

Good Afternoon,

I am Efraín Martínez, Superintendent of the Charter School for Applied Technologies, which is currently the largest charter school in the State. First, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would like to start my testimony by focusing on a proposed solution to what I contend is a major impediment to increased teaching efficacy in the State.

Let me quickly highlight the context of the proposed agenda item and then move to name the recommendation.

Research could not be clearer about teacher efficacy being the most important factor in education renewal. Effective administrative leadership is crucial, but not as influential. Thus, a school or a district may have highly effective teachers and mediocre management and results be excellent because of the quality of the teaching and learning regardless of administration. Conversely, a school or district may have excellent leadership, but if the skills of the teaching faculty are outdated or

otherwise ineffective, the results will be disappointing. That is true –of course- unless the school and/or district leadership is able to produce effective professional development programs and the content of that training is used by teachers.

Let me say a few more words about the context of my proposal. I was asked recently to consider an administrative position in a low-performing district in our State. The consideration allowed me to review any possibility of making a difference in student achievement. A review of the collective bargaining agreements I would need to honor led me to understand that neither I nor anyone else could make a significant impact on student achievement. Not only the teachers' union maintain effective control of what is being provided in professional development, but left the decision to implement what was learned at the training or not in the classroom to the individual teacher!

No other endeavor or important social institution – public or private- would consider tackling immense

challenges such as those that public education confronts with such a widespread restriction.

Invitational teacher professional development does not work because teaching is hard and change is also hard. It is human nature to find comfort in what is known. The theory behind invitational professional development is that the practitioner would “see the light” through information and that new thinking will move her or him to new practices.

The reality is that one seldom thinks one way to new behaviors, but behaves one’s way to new thinking. So many times we have to be compelled to trying something before fully committing that new practice to our repertoire.

Though the origins of such bargaining agreement clauses may have been well intentioned, the unintended consequences are crippling the chances for the needed changes in teacher efficacy, particularly where such changes are needed the most.

Therefore, I urge the Commission to look into proposing legislation and/or regulation that would neutralize and correct the above described effect on teacher training that some current – and probably future- bargaining agreements have.

Some of the calls for converting low performing schools into charter schools aim at restructuring building without the current bargaining agreement. Unless the State is willing to use that strategy in a significant enough number of cases, any positive results would be minimal. Besides, the vast majority of bargaining agreement provisions are legitimate in their entirety with no negative unintended results on achievement and there should not be any need to throw the proverbial kid with the bathwater.

Thank you.

J. Efraín Martínez