

The Morgan Hill Teacher

Morgan Hill Federation of Teachers

CFT / AFT / AFL-CIO / Local 2022

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Good News & Bad News Edition

October 21, 2013

Board Votes to Protect MH Schools & Students

The good news is that the Federation & the District administration are working together to defend our Morgan Hill public schools and students, and most members of the Board of Education recognize the threat to quality education that is posed by the two current charter applications.

Remember, these are not proposals coming from teachers and parents within our district, and what they are proposing has no resemblance to the already existing Morgan Hill Charter School. These are outside entities, with their eyes on Morgan Hill as ripe for harvesting.

They are aggressively recruiting parents in our district to sign on, much like Harold Hill did in *The Music Man*. Last Friday, Navigator was distributing leaflets in Spanish to parents at San Martin-Gwinn School. This past weekend, both Rocketship and Navigator even set up tables to recruit parents at Walmart in Gilroy. They have much to gain financially if they succeed.

On October 8, our school board heard from many speakers regarding their scheduled vote on the Navigator petition submitted last month, and Rocketship's submission of its own application for a charter.

Neither of the charter groups bused in parents as we had anticipated; instead they brought a number of parents they have recruited from our own community. Most of them spoke about how they just want their children to be successful, and they seemed to be of the opinion that success is only possible if they go to a Rocketship or Navigator charter school.

The speeches lasted until after 10pm.
**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO TURNED
OUT TO SPEAK IN DEFENSE OF OUR
DISTRICT SCHOOLS OR JUST TO
SUPPORT THOSE WHO SPOKE.**

Mary Alice Callahan spoke eloquently on behalf of MHFT, making clear her passion for teaching, and sharing her frustration at having to yet again spend time defending our schools and students from outside assault.

Britton Principal Glen Webb, representing MHELA, did a great job of disaggregating data to illustrate the inequities in student populations between Gilroy Unified and Navigator, and their manipulation of data regarding the relative success of our students and their students.

The speeches were followed by a lengthy & detailed staff report, culminating with the Interim Superintendent Steve Betando recommending rejection of the Navigator petition.

In the end, the Board voted 6–1 to deny Navigator's request. The lone "yes" vote was Rick Badillo.

Charter Battles Continue

Unfortunately, the battle is not over. On **November 5**, the Board will hold its vote on the Rocketship petition. (The timing reflects a mandatory delay between the submission of an application and the vote.) We are going to need to turn out in numbers again. We know this is aggravating and tiresome, but it is important. If we allow these outside charter groups to wear us down, they will continue to prey on our district, and they will drain substantial resources from our schools, impacting our ability to meet the needs of all students.

Please plan on attending, either to speak about how you are indeed addressing the achievement gap in your classroom, or just to demonstrate your interest by being in the room. Our school board members are under a lot of pressure to approve these charters; we need to be there for them when it is time for them to vote.

In addition, there are advocates for the charter movement who are suggesting that this comes down to a conflict between teachers and parents. Even the media is accepting this characterization. In her October 9 column in the *San Jose Mercury*, Sharon Noguchi wrote that "parents spoke in favor of Navigator charter, the district's teachers spoke against it."

While it is true that all teachers who were there spoke in defense of our public schools, it is not true that all parents spoke in favor of

the charters. There were several parents who asked the Board to deny the charters. We need both teachers and parents to respond to the contention that this has anything to do with conflicting interests between parents and teachers. We are all interested in the success of our students.

An interesting development has been the apparent discomfort that is created for parents who acknowledge the outstanding quality of their children's teachers and yet believe their children need a Rocketship or Navigator choice in order to succeed.

At the September school board meeting, Jeanie Wallace told the Board that their vote to approve either of these charters would be perceived by teachers in the district as a vote of no confidence in the work that we do, under their direction, every day in our classrooms.

Following this, there were several would-be charter parents who took the mic at the October meeting to say that the teachers their children have had have, in fact, been wonderful. They just feel that their children need the charter schools to be successful.

Armando Benavides, the apparent leader of the Morgan Hill parents who spoke in support of the charter, went so far as to suggest that opening these charters would be good for our remaining classrooms, because they will draw off the most needy students (which they won't do, by the way). He went on to state:

We know that teachers are afraid that they will lose their jobs; to solve that, we need to implement class-size reduction to decrease the student/teacher ratio.

Apparently, he does not understand how ADA and school staffing are related.

Ironically, Morgan Hill public schools are staffed at a 29:1 student:teacher ratio. Navigator, freed of the burden of a collective bargaining agreement, staffs at 45:1, and that one is often a Teach for America student rather than a certificated teacher.)

Putting the issue to rest, however, was Trustee Rick Badillo himself, who said:

There are 7 supermarkets in town to give people choice, so our schools should have the same choice. For the teachers that see this as a vote of no confidence, the die were cast a long time ago.

We all need to be more conscious of the efforts we are making to diversify instruction and to meet the needs of all students, so that we can discuss those efforts with others. We do need to do a better job of showcasing our work.

We especially need more parents to come forward and speak about how our schools do indeed address the needs of their children. Above all we need Hispanic parents, as they are the group that is being specifically targeted by both charter organizations, and both charter organizations are claiming that Morgan Hill schools are ignoring the needs of these students. If you know of any parents who might be willing to address this, please talk to them!

The Saga Continues; Your Calling is Calling!

Since they did not gain approval from our Board to open a new charter school in Morgan Hill, the Navigator group will appeal to the Santa Clara County Board of Education, where former Morgan Hill Trustee Julia Hover-Smoot is encouraging them, and where numerous charter petitions have already been approved to open in other districts.

The *MH Times* has quoted James Dent (of Navigator) as saying that he plans to file with the county by the end of this month. The county then has 30 days from the date of the filing of the appeal to hold a public hearing, and 30 days after that to make a decision. Dent also told the *MH Times* that Navigator will submit a Prop 39 facilities request to MHUSD by the Nov. 1 deadline. Under Prop 39, school districts are required to make "reasonably equivalent" facilities available to charter schools upon request. **So, if the county Board of Education approves the charter, we will be sharing classroom space with Navigator at one of our schools next year.**

The Rocketship application will be following down the same path one month later, if they are denied by our Board. **If Rocketship is successful, under their model we will have to close an entire school next fall.**

Barrett, El Toro, Jackson, San Martin-Gwinn, and Walsh are targeted for the location of the new charters, but both charters intend to draw students from throughout the district. Our district funds will be diverted to operate these charters in lieu of funding our existing classrooms and supporting our remaining students.

We need to turn out in numbers for the meetings at the Santa Clara County Board of Education, and we will need to get parents to come as well if we want to stand any chance of defeating this assault. Please watch for sign-up sheets that will circulate at your site. If we all **commit to one meeting**, then very few people (our union leadership) will need to attend all four.

It is also a good idea to email members of the County Board of Education regarding this issue. In your email, please share how you do, in fact, endeavor to educate all students (in particular those on the losing end of the achievement gap). ***And invite them to visit your school! Firsthand knowledge is the most effective way to counter the claims that will be made to them that Morgan Hill schools are failing, and that a quality public education is not available here.***

Their email addresses are:

Grace Mah, President grace_mah@sccoe.org
Michael Chang, VP michael_chang@sccoe.org
Leon Beauchman leon_beauchman@sccoe.org
Joseph DiSalvo josephsds1@aol.com
Darcie Green darcie_green@sccoe.org
Julia Hover-Smoot julia_hover-smoot@sccoe.org
Anna Song anna_song@sccoe.org

WE need to protect our students from this raid on their resources!

Save Our Schools: Sign Our Petition!

MHFT staff is visiting all sites today, tomorrow, and Wednesday. Please be sure to attend the meeting at your site, and give input to the content and wording of our petition to the County Board of Education. Navigator already has an online petition going, which you can view at MoveOn.org! (If you are a MoveOn member, please contact them and ask them to take down the petition. MoveOn is not an organization that supports defunding of public education.)

The Tide May be Turning

Last week, Washington School in San Jose had a victory that may be a bellweather for the state; the County Board of Education had voted to approve construction of a new campus for Rocketship, in violation of zoning ordinances, and the Superior Court ruled that the County Board had overstepped its authority.

In addition, the congregation of a Presbyterian church in San Jose stopped the planned construction of a Rocketship charter on their property.

And we believe our own City Council's rejection of Rocketship's request for the approval of a bond to build a new campus here in Morgan Hill may be the first such rejection in the state.

It is an uphill battle, and we should not have to fight it, but we must fight it for the sake of our students and their right to a quality public education *right here in Morgan Hill!*

Looking for More Information?

Jonathan Kozol's *Shame of the Nation*:

www.facebook.com/jonathankozol

<http://www.stoprocketship.com>

Save the Date:

Morgan Hill Education Forum

December 3rd, 6pm

Sobrato High School
Performing Arts Center

Secondary Curriculum Council

The important work of the district goes on, as we act to implement Common Core across the curriculum and through all grade levels. While it is expected that Department Chairs and Curriculum Associates attend these meetings to provide department-level and classroom-level expertise, all teachers are welcome to attend. (Only DCs and CAs have a vote.) The next meeting is October 28, 3:30-5:00 in the ESD training room.

Teachers at the Mic

Martin Murphy is up this Tuesday, October 22! The meeting starts at 6pm at the District Office. It is important that through all of the turmoil or the charter assault, we continue to share a positive message with our Board and the public about what is going on in our schools. Dynamic presentations that showcase the quality education that goes on every day, and the active involvement of our students in learning activities, goes a long way towards reminding our board and our community of what Morgan Hill schools are really about.

Please plan to attend the board meeting and support your colleagues when it is your school's turn to present. If you would like to be involved in the presentation, contact your Building Rep.

