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Toto elementary school teachers demand removal of principal

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By Isa Baza [CONNECT](#)

It's a change of administration that isn't going well with teachers at J.Q. San Miguel Elementary School. Roughly 75 percent of teachers at the Toto school have signed a petition, asking for the removal of current principal Darlene Castro.

The petition was submitted to J.Q. San Miguel administration and to the office of Department of Education superintendent Jon Fernandez on Wednesday. In the letter, teachers site a "hostile and unsafe work environment" which they allege has resulted in "stress and duress", as well as the resignation of several employees.

Parent Bertha San Nicolas says she too is concerned about the situation, and the number of changes that have affected her grandchildren this year. "I just had some concerns as to why my grandson's coming home to tell me that lunch is now being served late, his brain is hungry, I said maybe there was no power at the cafeteria he said 'no mama, the principal changed the lunch hour'," she told KUAM News.

"J.Q. San Miguel does not have a special education teacher on board, and when we had a PTO meeting last week Wednesday, she mentioned that they're short in staff on teachers and SPED is one of them," added San Nicolas. "I've been a student at JQ; my children and my grandchildren have been a student at JQ, and now it's getting so bad."

She Nicolas said as the school is already short-staffed, she is worried about how recent problems between the principal and faculty could affect teacher recruitment, retention, and ultimately, student learning. "Superintendent, where are you? This is something major - 75 percent of your teachers, they have already turned in their transfers," she stated.

Fernandez did meet with J.Q. San Miguel teachers and Castro last week in hopes of mediation. Fernandez said he asked both parties to work toward resolution, and emphasized there is a formal grievance process that should be followed. However, one week later and 24 of 32 teachers submitted their requests to transfer out of the school.

Fernandez added, "I am working with the principal to review the different issues that have been brought forward by teachers to determine whether and how they can be addressed. I also spoke to the president of the Guam Federation of Teachers to see if they can assist in mediating the situation. I am reviewing the transfer requests and will be looking to accommodate those individuals looking to find another school. Transfer decisions will be based on ensuring there are sufficient classroom teachers at J.Q. San Miguel."

While KUAM News did reach out to Castro, she is unable to comment on personnel matters.

Of note is that back in 2011, 13 faculty members at J.M. Guerrero Elementary School in Harmon also petitioned for their administrator's removal.



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