



San Antonio Alliance of Teachers & Support Personnel

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Alliance wins \$150,000 grant to grow student enrollment

On October 8, the AFT, one of the Alliance's national affiliates, announced that the San Antonio Alliance was one of eight local unions in the country to win an AFT Innovation Fund Grant. The AFT Innovation Fund is a union-led, private foundation-supported effort to provide grants to AFT locals to develop bold education innovations. Using the in-district charter design/development process as the vehicle, the Alliance's proposal looks at the challenge of declining student enrollment as an opportunity to think differently about how to engage school staff, parents, and community to improve student learning and increase enrollment. [Read more details here.](#)

The union will encourage and assist more schools to become in-district charter schools. There are currently several in-district charter schools, which are also neighborhood schools, that draw students from outside their neighborhood boundaries and from outside the district boundaries. These schools have a particular focus, outlined in their charter, that has drawn parents and students to their schools.

As the union works with schools to help them become in-district charter schools, we will also encourage them to consider becoming "community schools." We know that many of our students would benefit from services, activities, and experiences that are not directly addressed in school but impact student performance. "Community schools" wrap these services around the school - "wrap-around services," utilizing a needs assessment to determine what services to provide and partnering with other entities, including other governmental agencies, to provide the services.

The union will also help in-district charter schools learn how to market their individual school's successes. Most schools have had little experience or expertise in marketing their individual school, and yet the individual school, not the district, is what most interests the parent.

Finally, the union and the district will plan and coordinate a *Grow Our Schools Summit* of key entities and individuals to examine the many issues that impact student enrollment but are outside of the district's direct control (housing stock, neighborhoods in decline, etc.)

The AFT's Innovation Fund, which was announced last April, is funded, in large part, by four of the nation's most prominent private philanthropies -- the Broad Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and the Mott Foundation. 126 local unions submitted proposals under phase one of the grant process. Fifteen of those, including the Alliance, were selected to continue to phase two. Seven proposals won funding. The Alliance was the only local in Texas selected.