

Girls interrupted: Procedural fight can't thwart growth of successful charter school

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The latest front in the war on charter schools is a perverse bureaucratic assault on a phenomenally successful program for girls.

Girls Prep has blossomed in a lower East Side building shared harmoniously with two public schools, one a traditional elementary, one dedicated to autistic middle-schoolers. There's plenty of room for Girls Prep to grow without the slightest inconvenience.

But stunningly, Advocates for Children, an organization that styles itself as a voice for kids, objects. Its allies are the [United Federation of Teachers](#) and anti-mayoral control dead-enders.

Girls Prep has grown over the past five years into a K through 4 school with a student body that is mainly African-American and Latina. In 2009, the kids racked up pass rates of 100% in math and 96% in English on state standardized exams.

The school has applied for permission to add grades 5 through 8. Which requires more space, in a building that is at 67% of capacity with the three programs now in residence. The [Department of Education](#) okayed a sensible plan:

PS 188, the traditional elementary, would stay in place. PS 94, the middle school for autistic children, which draws students from various neighborhoods, would be phased out of the location as children

graduated. No one would be transferred, and a similar program would phase in elsewhere.

The three principals were onboard. But the [Community Education Council of District 1](#), which reflexively fights anything the department supports, joined with the teachers union in manufacturing transparently bogus objections about local control, parental rights and safety.

It also recruited Advocates for Children to petition the state Education Department to block Girls Prep's expansion on the grounds of supposed procedural missteps.

A spokeswoman for Advocates said the group is not opposed to charters, but is concerned only that children and parents did not get all the protections state education law requires.

This is insane hairsplitting in a case in which no student is being harmed and many students are likely to gain. State Education Commissioner [David Steiner](#) must stand up for the 125 preteen girls whose hopes to go to a really good school will be dashed if Advocates for Children has its way. Advocates? Enemies is more like it.

Read more:

http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/2010/06/20/2010-06-20_girls_interrupted.html#ixzz0rWBcUNz0