

Stop the TakeOver
Protect our Public Schools
No Home Rule Charter Takeover

A Subcommittee of Dallas Friends of Public Education
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Dear Trustee,

You are soon to embark on the daunting task of appointing the first Home Rule Charter School District Commission (HRCSD-C) in the state of Texas. Four sentences in the Texas Education Code provide the legal guidance as to the make up of the Commission, but they do not address the process as to how the board will go about the appointment of the members.

The law states:

“Sec. 12.015. CHARTER COMMISSION. (a) Not later than the 30th day after the date of receipt of a petition or adoption of a resolution under Section 12.014, the board of trustees of the school district shall appoint 15 residents of the district to serve on the commission to frame a charter for the district.

(b) The membership of the charter commission must reflect the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and geographic diversity of the district. A majority of the members appointed to the commission must be parents of school-age children attending public school. At least 25% of the commission must be classroom teachers selected by the representatives of the professional staff pursuant to Section 11.251 (e).”

We urge you to consider the following issues in the formation of the process by which to establish the Commission:

- 1) First and foremost will be how to define “the district” and what population you will choose to use to represent it. Will you choose among these options or others:
 - The number and ethnicity of those who have school-age children in the district (which excludes those who use private or home school and the childless)
 - The number and ethnicity of registered voters (which would exclude undocumented individuals)
 - The 2010 census population (which has, of course, changed)
 - The voting age population and ethnicity

Each choice leads to a different number of each racial and ethnic group which is reflective of the different ways to define each population. Adding or taking away even one position from the various ethnic groups may be controversial. Many things are NOT stated in the description. For example, there is nothing prohibiting students from being a part of the commission, or from having parents being teachers as well. How will the board propose to deal with the fact that racial and ethnic makeup of the students in the district is vastly different from the racial and ethnic makeup of the general population of the district, and appoint a commission which is fair to all?

- 2) How will you decide to reflect the socioeconomic status (SES) of the population which you define as the district?
 - A) How will you address the “economic” portion of SES?
 - Will you use the median income of the population, and then will you have half of the commission above that level and half below that level of income?
 - Or will you have the average of the combined income level of those on the commission be the average of the income level of your defined population?
 - Or will you use the poverty level of the defined population (say, 45%), and then require that 45% of the commission members be below poverty, and the other 55% above the poverty level in order to reflect the population?

- Will you apply the economic makeup of the district as an average or as a distribution to the commission?
- Or, will you select a Commission which reflects the student population on free/reduced lunch?

B) To address the “socio-” portion of SES:

- Will you need to consider the level of educational achievement?
- Will these percentages (high school education, college education, post-graduate education, etc) be reflective of the distribution among the population as you have defined it?
- Will you include special education and those with disabilities in the mix, along with literacy and home language, in order to be reflective of the population?
- Will you consider gender and sexual orientation as part of the diversity required?
- Then there are a myriad of other variables—religion, employment/occupation, age, language, etc...

4) How will you reflect the “geographic diversity” of the district?

- There are many municipalities included within the borders of DISD. What process will the board propose in order to be sure that they are represented on the HRCSD-C?

In addition, there are the many practical issues which must be considered:

- Is the member available for a year to serve on the Commission?
- Child care may be an issue and create an undue burden which may cause many parents to not be able to serve. Will the district make arrangements for child care for these parents?
- Will a tentative calendar/schedule be established before submitting nominees or will nominees have to commit to any possible schedule requirements and forgo any summer vacation or other plans?
- Will the District be able to support the Commission in July when Dallas ISD usually shuts down except for a skeletal staff, or will there be the presumption that no meetings will be held in July?
- What is the consideration for transportation and other expenses incurred by members?
- Will the District be responsible to bear the financial costs to the participant considering the requirement to have members reflect the socioeconomic district picture?
- Can the District expect parents with very low income to personally bear the expense of commission participation?

We also strongly urge you to not appoint anyone affiliated with the Support Our Public Schools organization. They have assured the public that their role would be over once the petitions were presented to the board of trustees and they should be held to their statement.

The monumental question which you each must answer is this: How will the board of trustees develop and implement a reasonable plan to choose 15 DISD residents who will most accurately reflect the many variables cited above?

This process will no doubt demand many hours of your time and thoughtful consideration. We appreciate your dedicated service to the children of Dallas ISD.

Respectfully submitted,

Stop the TakeOver