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Date: Oct 1, 2017 5:03 PM  
Subject: El Paso Charter Update

On and All,

The purpose of this email is to update you on this past week's events in El Paso. This is an summation of my estimate of the situation. Two major events occurred.

CREEED and Woody Hunt announced that they are providing \$12 million of Hunt Foundation donations over the next 8 years to support charter expansion. \$1.5 million a year is not decisive money. What is more significant is CREEED, Hunt and

Richard Castro offering a Charter friendly environment encouraging more aggressive expansion than is already occurring with IDEA and Harmony. Their stated goal is to go from 2% of El Paso's kids in charters, to 20%. Success in that will eviscerate from west to east, Canutillo ISD, EPISD, Ysleta ISD, Socorro ISD and Clint ISD, the 'Big 5'. This has been an expected move, and I believe we could have given Hunt some second thoughts based on IDEA's finances.

This is further compounded by the El Paso Inc article (El Paso's Charter School Boom [http://www.elpasoinc.com/news/local\\_news/el-paso-s-charter-school-boom/article\\_ad7497f0-a152-11e7-b930-47061e8f2f97.html](http://www.elpasoinc.com/news/local_news/el-paso-s-charter-school-boom/article_ad7497f0-a152-11e7-b930-47061e8f2f97.html)) that quotes Cabrera as saying "I think inevitably there has to be some form of collaboration (with charter schools)," EPISD Superintendent Juan Cabrera said. "If we are fighting for the same kids, we are going to have empty buildings."

Cabrera said he is open to partnering with a charter school network. He hopes El Paso can model Denver, Colorado, where school districts have incorporated charter schools alongside traditional schools." (He is referring to DSST model.)

"If we wanted to partner and take one in, we could probably do it better," he said. "That would be the competitive reason to do it."

### Players Involved.

--CREEED. Chamber of Commerce group with strong ties to Texans for Education Reform (TER), Texas Community Foundations among others. Has been opening doors and top cover for IDEA Public Schools. Does donate funds to some of Big Five, but nowhere near what they do for Charters.

--Richard Castro – CEO of CREEED. Long time charter supporter. Owns 75% plus of McDonald's in El Paso.

--Woody Hunt – Hunt Industries – Main \$\$ backer. Charters not vouchers. Will be contributing significantly to Escobar not Fenenbock, mostly likely on basis of likelihood of her winning. (That is a complicator)

--Dee Margo. Republican, one term State Legislator, voted to cripple Ed funding in TX in 2011; Pro-business; part of TER; appointed chair of Board of Managers which replaced old school board; hired Cabrera as 'sole finalist'; retains strong influence over Cabrera, meeting regularly, even before he became mayor; anti-union, especially teacher unions, very especially EP AFT.

--Forma Group. CREEED's public affairs firm that led attack campaign on Mary Gonzalez.

--Juan Cabrera. Supe for just over 4 years. In last year, wants to move on to

Advocate/Consultant and bigger money in Austin/DC (Guru of Dual Language?). Very image conscious, only wants good press on way out, will accept appearance of good rather than actuality. Gets very upset if I talk with Trustees directly. Either lacks fortitude or inclination or both to confront CREEED. ALAS trained, thus Broad trained, and has been practicing Disruptive Innovation in EPISD to point District and employees exhausted and vulnerable.

--Jose Lopez. Young District Chief of Staff. Consummate bean counter. Business, not education background.

--Bob Moore. Outgoing EP Times Editor who was privately pro-Public Ed but given amount of advertising dollars from Hunt Industries....., did a good job of keeping a balance. Was digging into EPISD/Cabrera and Fenenbock on multiple areas. Hit gold with Himmelstein investigation

--Dori Fenenbock. Resigned board to run as Democrat for open Congressional Seat, though being Republican voter and donor (like rest of her family and her husband's. Pro-charter, part of meeting with Cabrera, Louis, and some charter/reformer lobbyist where Cabrera tried to bulldoze Louis and me for or support, if not acquiescence to his bringing in Kipp to contract schools out to in EPISD (5-8). Expect her family Superpac (?) to hire Forma Group to work her campaign. Has stated that charters are "good for poor Hispanic kids, but not white kids". (Got that on tape and am saving for the right time. Cabrera has been actively campaigning for her, to include during a meeting during work hours, in a classroom with Ray, myself and one other.

### What has transpired since stories?

--After a regular Supe's meeting at Region XIX after story broke, the Big Five met in private and agreed to fight CREEED and Charters Expansion. (From one of the other Supe's, not Cabrera and he doesn't know I know that.)

Cabrera initially ready to fight on Wednesday.

--Thursday meeting with EPISD CoS, Jose Lopez walked it back saying CREEED is help and can't anger.

--Cabrera walked back willingness to fight today, wants proof others would. (Assessment: Since first conversation, CREEED through either Margo or Richard Castro have told him to back down and partner with a charter.)

--I am scheduled to meet with Canutillo ISD's Supe Galaviz on Wednesday to discuss:

- a. Community Schools.
- b. Go Public Campaign. (Cabrera and Lopez have slow-rolled this for two years, giving superficial support.)
- c. Fighting Charters Expansion and CREEED.
- d. Friday met with State Senator Jose Rodriguez's District Manager. Rodriguez will align with us, bring all delegation but Joe Pickett on board to one degree or another. Sees this linked to two other hot button issues (Duranguito and MA Cultural Center.)
- e. Reached out to the NEA locals in EPISD and YISD. Former was (politely put uninterested) in working together. Latter willing, but can't afford a beef with TSTA by EPTA President.

### Assessments.

1. Cabrera will not be EPISD Superintendent in 6-12 Months, this is his pay-off to Margo/CREEED.
2. Cabrera will hem and haw and try to deflect. May try heavy handed approach, has in the past, not effective.
3. Lopez will be the bad cop in this equation. Already has made threats about Healthcare or access or consultation to get me to recant a mild Facebook posting he didn't like. (Didn't work.)

4. Right now, EPISD Board is 3-3 on contracting out schools, maybe 4-2 against. Choice of new District 7 in November will be critical. (Strangely, Margo/CREEED choice, Daniel Call has already contacted me.)

Add in the \$67 Million DoE will be providing.g IDEA, next year, and Charter Forces will have momentum.

5. The financial deep dive I asked for that TX AFT slow rolled until it didn't could have caused Hunt to have second thoughts and been a model for hitting them where it really hurts. Lack of that support from TX AFT has hurt in this fight.

6. **It won't be hard to turn members and other EPISD employees against Cabrera/Fenenbock/CREEED and contracting out EPISD schools.**

7. And, just to make it more fun, the Congressional Primary is in the middle of this, as Fenenbock is in the mix in EPISD.

This fight isn't lost, but....

### Plans.

1. Continue to build coalition.

2. **Work around Cabrera/Lopez if necessary. And, keep him on defensive in District, without alienating the Trustees.**

3. Fight to avoid Call's appointment to District 7, while working other Trustees.

4. Keep information campaign going, internally and externally.

5. Develop relationship with Canutillo Supe, opening the doors to Community Schools....

Do u know how long our TUC meeting is?. Develop a Boycott McDonald's Campaign. And, yes, I understand it would be more impactful in the court of public opinion than economically. Internal messaging short version – Why are we funding our own destruction. External – Don't help Richard Castro hand you children's schools over to out of town profiteers. This would have to be multiple locals and CLU, too. Best though will be getting press and embarrassing Castro.

7. Develop a "I won't work for Charters" pledge campaign. Will share concept with other locals in area, to include EPTA if there is a change in tone or leadership.

8. **Start a series of FOIA requests with EPISD on contacts with CREEED, et. al.**

9. Make Charters/Privatization and Forma Group a Litmus Test for EP AFT/TX AFT/AFT endorsements

### Asks of AFT/TX AFT.

1. AFT – For the purpose of this fight, expand my charter informally to include Canutillo ISD for the purposes of Counter-Charter Advocacy, only. There is no AFT Local out there and the AMP Region is not geared for this kind of fight. I have a good rapport with Galaviz, and in the long run, this supports overall West Texas future planning.

2. TX AFT – Support the above.

3. AFT/TX AFT – Support Boycott and Pledge campaign (Artwork and Messaging and Media in and out of media El Paso market.)

4. AFT/TX AFT – Support FOIA campaign with select ORR's from TX AFT and AFT into EPISD.

5. AFT/TX AFT – Reconsideration of financial deep dive with goal of releasing unstable

IDEA finances into Bond Market during roll-over windows. I wanted to do that this year, based on the dive being conducted over a year ago and finished.

6. AFT – Continued advise on the how to's and nuances of this battle.

7. **AFT – Begin interfering with Cabrera's trying to develop a relationship with SUNY and University of Houston on his Dual Language Certification concept.**

8. AFT – Review of PAC's associated with Fenenbock's campaigns for any expenditures by them to the Forma Group.

And, yes, this past three years has been a textbook exercise in damage control with a reformer and Broadie as a Supe. Tap-dancing on a razor blade while juggling hand-grenades.

Respectfully,

Ross