

Opinion

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EDITORIAL: Removing barriers

Lawmakers should want more schools like Agassi Prep

Tennis champion Andre Agassi founded and helped finance the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy, a public charter school that has served "at-risk" students since 2001, and is set to graduate its first senior class in June.

Mr. Agassi testified in Carson City on Wednesday as lawmakers considered three different charter school bills, including SB391, which would allow charter schools to implement procedures to ensure students who are accepted at such schools are eligible.

Representatives of Mr. Agassi's academy favored the bill, saying some families try to circumvent the rules by such steps as giving a bogus address to comply with a requirement that they live within a two-mile radius of the campus. AB489 and SB385 are two similar charter school bills that would create the Nevada Charter School Institute. The institute's purpose would be to explore the existing sponsorship structure for charter schools to determine how charter schools could be sponsored in the future.

Nevada needs more schools like Agassi Prep. Thanks to the stranglehold the public-school teachers unions have long enjoyed among Democrats in the Legislature, Nevada trails behind much of the nation in facilitating alternative schools -- charter, private, and/or voucher-funded -- which are needed to offer much-needed competition to the stultifying state schooling monopoly.

That parents are so desperate for an alternative that they'll cheat on "boundary" requirements is good evidence of the public support for such schools. What's pathetic is that those from "better" neighborhoods are apparently offered few (if any) such alternatives.

So the question lawmakers should ask as they consider all such proposals is a simple one: Does the proposed change widen school choice for more students and their families -- or is this merely a Trojan Horse, designed to place more bureaucratic barriers in the path of students fleeing bad schools for good?

Nevadans -- of all races and economic stature -- want more school choice. They want it now.