

BY JEREMY HOFFMAN

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Everyone in my family is an educator — my grandparents, my parents, and my two sisters — and I always knew I wanted to work in education. I saw it as my role to help children better themselves.

I am the only one in my family to work in a non-unionized environment. I don't want to use the word "jealous," but when I describe the culture at my school and how well Alliance treats us, everyone in my family *is* more than a little envious.

I love my coworkers. I love my administration. I have always felt supported.

My principal has a very strong open door policy. We are always welcome to express our opinions, whether it's through e-mail, texting, phone calls, or just walking into her office. She always hears me out. That doesn't mean I've always gotten the answer I want, but it does mean that my opinions are considered.

It might be controversial to say this, but I love working in an environment where I know if I do my job well, I'm going to be rewarded. If I don't, I'm going to be held accountable.

When I found out that United Teachers of Los Angeles was trying to unionize me and my fellow Alliance teachers and counselors, I was surprised and disappointed.

Here are my main reasons for opposing the UTLA's unionization campaign:

**1. I don't want to be disenfranchised.**

As a non-unionized educator, I can speak for myself. If I feel I deserve a raise, I can go ask for one. If I want to support a particular political candidate with the money I've earned, I can write a check. Unionized educators don't have that power because the union speaks for them. You have to pay dues each month, and you have no say in how your money is spent. UTLA recently spent more than half a million dollars in union dues supporting anti-charter candidates. I would never freely contribute hundreds of dollars to support an effort that would hurt my school and me.

**2. I think we're more likely to be paid better at an Alliance school than at a LAUSD school.**

LAUSD educators haven't received a raise in eight years. Last year, Alliance educators got a phenomenal pay raise — 8%. Plus, we are eligible for incentive bonuses. One of our incentives is to increase attendance at our school. If we do it, we earn more, *and* we're helping our students and our school.

**3. I think unionization will harm the students we are here to serve.**

I used to work in a unionized school, and staff wouldn't do things that weren't written into the union contract even if they were good for our students. There were also big, invisible barriers separating the staff from the administration. Unions are in no way, shape, or form pro-student. They will claim that they have student interests in mind, but they are political bodies that don't stand up for students and don't stand up for educators like me.

Every year, Alliance teachers take a staff-wide survey. And every year, I say I "strongly agree" that I would send my own daughters (who are now only four months and 2 years old) to my school one day. I hope that my colleagues won't take a step that corrodes Alliance and forces me to change my answer.