

The Morgan Hill Teacher

Morgan Hill Federation of Teachers

CFT / AFT / AFL-CIO / Local 2022

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Navigator & Rocketship Update Board Meeting this Tuesday

Last week, both Navigator and Rocketship filed Prop 39 applications. **This means that if their charter petitions are approved, the district must give them space in our existing facilities next fall, to the extent that such space is available.** They plan to create available space by drawing from our existing student population.

Navigator is seeking to open with just grades K-2 in the fall, and add a grade level every year until they are a K-8 school. Rocketship intends to open a full K-5 elementary school next fall. One of our neighborhood schools would be forced to close in the fall and be given over to Rocketship, while another would be sharing its campus, turning over additional classrooms to Navigator every year until it is no longer a neighborhood school.

In addition, district ADA funds would follow any students who disenroll from a neighborhood school. This leaves fewer resources in place to support the students who remain. But that is not the biggest issue. The biggest issue is that the programs offered by Rocketship and Navigator are not the best practices; if they were, we would be utilizing them in our own classrooms. They are offering substandard instruction, all the while advertising themselves as superior, and draining resources away from the children in our community to sustain their opportunistic business model.

Both Navigator and Rocketship emphasize high density “classrooms.” Rocketship has a 45:1 student-to-teacher ratio, made possible because the teachers are mostly supervising students who are engaged in on-screen lessons. Social studies, science, and the arts are minimally addressed, because they are busy focusing on practicing for the STAR test. There is no bilingual education, no instruction in world languages, and there are no services for special education students. Despite this tunnel-vision approach, at every site where there is more than a year of data Rocketship’s scores have dropped. Finally, teacher turnover is very high, with a retention rate of only 65%, as teachers quickly become disillusioned with the program.

In order to sell this unfortunate model to parents in the community (which they must do to recruit parents from our neighborhood schools), both Rocketship and Navigator have been aggressively promoting their “successes” and telling parents that Morgan Hill schools are failing their children.

We need to continue to defend our students and our schools, and support our school board members as we ask them to resist the fierce political pressure they are under to approve these applications.

Please come to this Tuesday’s board meeting (6pm at the District Office). If you have something to say, turn in a speaker card before the meeting. (You will be given only 2 minutes, so plan carefully.) If you don’t wish to speak, please just be there to show your support for our schools and students, and for the board members who have thus far voted to protect them both.

Keep reading below:

Also, if you have not already done so please go to this link and sign the petition – a joint effort by parents, community members, and educators – asking the County Board of Education to deny the Navigator & Rocketship applications:

http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/support-morgan-hill-schools-1?source=c.em.cp&r_by=9364715

Then forward the link to your friends and family members, post it to your facebook page, help hand out copies after school at your site, and help contact other members of the community (like maybe your neighbors). We should each have a goal of adding at least three more signatures over the next three days.

Many people are not aware of this assault on our schools, and would like to help if only someone told them about it. The best thing they can do is speak up at the board meetings (here and at the county level). The next best thing is to either send a letter to the editor of the Morgan Hill Times, or send an email to the school board members (or both). The easiest thing is to just go online and sign the petition themselves. Every action helps.

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Together, we are making a difference!