Teachers union challenges L.A. Unified's new evaluation process

UTLA says the district did not "engage in good faith negotiation" over a new teacher evaluation system that includes use of student test scores. L.A. Unified is seeking volunteers to test the system.

By Howard Blume, Los Angeles Times

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The union representing Los Angeles teachers is pursuing a legal challenge to a key early step in creating a new teacher evaluation system that includes the use of student scores on standardized tests, union officials said Friday.

United Teachers Los Angeles filed an unfair practice charge Friday with the regional office of the state Public Employment Relations Board. The union asserts that the Los Angeles Unified School District violated its legal obligation to "engage in good faith negotiation with UTLA regarding the development of … performance evaluation procedures and any related impacts."

At issue is an effort to develop and test a new evaluation process outlined in an April 28 letter to employees from Supt. John Deasy. The letter lists incentives for volunteer participants in the still-evolving evaluation system, while also pledging that participants would not face adverse consequences to their employment status. The incentives include a stipend, paid training days and the option to bypass the standard evaluation process for a year.

The union claims this offer is, in effect, an attempt to unilaterally impose the district's own evaluation system by making individual deals with employees, said Jesus Quinonez, an attorney representing the union. Instead, L.A. Unified should be dealing with the union, which is the legal representative of employees, as required by law, said Quinonez.

A district spokesperson said that the teachers union has had substantial input in the process that led to the system the district is trying out, but that L.A. Unified could not comment on the legal claim until it had reviewed it.

But the district defended its efforts to develop a new evaluation system.

"We certainly want to work together with the union, but we also want to look out for the best interests of our students so that this is a true reform," said Lydia Ramos. "There has to be a sense of urgency. There's no time to wait."

howard.blume@latimes.com

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