

API Delta Chapter provides \$25,000 to St. Bernard Parish Schools

It was our pleasure to attend the St. Bernard Parish School Board meeting in August and present them with \$25,000 to fully supply 3 new freshmen science labs. The school board members directed us to convey their great appreciation to our other board members, our tireless volunteers, and our entire industry membership. According to Beverly Lawrason, assistant superintendent, “finally, after 3 years of reconstruction, the 2008 school year is off to a much more normal beginning”. I am sure that we are all grateful that Hurricanes Gustav and Ike did not disrupt their hard work and personal sacrifices.

On a personal note, it is always inspiring to see people help themselves and their community overcome great adversity. However, it was especially inspiring that evening to hear at their meeting that the St. Bernard Parish School Board was raising money to help the Iowa flood victims. After having lost so much and worked so hard, they still recognized the needs of others and emphasized helping those recently devastated by another natural disaster. It was a great moment for us. It confirmed that our efforts were directed to a worthy group and a worthy cause.

The API Delta Chapter was established over 25 years ago to help our local industry and community in any practical way we can. Our primary goal is to support education efforts in the metropolitan area since they are key to the area’s long term health and success.

Letter from Beverly Lawrason of the St. Bernard Parish School system

“Having shared the anxiety of rebuilding a home over the last three years with too many families from the area, I can easily say that we each know what the other is going through. However, not too many of us have had to rebuild an entire school system from the ground up – but that is what we are doing in St. Bernard. Every one of the St. Bernard Parish Public School’s 15 schools was heavily damaged or destroyed by Katrina’s floodwaters, and everything had to be replaced. So, after you get the building built, or repaired, what comes next? The textbooks, the football uniforms, the blocks for the preschoolers, or maybe the furniture...but, then, what about test tubes for science labs, band instruments, and computers? To say that we lost in excess of \$54 million dollars in just contents alone would probably be an understatement because we could only recount for FEMA what principals and teachers could remember to put on their “contents list” at a time when they were still in personal and professional shock.

Then the realization hit in a different way. We had an opportunity to rebuild a public school district from the ground up! We could choose to build buildings and equip classrooms with the latest and most tested technology and instructional methodology. Of course some of the costs of our new schools would have to be borne by the district, as FEMA will only return us to pre-Katrina conditions. So the challenge began. Now that we have the chance to do it right, our focus became, and remains, ensuring that our teachers and students will be on the cutting edge of what works best when it comes to teaching and learning.

Much of what we are doing now could not be done without the generosity of our partners within the community. Thanks to grants from API and Exxon-Mobil, in particular, students in math and science classes are now focused not only on learning the basics but also on how those fundamental math and

science concepts are applied in new learning situations. Opportunities to experience math and science “hands-on” are now in every classroom through Promethian Activeboards, a minimum of 5 computers, probes, CBL’s, graphing calculators, lab equipment, scales, balances, virtual lab software, and boxes and boxes of manipulatives, or materials for students to complete experiments and activities first-hand.

There is a pyramid that teachers often use to determine learning. It begins with the step that children retain only about 10% of what they hear, moving next to what they read, what they see, etc. And it moves on up the pyramid to children retaining about 90% of what they have the opportunity to do or experience first-hand. API has given us the chance to provide our freshmen science students with the opportunity to “do” and that means better science students in the long-run. This is just a start in our new journey to build a pre-engineering curriculum and career academy within our high school – the only high school reopened to serve our reduced population. API has literally invested in, perhaps, its future members with their investment in our school system. And for that, our teachers, students, and community remain very grateful.”

Beverly C. Lawrason
Assistant Superintendent
St. Bernard Parish Schools