

Houston Federation of Teachers



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Under Cover of Darkness, Occupation of Houston ISD Begins

“This is a hostile takeover. We are no longer an independent school district. But we will also not be a silent school district.”

HOUSTON — In the wee hours of the morning, under the cloak of darkness, Mike Miles was appointed superintendent of the now occupied Houston "Independent" School District. Miles' name had been floating around the district as the Texas Education Agency's chosen leader since March 15, but TEA vigorously denied that appointment had been made.

Lo and behold, here we are, the inevitable having come to pass. With police surrounding the Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center, denying access to public property, non-employees were denied access to the building. If this is any indication of what we can expect going forward, it is sure to be a bumpy ride.

Additionally, we now know the [identities of the members of the board of managers](#) who have replaced our democratically elected school board. Once again, these appointments seemed inevitable, these names having been floated as selections long before today and before TEA's vetting process had begun.

While we agree that some changes needed to be made in the district, the Houston Federation of Teachers stands dismayed this morning. With TEA's clear disrespect for community input, we are doubtful the agency and its appointees will make any changes that improve student outcomes.

HFT will work to hasten TEA's departure in this district and reduce the harm to teachers, families, and our schools. We want what is best for our community, and we will not let them be ignored in this process.

As this board of managers and superintendent take power, they should know now that HFT will always oppose:

- The gutting of wraparound services for our community
- The closing or “charterizing” of schools and the sale of property
- Any push for a pay-for-performance scheme
- The continued over-reliance on STAAR and standardized testing in the measure of our schools
- Any move to make Houston ISD a “District of Innovation,” exempting it from key standards that make our schools a safe place to learn for students and a suitable place to work for employees

To restore any trust in this community, the board of managers must commit their support of:

- Local, democratic control of HISD on a definite timeline. (*If TEA can't deliver improvements, why should it retain control?!*)
- Smaller class sizes
- Higher pay across the board for all HISD employees to help recruit and retain teachers and school staff
- Increased investments in community schools and services
- Functional, safe school buildings and equipment
- More opportunities for career and technical education and experiential learning

"Don't get confused," said Jackie Anderson, HFT president. "This is a hostile takeover. We are no longer an independent school district. But we will also not be a silent school district."

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The Houston Federation of Teachers represents educators and certified professionals in Houston ISD. HFT is affiliated with the 1.7-million-member American Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO.