

The following emails were sent regarding the .25 millage allocated for operation expenses.

Email dated 9-2-11

Mr. Davis,

It is that time of year again! I have reviewed the Palm Beach County School District's Budget Narrative and it appears that we, Bright Futures Academy as a choice program, are supposed to receive a percentage of the voted upon .25 millage for operating needs. Earlier in the year there was some discussion regarding whether Charter Schools were supposed to receive any of this funding, as the four year vote left the decision for distribution up to the school board. In the district's narrative it does indicate the following:

Board Millage Levies

“Local Millage set by the School Board is unchanged from the prior year; however, the components have changed slightly. Discretionary millage of .748 mills, as allowed by law, is split 0.688 mills for operating and 0.060 mills for capital outlay, compared to .678 for operating and .070 for capital in FY2011. Additionally, the .25 mills levied by the Board in FY 2011 for critical operating needs was replaced by the .25 mills approved by voters in November 2011. Voters approved the millage levy to fund teachers, as well as arts, music, physical education, and choice programs for four years, from FY2012 through FY2015. Local capital improvement millage remains at 1.50 mills for FY2012. Local millage rates will generate \$119 million for the operating General Fund budget and \$198 million for the Capital budget.”

On Page 8 of the School District's Budget, under “Estimated Property tax Levies and Collections” the Discretionary Operating millage revenue is listed at \$87,354,111 and the Additional Operating millage revenue is listed at \$31,742,048. The FEFP revenue first calculation shows the Discretionary Operating millage generating \$87,292,172 which was adjusted at the second calculation which is now showing a Discretionary Operating millage of \$86,084,429. This adjust was made on the 2nd Calculation Charter School Worksheet; however, I am wondering where the \$31,742,048 is listed? I understand that these funds are not required to go through the state and the FEFP Revenue, but it is not clear where these funds will be indicated, as I have not received any funding or information regarding this millage at this time. If you have any information regarding this funding I would greatly appreciate your assistance. Thanks for all of your help in these matters-
Kendall Artusi

Response Dated 9-2-11

Ms. Artusi,

As you indicated below, the special millage levy for school operations passed by voters in November 2010 is not a component of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). As such, school districts are not obligated to allocate a portion of the levy to charter schools.

Voters approved a 0.25 mill levy for four years spanning from FY2012 to FY2015. For FY2012, the 0.25 mill levy is expected to generate \$31,742,046. Per the ballot language, the millage levy will be used to "maintain school operational needs to fund teachers, as well as arts, music, physical education, career and academic programs." The School Board's intent in placing this question on the ballot was to secure a dedicated funding source to protect district programs. Specifically, this millage levy is dedicated to funding district elementary art, music, and physical education teachers (395.5 FTE) and district magnet program classroom teachers (145.0 FTE). These two allocations total \$34.6 million and completely exhaust the revenue generated by the special millage levy.

Charter schools will receive their pro-rata share of local discretionary operating funds included within the FEFP. For FY2012, the discretionary levy of 0.688 mills is expected to generate \$87,354,111. Your charter school revenue worksheet will ultimately reflect the \$87,354,111 figure. A small portion of the discretionary levy (0.060 mills) is dedicated to capital outlay again for FY2012 in order to maintain compliance with a statutory debt service limit. Charters schools do not receive a portion of the levy dedicated for capital outlay.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with additional questions.

Thank you,

Mike Burke
Chief Financial Officer

Response to Mr. Burke's response dated 9-4-11

Mr. Burke,

Thank you for your response, as always I appreciate your prompt response to my never ending fight for charter school funding. As is the case in both the "special millage levy for school operations passed by voters in November 2010" and the capital outlay discretionary levy, the school district of Palm Beach County board of directors has the deciding authority to grant a pro-rata share of these funds to charter schools; however, at this time they have not. Under the previous superintendent, not only did charter schools NOT receive any of potentially voted upon TAX dollars (to include the sales tax), the school board has never publicly discussed this issue to even consider a vote for or against charter schools receiving any of these tax dollars. Additionally, many would agree that the ballot verbiage was ambiguous at best and nowhere on the ballot did it suggest that charters would not be included in the tax levy, or sales tax for that matter.

When I read through the 2011-2012 budget narrative I was excited by the possibility that under new leadership the current superintendent, Mr. Malone, had intended for charter schools to receive their fair share of these dollars, as his verbiage included "choice programs". Since charter schools are considered choice programs, eager and optimistic that perhaps our district's climate for charters had changed, I wrote you questioning our portion of these TAX dollars. Again I have been told that these dollars are not for charters but to "protect district programs". The last time I checked charter schools are part of the district programs. Charters are programs that this district offers when parents are not happy with the product that the school district is currently providing for their children, this gives parents who can not afford the private school option, an option for a better fit for their child.

It is frustrating how at every turn charters face a never ending sea of challenges. Last year we faced a new challenge as parents came to us and reported that the High School District Magnet Programs were giving preference to students who attended Middle School District Magnet Programs (this phenomenon was even written about in the Dreyfoos school newspaper "The Muse"). We lost students from our middle

school program out of FEAR, not preference, that their children would be at a disadvantage if they graduated from our school, which by the way offers the SAME classes as the non-charter district middle schools. Now this year the charter school closure rating faces another challenge because the district approved two new charters to open within 2 miles of our school, one of which can not enroll enough students to stay open. Perhaps market studies for location would improve success rates for charters.

Charter schools are often referred to as a Civil Rights movement due to the high percentage of minority students enrolled in charters and because a minority of the population attends charter schools. Even with all of the odds stacked against us, we still prevail because those of us that believe in charter schools fight for equality. Please do not misunderstand my fight for equality as confrontation, I am just passionate about the difference that we have made in the lives of thousands of children and I will continue to ask for our fair share at every opportunity I have.

Respectfully,
Kendall Artusi
Chief Executive Officer
Bright Futures Academy

No further response received.