



United Teachers of New Orleans

Larry Carter, President

4714 Paris Avenue • New Orleans, LA 70122

(504) 304-2160 • <http://utno.la.aft.org/>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Larry Carter, President, United Teachers of New Orleans

Benjamin Franklin High School Teachers Unionize

(New Orleans – April 2, 2014) Over 85% of the faculty at Benjamin Franklin High School joined together and presented a petition to their administration and the Advocates for Academic Excellence in Education charter school board and asked them to recognize their union and begin negotiating a collective bargaining agreement with them.

Teachers at Franklin look forward to working with their administration to bargain an equitable and fair contract; this will allow them to provide the best educational opportunities for their students.

Teachers at the state's highest-performing school said that they would be better able to advocate for their students if they had more of a voice in the decision-making process at their school.

Like most other schools in the city, Benjamin Franklin reopened as a charter school after Hurricane Katrina. Under Louisiana law, charter school teachers are considered "at-will" employees who can be terminated at any time, for no reason whatsoever, and have no recourse or due process rights. This compromises teachers when it comes to advocating for best practices to be followed in the school or classroom.

"Without a clear and safe process for teachers to voice our concerns over the curriculum and direction of the school, Franklin students cannot benefit from the full expertise of the faculty," said social studies teacher Dustin Batson.

Teachers believe that formalizing a process to work cooperatively with the administration will help the school retain its extremely qualified and competent staff.

High-performing schools such as Ben Franklin rely on a quality teaching staff to maintain their distinction. The professional educators at Franklin are asking for the ability to advocate for their students and peers without fear of retribution.

"The union at Franklin would bring transparency and equality back to the school, allowing the teachers to have a voice in shaping policy for our incredible students," veteran educator Jodee Pulizzano said.

This is the first charter school chapter of the United Teachers of New Orleans, Local 527 of the American Federation of Teachers.