



Princeton International Academy Charter School

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PROPOSED PRINCETON-BASED CHARTER SCHOOL SUES THREE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO END INTERFERENCE WITH THE OPENING OF THE SCHOOL AND TO STOP MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

Suit Also Seeks Repayment of Funds, an Accounting of Monies Spent, and Appointment of a Monitor to Oversee Spending Practices

PRINCETON, NJ (August 10, 2011) -- The Princeton International Academy Charter School (PIACS), joined by parents of children who would attend the school, today filed a privately-funded suit against the Princeton Regional, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional and South Brunswick school districts before the State Commissioner of Education, to enjoin them from spending public funds and using their governmental positions to oppose the opening of the charter school.

According to the lawsuit: the school districts have vigorously opposed the efforts of PIACS and diverted tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars intended for the education of school children to pay for consultants and lawyers to oppose efforts to secure a facility in South Brunswick, the site of the planned school. While parental interest in the school is high, the school districts have disseminated false and inflammatory statements about the charter school to the community and have pledged to use any available means to prevent PIACS from opening, all at taxpayer expense.

The Commissioner of the State Department of Education approved PIACS' plan to operate a charter school focused on Mandarin-English dual language immersion, an inquiry-based curriculum framework and Singapore-style math after considering input received from the three local school districts from which the majority of the students will be drawn. The charter school is a free public school, open to all on a space-available basis. It would receive its funding from the local districts in the amount of 90% of the per pupil cost for each student enrolled from the sending district. Local school district funding is derived from local property taxes and State aid.

The suit alleges that the school districts are misspending public monies provided to them by the State and by their taxpayers for the purpose of running district schools, and are improperly using those funds and their status as public school officials to malign PIACS and serve as the catalyst to galvanize opposition to the proposed charter school. The suit further alleges that these activities are an abuse of their school administration

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responsibilities, exceed their legal authority to operate the schools and educate the children, and violate a number of State law provisions that are intended to ensure financial and operational accountability of the school districts.

"For the past eighteen months, these school districts have been using public funds and their public educational positions to thwart the rights of the parents and the educational opportunities of their children. They had their say in the review process and they chose not to appeal the Commissioner's approval of the school. Now they are waging a guerilla war financed by public dollars to fight PIACS and pick sides, favoring one set of public school children – those who will attend the traditional public schools – over another – those who want to attend the charter school. This is not only morally wrong, it is unlawful and against the public policy of this State," said Parker Block, a co-Founder and Spokesman for PIACS.

In addition to asking the State Commissioner of Education, who has legal oversight over the spending and educational practices of the school districts to stop the expenditure of public monies to oppose PIACS, the suit also requests other relief such as the appointment of a monitor to ensure that the districts are spending public funds in a lawful manner, a reduction in State aid to the districts in an amount equal to that spent to oppose PIACS, and an end to the dissemination of any school district-sponsored information opposing PIACS. Further, the suit seeks compensation by the districts to PIACS equal to the amount the school districts have spent for opposing PIACS and an accounting of all expenses and activities to date. Finally, the suit asks that the school districts be instructed to drop their opposition to PIACS' effort to secure a facility.

"We have seen overwhelming interest among local parents here, like others around the country, who understand that the global achievement gap is real," added founding PIACS Board Chair Bonnie Lao. "The charter school law recognizes that parents can pursue high quality, innovative schools to improve educational outcomes for their children. This is true regardless of the socio-economic status of the community."

Copies of the Verified Petition for Relief and the Brief on Behalf of Petitioners are available upon request.

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About Princeton International Academy Charter School

The Princeton International Academy Charter School (PIACS) will provide innovative learning strategies which have been proven to improve results in three critical 21st Century Skill areas: proficiency in two strategic world languages, Mandarin and English through dual-language immersion ; Proficiency in Math through a Singapore-style Math curriculum; Enhanced critical thinking skills and a global perspective through an inquiry-based curriculum framework which will follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program.

The New Jersey Department of Education approved the PIACS application on January 11, 2010 to permit the admission of students, now anticipated in September 2012.