Rural Charter Schools: Unique Challenges, Unique Opportunities

National Charter Schools Conference

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Joe Keeney, Founder & CEO, 4th Sector Solutions
Roy McCoy, Founding Principal, Beekman Charter School
Dr. Linda Saucier, Executive Director, Slaughter Community Charter School
Beekman Charter School

Roy McCoy – Founding Principal

• School is in northern LA, close to Arkansas border.
• Conversion of a 100 year old traditional school to charter in 2013-14 – after successful teacher vote and parent vote.
• Goal: Create a high quality high school option and expand enrollment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>SY12-13</th>
<th>SY13-14</th>
<th>SY14-15</th>
<th>SY15-16</th>
<th>SY16-17</th>
<th>SY17-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PK-8</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• First year academic assessment index aligns with “B” schools.
Slaughter Community Charter School

Dr. Linda Saucier – Executive Director (and former Principal)
• School is in rural parish north of Baton Rouge.
• Goal: Create a high quality middle and high school option (district only has one of each).
• Started in grades 7-8 and expand one grade per year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>SY11-12</th>
<th>SY12-13</th>
<th>SY13-14</th>
<th>SY14-15</th>
<th>SY15-16</th>
<th>SY16-17</th>
<th>SY17-18</th>
<th>SY18-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Grade</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Grade</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Grade</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• In 3rd year was highest-performing school in East Feliciana Parish.
Common Characteristics

• Locally-authorized.
• Only charter in district.
• Highly experienced school leaders.
• Participate in teachers retirement system.
• Driven by need for high school option.
• Creative facility financing:
  – Beekman: Access to school district bond funds.
  – Slaughter: Leased modulars → USDA loan 3.5%, 40 years.
• Strong community engagement.
Rural Charters: Unique Challenges & Opportunities

Challenges
• Teacher recruiting
• Expectations for college matriculation
• Facility financing
• Insularity of board members
• Politics – impact on district
• School size/budget

Opportunities
• Blended learning
• Community engagement
• High quality governance
• Budget flexibility and creativity
• PK-12 school
• Maintain population and attract employers
Resources

Journals/Publications:

- Rural Education
  - The Rural School and Community Trust
    - *Why Rural Matters* - This is a biennial report that analyzes the conditions of rural education in each of the 50 states and highlights rural education issues that should be addressed by policymakers in their respective states.
  - Journal of Research in Rural Education
    - [http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/](http://jrre.vmhost.psu.edu/)
  - Rural Opportunities Consortium of Idaho
    - [http://www.rociidaho.org/](http://www.rociidaho.org/)
  - National Research Center on Rural Education Support
    - [http://www.nrcres.org/index.html](http://www.nrcres.org/index.html)
  - Education Week Blog - Rural Education

- Rural Charters
  - *A New Frontier: Utilizing Charter Schooling to Strengthen Rural Education* by Andy Smarick
  - *Policy Brief: Idaho's Rural Charter Schools* by Bellwether Education Partners
Thank you!

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Presentation will be updated and uploaded to www.charterschooltools.org as well as NCSC site.