



STUDY GUIDE

MOTHER KNOWS BEST: WHY I FIGHT FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

KEY TERMS:

school choice
teacher's union

education
activists

charter school
voice

| NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms. | CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video. |
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| <p>Why didn't Ms. Iglesias like the government-run school in her neighborhood?</p> <p>How much did teacher's union leaders spend on a campaign against Ms. Iglesias?</p> <p>Why did Ms. Iglesias start the Parent's Union?</p> | <p>Why did Ms. Iglesias become an advocate for school choice?</p> <p>How have the various constituent groups at the school responded to Ms. Iglesias' crusade for school choice?</p> |

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Iglesias explains: "...when my son approached first grade, I took a hard look at the government school in our neighborhood. I didn't like what I saw. Academic standards were low. Discipline was lax. I saw no good future there for my son. But I didn't have the money for private school. I did some research. I found that my district offered something they call 'a fundamental school,' kind of like a charter school, where they stress reading, writing, and math. The test results at this school were higher than at the government school. This was exactly what I wanted for my son." Why do you think that the test results were higher at the 'fundamental school?' Explain.
- After Ms. Iglesias shares her story about her son having to be at the mercy of a lottery to try to get into a better school, she shares with us: "I decided to do something with my anger. I decided I would run for the school board and push for every parent to have a choice of schools for their children. It shouldn't be a matter of luck. I had no experience running for local office. I certainly wasn't a politician. I was just a mom with an issue. I guess that was enough because I won." What is so important and inspiring about Ms. Iglesias' story regarding turning her anger into action and her resolve to actually do it? Explain. Do you agree that parents should just have school choice- that they shouldn't have to win a lottery to get their children into good schools? Why or why not?
- Ms. Iglesias shares with us that she stood by her principles and stated: "Why don't we try school choice, I suggested at a board meeting. Introduce competition. Because competition almost always makes things better. This sounded like common sense to me. To the teachers' union it was treason. First came the nasty emails. Then the ugly tweets. When I wouldn't shut up, the union packed board meetings with their activists. They booed me. Called me names you wouldn't believe. I was even physically threatened. All because I had made the case for school choice. When they couldn't intimidate me, they tried to get me thrown off the school board." Why is it true that competition really does make things better, almost always? Explain. Why do you think that the teacher's union was so against school choice? Do you think it was right for the teacher's union to have activists physically threaten and try to intimidate Ms. Iglesias? Why or why not?
- Later in the video, Ms. Iglesias notes: "When I decided to run for a second term, the union leaders declared war. They spent almost \$250,000 against me in 2016- a quarter of a million dollars! For a seat on the local school board! But I won. Again. This time with more votes than any other candidate. And the reason is clear to me. Parents want good schools for their children. They want choice." Do you think that the \$250,000 dollars was well spent? Why or why not? Why do you think that the teacher's union was so adamant about getting Ms. Iglesias off of the school board? Do you agree with Ms. Iglesias that she won a second term because parents want school choice? Why or why not?
- At the end of the video, Ms. Iglesias concludes: "It's a battle. But I'm confident we'll win. There are few forces stronger than a parent determined to get a good education for their child." Do you think that parents should have to battle anyone, especially unionized teachers, to do what is in the best interest of their child? Why or why not? Why do you think that Ms. Iglesias and other parents like her are so determined to do whatever it takes for their children to get a good education? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Cecilia Iglesias

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “A true defense of students, teachers” then answer the questions that follow.

- How many of the teacher’s jobs did Ms. Iglesias vote to save? Who is Barbara Pearson, and what did she threaten to do to Ms. Iglesias? Who helped to create the Santa Ana School District budget disaster by pushing for a 10 percent raise in December 2015, despite a looming budget deficit? How much of Ms. Pearson’s annual \$140,000 salary does the district pay for? At the board meeting, what did Ms. Pearson state as being the ‘real’ problem with the school district’s budget? In what way did Ms. Pearson accuse Ms. Iglesias as ‘attacking the school district?’ Why will Ms. Pearson and many of the other union leaders not be fired as a result of the budget deficit? What will happen when the newer teachers at the troubled schools are eliminated? What does Ms. Iglesias claim that she is there on the board for?
- Why do you think that Ms. Pearson will not accept any culpability for the district’s budget deficit? Why do you think that Ms. Pearson characterizes Ms. Iglesias as ‘attacking the school district’ by advocating for school choice and blames Ms. Iglesias’ promotion of school choice as ‘the real problem’ with the budget? Explain. Do you think that Ms. Pearson and the teacher’s union is also going after Ms. Iglesias because Ms. Iglesias is a Republican and a President Trump supporter? Why or why not?
- This article was published in 2017, and currently in July 2020 the recall effort is still going on. Do you think that the gobs of money the teacher’s union is spending on the recall effort is cost justified? Why or why not? Do you think that Ms. Iglesias will be recalled? Why or why not?



QUIZ

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1. Why didn't Ms. Iglesias like the government-run school in her neighborhood?
 - a. academic standards were low
 - b. discipline was lax
 - c. she didn't see a good future there for her son
 - d. all of the above

2. The only way for Ms. Iglesias' son to get into the fundamental school was _____.
 - a. through a sports scholarship
 - b. through a personal connection at the district office
 - c. through determination
 - d. through a lottery

3. After Ms. Iglesias suggested school choice at a board meeting, teacher's union activists physically threatened her.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. How much did teacher's union leaders spend on a campaign against Ms. Iglesias?
 - a. almost \$2,500 dollars
 - b. almost \$25,000 dollars
 - c. almost \$125,000 dollars
 - d. almost \$250,000 dollars

5. Ms. Iglesias started the Parent's Union _____.
 - a. to give parents more legal power over the school
 - b. to fundraise for the administrators
 - c. to give parents jobs at the school
 - d. to give parents more of a voice



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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A true defense of students, teachers



Social studies instructor Okan Cakir in his classroom at Magnolia Science Academy Santa Ana.

By Cecilia Iglesias

PUBLISHED: April 2, 2017 at 7:00 a.m. | UPDATED: April 9, 2017 at 9:08 p.m.

You might find this hard to believe. I voted to save the jobs of 287 Santa Ana teachers, and Barbara Pearson, president of the Santa Ana teachers union, responded by threatening to recall me.

On March 14, I voted no on the school district's proposal to cut 287 teachers in order to balance our out-of-control budget. My four board colleagues — three of them backed by the powerful Santa Ana teachers union — all voted yes.

I pointed out that Barbara Pearson helped create this disaster by pushing for a 10 percent raise in December 2015, despite a looming budget deficit.

I lost the debate that night, but I've been poring over the district budget since, looking for ways to save \$28 million — the cost of those 287 teachers.

Our district pays \$883,000 a year for marketing. And last year we spent \$2.2 million (the equivalent of 28 teachers) on travel, \$31.8 million on “Professional and Consulting Services” and \$600,000 on dues and membership fees to organizations.

I could go on, but you get the picture. If you don’t, consider this minor, but powerfully symbolic, outrage: The district pays half of the \$140,000 annual salary of the union’s full-time leader to represent her union in contract negotiations with us.

But the union is trying to flip the script. On Tuesday night, March 28, speaking to a packed board meeting, Pearson said the real problem in Santa Ana’s budget is my commitment to public school choice — that my fight for excellence in education for everybody is “attacking the school district.” And then Pearson made this bold declaration: She said it’s time to recall me.

If that’s the price of standing up for teachers and students, then I welcome the debate that will come with any recall effort.

It was Pearson who negotiated and claimed victory for the 2015 pay hike that I predicted would lead to the current budget crisis — and now she is trying to recall me. That’s the alternate universe we live in.

In Santa Ana, as in all California school districts, those teachers targeted for layoff will be our youngest, most enthusiastic and often most promising teachers — because union contracts require that the last to be hired are the first to be fired, never mind quality. This is because Pearson, and most of the rest of the union leadership, are tenured teachers — there is no chance they will be among the 287 teachers who are slated to lose their jobs.

And, because the targeted teachers are the newest teachers, they often work in the poorest-performing schools — the most desirable positions in the best schools having been plucked by teachers with more seniority.

Eliminating these newer teachers in these already troubled schools will create chaos in the classrooms of students already facing some of life’s most difficult challenges. Classroom sizes, already too high, will increase. Overworked teachers will be stretched even further.

In the days since Pearson leveled her threats to force me out, I’ve been overwhelmed by supporters I never knew I had. I’m here for the students and their parents and the teachers. I’m here to help them make sure every one of our kids has access to an excellent public school education.

If a union leader thinks that is a reason to recall me, then let’s get started.

Cecilia “Ceci” Iglesias is a Santa Ana Unified School District board member, and community relations director for the California Policy Center’s education initiative.