

Keeping Texas Competitive

A Legislator's Guide to the Issues 2013-2014



Campus Charters: A Parent-Trigger for Texas

★ Keeping Texas Competitive Priority

The Issue

The Texas Education Code allows for the creation of campus charter schools or charter programs if a majority of both parents and teachers at a campus petition a school board. These are different than the local charter schools that districts can create on their own, with the process driven from the bottom up. Most commonly, this procedure is referred to as a “parent-trigger.” Such laws are gaining popularity in a number of other states, such as California and, most recently, Louisiana, and are designed to empower parents to make significant education reforms at the campus level.

The creation of these campus charters or campus program charters are governed by Sec. 12.052, Education Code:

- a. In accordance with this subchapter, the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a home-rule school district may grant a charter to parents and teachers for a campus or a program on a campus if the board is presented with a petition signed by:
 1. the parents of a majority of the students at that school campus; and
 2. a majority of the classroom teachers at that school campus.
- b. For purposes of Subsection (a)(1), the signature of only one parent of a student is required.
- c. The board of trustees may not arbitrarily deny a charter under this section.

Campus charters can be run semi-independently from its parent ISD, as well as from the state education system. This provision is the closest thing Texas has to a parent-trigger.

However, much like with Texas’ home-rule district law, this attempt to foster innovation has not been taken advantage of by parents because of various barriers that stand in their way. The main barrier is that parents cannot petition for a charter on their own—the petition must also be supported by a majority of teachers on the campus. While it is important for parents and teachers to work together, it is the parents who should be able to direct the education of their children.

The Facts

- For a campus charter to become operative in Texas, the votes of 50% of the parents of students at the school, as well as 50% of the teachers, are necessary.
- Campus charters can be run semi-independently from its parent ISD, as well as from the state education system.
- Unlike open-enrollment charters, there is no cap as to the number of such charters that could exist in Texas.

Recommendations

- Change Sec. 12.052, Education Code to require a board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a home-rule school district to grant a campus charter or a program on a campus charter to the parents of a majority of students on the campus.

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- Make the requirement that 50% of the teachers at a school approve the campus charter optional, rather than mandatory.

Resource

Improving Efficiency and Local Control in Texas Education: Home-Rule Districts and Campus Charters by James Golsan and Bill Peacock, Texas Public Policy Foundation (July 2012).

