple of years ago. Since earning the best in the west API of 809 in spring of 2013, our best recruitment has been word of mouth by our families in our community.

The highest compliment our families can give us is the referral of family and friends. Educating children is our business and we take pride in offering the best education to academically prepare our students with a world class education so they can go out with the right tools to become who they will be.

I invite you to make the charter choice and welcome you to become part of the EBCA Wildcat family. We are at 1616 S. Fruit Ave. Learn more about us at myebca.com or call (559) 457-2530. To enroll, all we ask for is good attendance and good behavior.

Call and tell them Mr. Garcia recommended the EBCA charter choice.