



JOY HOFMEISTER
STATE SUPERINTENDENT *of* PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

May 15, 2020

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Superintendent Matt Wilson
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Oklahoma City, OK 73131
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Superintendent Wilson,

It has come to the attention of the Oklahoma State Department of Education ("OSDE") and the State Board of Education ("State Board") that the Sovereign Community School ("SCS"), a public charter school sponsored by the State Board, has publicly announced plans to "merge" with an entirely separate charter school entity under the governance of another sponsor, Oklahoma City Public Schools. Such a "merger" of two distinct charter schools with entirely separate sponsorship is not authorized under Oklahoma law and any commingling of assets, funds, records is expressly prohibited by SCS's contract ("Contract") with the State Board. Further, the State Board of Education in its role as charter school sponsor was not consulted or notified of any potential plans by SCS to attempt to alter its governance structure or educational program prior to the public announcement of this planned "merger."

Specifically, the OSDE was advised that the following post was made on the official Facebook page of the Sovereign Community School, on or about April 24, 2020:



Sovereign Community School

33 mins · 🌐

It is with great joy that I have the opportunity to announce that tonight, in a unanimous vote, the Santa Fe South board has voted to move forward in a merger with Sovereign Community School!!! This partnership is what we need to give our school the chance to keep serving our community. We will be working closely with the SFS team as we develop the terms of our partnership, but, rest assured, the pieces are in motion. The first step is to support us in the current school year and help us to build a robust plan for next year. I'm so grateful for our families, staff, and students for your commitment to Sovereign and for voting for our school to move forward in building a relationship with SFS. This is a time for celebration as we move forward. Niyaawe, without your support we would not have a school to fight for. Gratitude for all of you!

A charter school sponsor is responsible for oversight and monitoring of its sponsored schools, and a charter school is accountable to its sponsor for its operations and governance. By failing to communicate with the State Board on a matter as foundational as changing the structure and nature of the school, SCS has frustrated the purpose of the sponsorship arrangement and the charter contract.

Additionally, considering this is the first year of operation for SCS, an apparent attempt to substantially deviate from its application for the charter school and the resulting Contract is of significant concern. Most concerning of all in terms of educational services to students, the State Board has not been apprised of any plans regarding how the indigenously-informed pedagogical nature of Sovereign Community School, as authorized by the Board, would be affected by a "merger" with a different charter school that may be guided by different educational strategies or priorities. As you are aware, modifications that are of a nature or degree to cause the State Board approved curriculum to cease is prohibited by the Contract and requires prior approval from the State Board.

In its capacity as the charter school sponsor of Sovereign Community School, as well as under its general authority pursuant to 70 O.S. § 3-104(13), the State Board of Education requires the presence of one or more representatives of SCS at its next meeting, to be held at 9:30 a.m. on May 28, 2020. At this time, is anticipated that the State Board meeting will be held by videoconference as authorized by 25 O.S. § 307.1, and instructions for accessing and participating in the meeting remotely will be provided to you at a later date.

Representatives of Sovereign Community School should be prepared to address questions from the State Board about SCS's unauthorized approval of a "merger" with another distinct charter school under the sponsorship of another entity, as well other pertinent school issues, including but not limited to school finances.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss.

Sincerely,



Brad Clark
General Counsel
Oklahoma State Department of Education