



TSTA NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TSTA files grievance against SAISD over Stewart charter

The Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) has filed a grievance with San Antonio ISD over the process by which the district approved Democracy Prep's application for an in-district charter at Stewart Elementary School.

TSTA alleges that the school board violated numerous provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act and the Texas Education Code when it voted on Jan. 22 to direct the superintendent to negotiate a contract with a charter school operator. The resulting selection of Democracy Prep, a New York-based charter chain, will have "a detrimental effect" on SAISD students and employees who are TSTA members, according to the grievance filed by TSTA General Counsel Russell Ramirez.

The grievance alleges:

The school board's decision to direct Superintendent Pedro Martinez to negotiate a contract with a charter school operator was not properly posted on the board's agenda, as required by the Open Meetings Act.

The board did not receive a petition signed by a majority of Stewart's parents or a majority of the school's classroom teachers requesting a charter school, which the Education Code requires.

The district committed numerous other violations of state law designed to assure that parents and other community members are kept informed and given the opportunity to be actively involved in the development of plans to improve a campus' performance.

"The superintendent's plan to turn over our neighborhood school to a New York-based charter company was developed and advanced without public involvement by parents, school employees and other members of the Stewart community," said Shelley Potter, president of the San Antonio Alliance of Teachers and Support Personnel, a merged local affiliate of TSTA and Texas AFT.

"The Democracy Prep plan was in the works for at least six months, but Stewart parents and staff were not informed about the proposal until four days before the school board directed the superintendent to proceed," she added.

Noting that the selection of the charter operator could have a "detrimental effect on teacher contract rights" at Stewart, TSTA asks that the vote granting the application be nullified and that all teacher contracts and other employee rights for TSTA members at the school remain unchanged. So far, teachers at Stewart have not received any written assurances that their contracts with the district will continue to be honored as required by the Education Code.

The grievance process gives San Antonio ISD an opportunity to address the issues. If necessary, TSTA can appeal the district's response or lack of action to the Texas Education Agency and ultimately to a state district court.