

THE ADVOCATE

SD4GS collects signatures for appointed School Board initiative

Scott Himelstein of the self-anointed “San Diegans 4 Great Schools” (SD4GS) recently published an opinion piece encouraging voters to support their initiative to drastically restructure the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) School Board. The initiative combines widely-supported concepts such as district-only elections and term limits with a scheme to make way for a near-majority of appointed, rather than elected, Board members. It also adds two supposedly “new” components requiring planning and public accountability for student achievement—both of which are already mandated by state and federal law. The SD4GS initiative is constructed to bury deeply anti-democratic goals beneath these other moderate or unnecessary components, and has nothing to do with “great schools.”

With the backing of a group of wealthy business leaders and academic elite, SD4GS is using paid signature-gatherers to place their initiative on the next ballot. Voters should be clear—the SD4GS initiative does nothing to support teaching and learning in San Diego’s classrooms. It is simply a thinly-veiled power-grab to diminish the voices of parents, educators and voters in the future of our schools.

The fact is that SDUSD’s student achievement ranks among the highest of any urban district of its size. Despite constantly worsening budgetary cuts, student achievement in SDUSD has continued to rise. The current School Board has increased fiscal oversight and transparency, maintained core programs and class sizes, and worked consistently to engage parents and educators in decisions about our schools. Their actions demonstrate a tangible commitment to providing quality schools for our community while ending the internal

discord of past leadership, and a commitment to the voters who put them in office. This reality belies SD4GS’ stated goal of improving student achievement, and calls into question their true motivation for wanting to take control of a democratically elected board.

So what is their motivation? For all that their name includes “great schools,” what the SD4GS initiative does is take direct aim at the elected governance structure of SDUSD, and includes nothing that would directly support schools or students. The bottom line is that SD4GS wants to replace democratic, local control of our schools with a back-room School Board appointed by the business sector, not elected by the voters. Since 2008, San Diegans have consistently elected School Board candidates who were backed by San Diego’s teachers. It appears that SD4GS hopes to circumvent the democratic process to achieve what they have failed to accomplish through engagement in the electoral process.

Ask a teacher or anyone who works with our students what they need to provide a quality learning environment for our students—guaranteed you will not hear a plea for more School Board members or a less democratic leadership structure. That’s why we simply cannot afford to allow SD4GS to frame the discussion about the future of our schools, not when we have the opportunity to stand together and to focus our collective efforts on ensuring a bright future for every child in our city. San Diego’s educators will continue to stand ready to engage in that real and democratic discussion.

[As submitted — still unpublished — to the San Diego Union-Tribune by SDEA President Bill Freeman.]

CDC teachers win workload grievance on behalf of 100 members!

by COLLEEN ANDREWS, ALYCE FOX and BLANCA TREVINO

In November 2009 SDEA members won new workload protections that Child Development Center (CDC) Teachers are putting into action.

In March new attendance job duties were shifted from classified CDC clerks to CDC teachers. Our supervisors told us to manage parent sign-in/out sheets that parents use every day when they drop off and pick up students. This new duty required that we interrupt our teaching to greet parents and manage attendance sign-in/out. We spent as much as an additional hour every day monitoring attendance and even making phone calls to verify absences. Adding new work to our plates without taking something off violates our workload rights in the SDEA union contract.

CDC Teachers used the workload protections in our contract to tell our Program Director that she had to either take work off of a comparable quantity off of our plates, or couldn’t assign us the new attendance duties. In November we finally won the solution we were looking for — the attendance sign-in/out duties were taken off our plates and went back to CDC clerks!

CDC Teachers are celebrating our victory, but we’re also learning from our experience. We learned that having the courage to stand

up to our boss for what’s right pays off. But we also realize that the grievance process took a long time to produce a solution. We might have had a more speedy victory if we had organized collective actions with co-workers to pressure decision-makers to take action sooner.



From left: CDC teachers Alyce Fox (Walker CDC), Blanca Trevino (Bay Park CDC) and Colleen Andrews (Kennedy CDC) led the workload grievance on behalf of approximately one hundred CDC teachers.

Editor's Note

We continue to streamline The Advocate to meet our budgetary needs and provide greater content flexibility. Future Advocates will range from two to eight pages dependent upon content. Communications will continue to be supplemented through our new email newsletter, SDEA Union Notes, sent out periodically on Fridays.

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