

Email #1

As copied from Florida State Statutes:

(20)SERVICES.—

(a)1.A sponsor shall provide certain administrative and educational services to charter schools. These services shall include contract management services; full-time equivalent and data reporting services; exceptional student education administration services; services related to eligibility and reporting duties required to ensure that school lunch services under the federal lunch program, consistent with the needs of the charter school, are provided by the school district at the request of the charter school, that any funds due to the charter school under the federal lunch program be paid to the charter school as soon as the charter school begins serving food under the federal lunch program, and that the charter school is paid at the same time and in the same manner under the federal lunch program as other public schools serviced by the sponsor or the school district; **test administration services, including payment of the costs of state-required or district-required student assessments; processing of teacher certificate data services; and information services, including equal access to student information systems that are used by public schools in the district in which the charter school is located. Student performance data for each student in a charter school, including, but not limited to, FCAT scores, standardized test scores, previous public school student report cards, and student performance measures, shall be provided by the sponsor to a charter school in the same manner provided to other public schools in the district.**

2.A total administrative fee for the provision of such services shall be calculated based upon up to 5 percent of the available funds defined in paragraph (17)(b) for all students. However, a sponsor may only withhold up to a 5-percent administrative fee for enrollment for up to and including 250 students. For charter schools with a population of 251 or more students, the difference between the total administrative fee calculation and the amount of the administrative fee withheld may only be used for capital outlay purposes specified in s. 1013.62(2).

3.For high-performing charter schools, as defined in ch. 2011-232, a sponsor may withhold a total administrative fee of up to 2 percent for enrollment up to and including 250 students per school.

4.In addition, a sponsor may withhold only up to a 5-percent administrative fee for enrollment for up to and including 500 students within a system of charter schools which meets all of the following:

- a.Includes both conversion charter schools and nonconversion charter schools;
- b.Has all schools located in the same county;
- c.Has a total enrollment exceeding the total enrollment of at least one school district in the state;
- d.Has the same governing board; and
- e.Does not contract with a for-profit service provider for management of school operations.

5. The difference between the total administrative fee calculation and the amount of the administrative fee withheld pursuant to subparagraph 4. may be used for instructional and administrative purposes as well as for capital outlay purposes specified in s. [1013.62\(2\)](#).

6. For a high-performing charter school system that also meets the requirements in subparagraph 4., a sponsor may withhold a 2-percent administrative fee for enrollments up to and including 500 students per system.

7. Sponsors shall not charge charter schools any additional fees or surcharges for administrative and educational services in addition to the maximum 5-percent administrative fee withheld pursuant to this paragraph.

Last year I contacted the School District concerning the withholding of a portion of our Federal IDEA grant money to pay for ESE administrative services. I was told that this was within the rights of the District to withhold our funding to pay for these services- **ALTHOUGH BASED ON THE HIGHLIGHTED STATUTES ABOVE I DISAGREE.**

I am only going to refer to the portion of the IDEA funds that affect Bright Futures Academy, not Part B Pre-K funds as we do not have a Pre-K program and do not receive any Part B funds. The report that I received last year indicated that there were 1658 K-12 ESE charter students that would receive \$1382.00 each for a total of \$2,292,939.11 to be distributed to charter schools. In this report it was stated that a portion of these funds would be withheld to pay for ESE administrative services reducing the total distributed to charter schools by \$248,888.30 which was indicated would pay for employee salaries and benefits.

When completing my school's calculations the 52 Bright Futures ESE Students were to receive a total of \$71,864.00, or \$1382.00 per student. Due to the reduction in fees that were withheld to pay for the district's administrative services to charters, our school instead received \$64,324.70- a \$7500 reduction that was instead paid to the School District of Palm Beach County.

This year we have not yet received our letter with regard to IDEA funding. I can only assume based on historical experience and conversations about this matter, that this re-distribution of funds to cover district expenses will continue. I am unsure as to which employees this \$248,888.30 covers, but can only assume it was the 2 area resource personnel and psychologists that charter schools had last year. When calculating the services paid for by Bright Futures Academy during the 2010-2011 academic year it does not appear that we are getting the best value for our dollar.

Psychologist and Evaluations: Last year we put through approximately 12 student evaluations at the going rate of \$350.00 per eval. which would total \$4200.

Area Resource Personnel: Last year Bright Futures Academy received visits from one of the 2 area resource personnel approximately once per month for a total of approximately 20 hours. If this person were to make \$60 per hour, which would put her above an \$80,000 per year salary, we would spend another \$1200.

These two totals leave us with an additional \$1800 to spend. DO WE HAVE A CHOICE IN THIS MATTER?

Currently we have been working with Derri Parks concerning evaluations that we have that are reaching out of compliance status due to district cut backs. A Psychologist was just hired and we are told that only 1 will work with the 35 charter schools in our district. Due to the overwhelming number of evaluations that this individual must perform, it has been suggested that we will not be able to test all of the students that need to be tested. We feel that student evaluations are critical to understanding student learning and behavioral issues and in turn pin pointing strategies to most effectively and efficiently service the students. We met our new Psychologist today, she was most gracious and eager to get started with her daunting task.

QUESTION: CAN WE OPT OUT OF THE DISTRICT'S PAYMENT WITHHOLDING AND SECURE OUR OWN PSYCHOLOGIST WHO CAN TEST OUR STUDENTS AND WHO WILL COMPLETE AN OUT OF SYSTEMS REVIEW TO SEND TO THE DISTRICT?

I feel that this would be a more efficient way to evaluate students and will allow us to save revenue that we can ultimately spend on student services.

Additionally, we have not received our IDEA letter from the district indicating the funds our students will be entitled to receive. Last year the letter was dated November 19th and we are being told that the information is not yet available. It is my understanding that we can not submit documentation to request any of these funds until we know the exact dollar amount because we must submit/request reimbursement for the exact amount allocated to our school. As a charter school we need these funds to pay our employees. Our capital expenditures exceed revenues by over 50% which does not leave us with extra funds to pay for ESE services that are not being support by IDEA until we receive the funds. I do not understand how the State and School District expect charter schools to balance their budget, which somehow we manage to do every year, when our funding is significantly less than district run school budgets and at the same time restrict our request for funding in this case 13 weeks into the academic year.

Please respond to my request and I welcome any clarification that you may have regarding this situation.

Kendall Artusi
Bright Futures Academy
Chief Executive Officer