

Dr. Cover-

I am writing today out of frustration regarding the Teacher Evaluation as part of the Student Success Act. On **Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup>** a letter from the School District was delivered to our school post marked 9/8/11 with contents dated September 6, 2011; however, I did not retrieve this letter from my office mail box until Monday, September 12, 2011. The letter states that I need to return the survey by September 8<sup>th</sup> which would have been physically impossible given that the letter was not delivered to our school until September 9<sup>th</sup>. My frustration was only beginning as I read the contents which were inquiring about the teacher evaluation system that charter schools in Palm Beach County were going to be using.

I was aware of the teacher evaluation component required in Senate Bill 736 and was comfortable with this requirement as Bright Futures has always used a “pay for performance” based evaluation measure for our entire staff. As I sat down to answer the questions on the survey I became increasingly anxious as the information that I read indicated that I had somehow missed a crucial deadline.

**Question 3 on the survey states:** *“If you are not going to use the Marzano Protocol for your teacher evaluation system then (a) explain a brief summary of your proposed evaluation system and (b) explain when it was approved by the State of Florida.”*

This lead me to question the “approval date” for the proposed evaluation system as my recollection was that according to line 104 of Senate Bill 736, “By **December 1, 2012**, the Commissioner of Educations shall report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives the approval and implementation status of each school district’s instructional personal and school administrator evaluation systems. ...” After confirming this information was accurate, I then went to the Florida Department of Education’s web site to determine if there had been a change regarding charter schools and this deadline. I found a charter school webinar that had been conducted on April 13, 2011 regarding this evaluation time line which stated that charter schools needed to submit to their districts: “Initial system documentation is due June 1, 2011”. Panicking I raced to the district website to see if I missed an email, bulletin, or on line training regarding this webinar or time line. I found **ONLY** one email from Mrs. Edwards titled: “Just an FYI” with contents that re-stated how the district **will not be receiving any of the race to the top funds**, but that the webinar would be “enlightening as it relates to the new legislation surround teacher evaluations...” and **NO OTHER** information about charter schools and any deadline to submit documentation for our evaluation plan to the state or district.

Being the conscientious leader that I am, I immediately put a call into the FLDOE to get answers to the time line that I was facing with regard to submitting my plan. Not getting an immediate answer and between finishing my other obligations as a Charter Leader and the School Improvement Plan that was due on Sept. 30, 2011 I found the need to prioritize, putting this plan in the queue of things to complete and waited for a call back from the state. I had already completed 45 pages of my pay for performance document when I received a call back from Adam Miller in the Choice Office at the FLDOE on Monday,

October 3, 2011. I was most relieved to hear that the deadline of June 1, 2011 was ONLY for race to the top schools and that the actual due date for the plan, due to the state is, as I had read, December 1, 2012. **He stated that there is not even a timeline available yet for charter schools and that there are a lot of questions regarding this plan for charter schools.** As I questioned further he stated that I was farther ahead than most and that I should send him an email with my questions that he could forward to others in his department for clarification.

I was relieved to hear his words of assurance and questioned why this Compliance Survey was sent with such a short deadline, written in bold red type. I felt pressured to adopt whatever the district was doing because I felt as though I was behind on a deadline that I should have met. I had fully intended to submit a pay for performance plan specific to Bright Futures employees as I personally find the cult like adoption of the Marzano Protocol for evaluation to be against the innovative measures that charter schools were intended to produce. Just as a recent politician questioned the mandate of a cervical cancer vaccination, I question the eagerness with which this Marzano method and all of its products/trainings were adopted by the State of Florida. These time lines as presented to charter schools for supplying innovative measures will leave many, if not most charter schools feeling as though they have no choice but to drink the Marzano Kool-Aid.

I am becoming increasingly disappointed with the lack of communication and assistance that the School District of Palm Beach County provides charter schools. I do not blame Mrs. Edwards and her ever shrinking charter school department, as they do what they can to assist us in every way; however, I do blame the School Board who chooses to turn a blind eye to the lack of equality that charters are given in this district. Financially and proportionately, the school board is the most powerful public entity in this county and I believe that their lack of action with regard to charter school funding and their inadequate communication with regard to charter schools in general is

making a statement loud and clear: “The Palm Beach County School Board does not support charter schools.”

I have attached the letter as sent via email to Adam Miller with my questions regarding this plan and process. I will include you on any additional correspondence if it will be beneficial to other charters in our district.

Respectfully,

Kendall Artusi

Chief Executive Officer

Bright Futures Academy

Adam-

Thank you for taking the time today to speak with me concerning the Pay for Performance Plan as part of Senate Bill 736. As a charter operator I am opting to use my own evaluation system due to the individual nature of our school and our employees. Please see my questions as stated below and if I can be of any assistance to you or your department regarding this endeavor, I would be happy to help.

**Definitions:**

FS 1012.01 (2) Instructional Personnel includes Classroom teachers, Student Personnel Services, Librarians, Other Instructional Staff, and Education Paraprofessionals.

FS1012.01 (3) Administrative Personnel includes District Based Instructional Administrators, District-based non-instructional administrators, school administrators (principals or school directors and assistant principals).

**Question Regarding Administrative Evaluations:** Charter school’s often operate quite differently from traditional public schools as they are educational institutions that function independently from the district in which they reside. This independence allows for varying degrees of flexibility; however, the school’s operations are handled completely by the organization as a 501(C) (3) company. Charter schools can be viewed as mini school districts with their own school board of directors and superintendent (Chief Executive Officer in our case) that handle all grievances and over see the school’s

financial operations. The definition of administrative personnel listed above is what I am to assume should be used for the pay for performance plan; however, our administrator positions encompass job duties that may or may not be considered typical.

Given this discussion, I feel that it is necessary for me to include job descriptions and detailed expectations for the administrative positions at Bright Futures Academy. Currently I am writing a performance plan with criteria specific to the job as described. I believe it is impossible to evaluate someone effectively if you do not have clear expectations for the employee and since charter administrators have different job duties than traditional public school administrators I am finding that I need to include job descriptions and expectations. This is a lengthy undertaking and I want to be sure that I am on the right track. **Is this process that I am going through correct and should I be including the job descriptions with my evaluation system for administrators?**

**Question Regarding Senate Bill 736 and Charter School Application:** Much of Senate Bill 736 refers to “changing” existing policies for employees. Charter Schools may or may not ascribe to the employment policies of their districts, depending on their charter agreement with their district and/or depending on their individual charters. Bright Futures Employment Policies have always included a pay for performance type system; therefore, we now have to adjust our system to comply with the new state requirements. Many of the statements listed on lines 21-76 and 304-381 of the bill are not applicable to our school. As a non-union organization, Bright Futures hires all employees on annual contracts and all employees’ work at-will with the understanding that they can be terminated at any time. The notion of pay for performance is an entirely different animal for charter schools like mine that ascribe to the previous statement. Pay for performance is only needed by the state, in my opinion, because they are under union pressure. I am working to conform my system to what is required; however, I question the necessity of such a plan. **Why are charter school’s being required to follow this plan?**

**Question regarding the annual salary scale and salary supplements:** Line 535 of Senate Bill 736 begins requirements for compensation and salary schedules. Much of the discussion in this section does not pertain to us, as we are not a union school. The ability for Bright Futures Academy to increase salaries is directly tied to the state’s decision to increase or decrease FEFP funding. The only additional compensation that we are able to give employees is based on this amount; if the state increases the base student allocation by 3% we give a 3% increase to teachers that warrant the increase. **I am confused as to how this is going to work, could you please clarify for me if the 3% would be the amount that would be given to highly effective and effective or is there a different amount that would be used to give the raise? Additionally, if teachers are hired on annual contracts, why does it matter if the pay for performance amount is given as a bonus or salary? If contracts are truly annual, the employee is starting each year with a new contract and with that the salary may fluctuate, is this correct?**

**Question Regarding the “State Board of Education (is) to adopt formulas for school districts to use in measuring student learning growth.”** The Value added model recommended to the commissioner of education on June 8, 2011 describes the method to be used to determine student growth given a number of variables. The document I have to reference is vague regarding this process and I need

clarification with regard to this model. I can understand comparing apples with apples; however, there will have to be a formula to take all of these factors into consideration for each teacher's class of students. Currently I use the Developmental Scale Score (FCAT) with regard to student growth. I expect each student to make 1 year of growth according to the State Developed Scale. If the Teacher average Developmental Scale Score is below this number, as a whole, then they are considered to need improvement or they are considered not acceptable, depending on the data. For non FCAT grades and subjects I use Lexile Scores, Running Reading Records, Singapore Math Scores and a myriad of other statistics to determine whether the students are showing a years worth of growth (prior to budget cuts, I used CTBS for grades K-8 which covers all subjects to determine teacher performance). I do not differentiate for the recommended variables because I believe that all students deserve to make 1 year's worth of growth and typically the class averages correct any deficiencies in the performance numbers due to severe cases of students with disabilities or English Language Learners. **Can I continue to use this approach to assessment or am I going to be required to change using the covariate adjustment model? If I am going to be required to use this model, where can I find more detailed instruction as to how this is to be implemented?**

These are the first series of questions that I have regarding this process, as I go a long I am sure I will have many others. It was reassuring to hear that a time line, although not yet published, will be published for charter schools to meet the December 1, 2012 deadline. Unfortunately I have a prior obligation during the Florida Charter Conference and I will not be able to attend as you suggested; however, I would be more than happy to participate in any focus group discussion or other feedback session to assist as we all make our way through this process.