

Speech given at PBCSD Board Meeting on 10-19-11

In the words of Yogi Berra- “In theory, practice and theory should be the same but in practice they are not”

The theory is Florida State Statute 1002.33 (17) which states “Students enrolled in a charter school, regardless of the sponsorship shall be funded as if they are in a basic program or a special program , the **same as students** enrolled in other public schools in the school district.” **But in practice they are not!**

Students enrolled in Palm Beach County non-conversion Charter Schools **do not receive equal funding for their education.**

Non-Conversion Charter Schools do not receive **ANY of the PUBLIC TAX DOLLARS** raised by the District for capital projects. Last year the district raised over \$200million dollars in property tax revenues for capital projects.

There are, and were last year, approximately 180,000 students enrolled in the Palm Beach County School District, **WHICH INCLUDES CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENTS.**

If you divide the \$200 million dollars generated in property tax revenue for capital projects by the 180,000 students enrolled in PBC- EACH student should receive \$1,100 in capital funding. **PLEASE REMEMBER THAT NON OF THESE TAX DOLLARS WOULD BE COLLECTED IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THIS DISTRICTS SCHOOLS- WHICH INCLUDES CHARTER SCHOOLS.**

Last year, OUR SCHOOL, BRIGHT FUTURES ACADEMY had an enrollment of 627 Students after the October FTE count. Does anyone know what \$1,100 times 627 students is???? **\$700,000 that my students ALONE were denied.**

If we look across this district AS OF TODAY AS LISTED ON THE DISTRICT’S CHARTER SCHOOL PAGE AND THE DISTRICTS TERMS SYSTEM there are 35 charter schools educating 10,132 students. If you multiply \$1100 by 10,132 charter school students **the number is a staggering \$11,145,200.**

Last year I noticed that there was a discrepancy between the district’s budget narrative, the States General Appropriation for FEFP and our School’s FEFP revenue worksheet. I contacted the State and District offices which ultimately resulted in our school, and I assume all of the other charter schools in our district, receiving a “one- time non recurring critical needs millage”. I was confused by this because I had just voted, according to the ballot, for – and I quote- a

[Top of Form](#)

REFERENDUM TO CONTINUE AN AD VALOREM LEVY FOR SCHOOL OPERATIONAL NEEDS

Shall the School Board of Palm Beach County have the authority to continue to levy 0.25 mills of ad valorem millage dedicated for school operational needs to fund teachers, as well as arts, music, physical education, career and academic programs for the fiscal years beginning July 1, 2011 and ending June 30, 2015, with oversight by an independent finance committee of citizens and experts?

[Bottom of Form](#)

At no point does this ballot state that this levy would exclude charter schools. It has always been made eminently clear that charter schools would not receive district capital tax revenues, but operational tax levies were always include in charter school funding. In fact we were receiving a

portion of the .25 mills that was mentioned in this ballot,” as a one -time non recurring funding source”.

2

I, and everyone that I know who voted for this levy assumed that it was the same levy that we were currently receiving- **BUT IN PRACTICE IT WAS NOT!!** Because this levy was for 4 years, state statute gives district’s the power to spend these operational funds as the school board deems necessary. I was told that we would NOT be receiving any of these funds which is evidenced by the fact that our discretionary FEFP revenue does not reflect any of these tax dollars.

For this funding source, dividing the \$31,743,000 by 180,000 PBCSD students gives each student a total of \$176.00. For my students we are losing \$109,337.00 **per year** as a result and charter schools STUDENTS as a whole are losing over \$1.7 million dollars in **revenue per year.** Putting all of the funding sources together and looking at the district’s annual budget for this year of \$2,296,600,368, the 170,000 non charter school students receive \$13, 509.00 EACH when attending a traditional public school. I do not know what the budgets are for other charter schools, but speaking for BFA, our entire budget as received from the district, state and federal funds totals \$4,000,000, divided by 620 student currently enrolled in our school allocates \$6451.61 per charter school students. **We literally educate students with half of the funds.** I believe that the biggest issue that charter schools are facing is funding equality. Districts like ours are frightened by the prospect of losing control of the bureaucracy that keeps many with jobs created just to maintain such a bureaucracy, and it doesn’t stop here. Unions dislike charter schools because charters threaten their establishment. Let me say that **I dislike Unions.** For starters our district and CONSEQUENTLY charter schools did not participate in the race to the top funds because the concept was not union friendly. **WE LOST OVER \$20 MILLION DOLLARS IN REVENUE TO OUR DISTRICT BECAUSE OF THIS DECISION. I TRIED TO GET ACCESS TO THE FUNDS, STATING THAT WE WERE NOT A UNION SCHOOL BUT I WAS TOLD MY DISTRICT’S DECISION STOOD FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS AS WELL. I ASK RETORICALLY, “CAN I GET A DIVORCE FROM MY DISTRICT??”**

Here are just a few things that non-union BFA employees do:

ALL STAFF, INCLUDING TEACHERS CAME BACK TO WORK ON AUG. 1, 2011 TO ATTEND TRAININGS AND PREPARE FOR THE 2011-2012 ACADEMIC YEAR WITH NO ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION.

BFA TEACHERS CLOCK IN AN AVERAGE OF 10 HOURS PER DAY.

BFA STAFF VOLUNTEER FOR WEEKEND AND AFTER SCHOOL EVENTS EVERY DAY AND EVERY WEEKEND.

BFA TEACHERS GO THROUGH AN EXTENSIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS OVER 3 DAYS WHERE THEY MEET WITH OUR ADMINISTRATION, TAKE TESTS AND TEACH LESSONS BEFORE THEY ARE HIRED.

BFA EMPLOYEES DO NOT RECEIVE STATE OR SCHOOL FUNDED RETIREMENT BENEFITS.

BFA EMPLOYEES CAN BE TERMINATED AT ANY TIME.

BFA EMPLOYEES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COMPENSATED WITH A PAY FOR PERFORMANCE PLAN; HOWEVER, WE ARE NOW BOGGED DOWN WITH THE BEUROCRAY OF WRITING A PLAN TO FIT THE STATE’S CRITERIA WHICH LOOKS LIKE A WAY TO GET AROUND MANY OF THE UNION POLICIES. WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS???

You may be asking yourself why? Why do Bright Futures CHARTER SCHOOL employees do all of these things and more? BECAUSE THEY HAVE A PASSION FOR KIDS AND A PASSION FOR EDUCATION and if you have a passion for something I believe you can accomplish great things because your motivation comes from within. Not from from a retirement account, not from a pension plan and not from the prospect of becoming the district's teacher of the year but from wanting to make a difference in the life of a child and a difference in the world of education.

The reality is that charter schools are here to stay and I believe that they have improved the quality of education in traditional public schools as they have been forced to compete with charters for student enrollment. Every year I am amazed that I am able to balance our budget operating with 50% less funding than traditional public schools yet our school does AMAZING THINGS. Our parents are wonderful contributors and our staff is our most valuable resource. We have submitted numerous requests for press releases but have never received recognition from the school board for any of these accomplishments so I thought, maybe you did not know that our school-

DIFFERENTIATES EDUCATION FOR EVERY CHILD IN OUR PROGRAM
 THAT ALL BFA ELEMENTARY STUDENTS RECEIVE 50 MINUTES OF
 PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN A CITY PARK EVERY DAY!

THAT ALL BFA STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN OUR SCHOOLS EDU-GARDEN
 WHERE KIDS RAISE CROPS THAT THEY HARVEST AND COOK IN OUR
 OUTDOOR KITCHEN, THEY RAISE RABBITS AND CHICKENS AND
 PARTICIPATE IN THE HANDS ON APPROACH TO FIELD TO TABLE
 GARDENING.

THAT BFA STUDENTS RECEIVE ART, MUSIC, CHARACTER EDUCATION, AND
 SPANISH EVERY WEEK

THAT BFA HOSTS FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE RIVERSIDE WHERE STUDENTS
 CAN SOCIALIZE WITH FRIENDS IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

THAT BFA RAISES SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS FROM PARENT AND
 STAFF CONTRIBUTIONS THAT WE GIVE TO NEEDY FAMILIES ATTENDING
 OUR SCHOOL EVERY DECEMBER.

THAT BFA HAS A COMPETITIVE SPORTS PROGRAM INCLUDING SOCCER,
 VOLLEYBALL, LACROSS, AND BASKETBALL.

THAT BFA HOSTS THE NORTH AREA CIVIL AIR PATROL UNIT.

THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE WON 1ST PLACE IN THE KRAVITZ CENTER ART
 CONTEST, WHERE OUR STUDENTS WORK WAS FEATURED ON THE COVER
 OF THE KRAVITZ PROGRAM

THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE WON COUNTLESS ARTS AWARDS AT ARI-
 GRAS, LIGHTHOUSE CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND SUNFEST.

THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE COMPETED IN WITH THE MODEL UNITED
 NATIONS HELD AT THE HAGUE IN THE NEATHERLANDS

THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE WON 1ST PLACE IN THE FLORIDA STAGE
 MONOLOGUE CONTEST

THAT OUR SCHOOL WON 1ST PLACE AT KALEIDOSCOPE

THAT OUR STUDENTS HAVE WON 1ST PLACE IN THE LOCAL PUBLIC
 SCHOOL'S CHESS TOURNAMENT

THAT WE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE ODYSSEY OF THE MIND
COMPETITION

THAT OUR SCHOOL ENTERS A FLOAT IN THE HERITAGE DAY AND JUPITER
ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION PARADES EVERY YEAR

THAT OUR SCHOOL HOSTS COMMUNITY FUN RUNS, OPEN TO THE
GENERAL PUBLIC TO CREATE AWARENESS FOR CAUSES SUCH AS
CHILDHOOD OBSEITY AND VETERANS OF AMERICA

THAT OUR SCHOOL SENT FUNDS TO FAMILIES IN ALABAMA WHO
SUFFERED GREAT LOSS DUE TO THE HORRIFIC TORNADO OUT BREAK
EARLIER THIS YEAR.

THAT OUR SCHOOL SENT WATER AND RESOURCES TO HATIE AFTER THE
EARTHQUAKES

THAT OUR SCHOOL SENT ITEMS TO KATRINA VICTIMS

THAT OUR SCHOOL SENDS CARE PACKAGES TO AMERICAN TROOPS
OVERSEAS

THAT OUR SCHOOL HAS SUPPORTED THE SPECIAL FORCES WOUNDED
WARRIER ASSOCIATION

THAT OUR SCHOOL HAS SALVAGED 100% OF IT'S CLASSROOM AND OFFICE
FURNITURE FROM PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT DEMOLITION
SITES AND THE RE-DISTRIBUTION WAREHOUSE.

THAT OUR SCHOOL WAS THE FIRST IN THE STATE TO MERGE TWO
CHARTERS INTO ONE, BRIGHT FUTURES ACADEMY.

4

THAT LAST YEAR BFA PARENTS VOLUNTEERED OVER 2200 HOURS.

THAT OUR SCHOOL HAS BEEN IN OPERATION FOR 11 YEARS AND HAS
ONLY ONCE RECEIVED A GRADE OF BELOW "B", but because we received the
"C" rating year before last, we are not eligible to be considered High Performing?

THAT OUR SCHOOL HAS RECEIVED PERFECT AUDITS AND DISTRICT MID
YEAR REVIEWS

THAT UP UNTIL THIS YEAR WE HAVE GIVEN OUR ENTIRE STAFF AT LEAST
A 3% PAY INCREASE

THAT SUPERINTENDENT MALONE ATTENDED A MEETING WHERE,
COMMISSIONER KAREN MARCUS AND VICE MAYOR NORRIS OF NORTH
PALM BEACH SOLICITED BRIGHT FUTURES TO DISCUSS THE TAKE OVER
OF NORTH PALM BEACH ELEMENTARY, CONVERTING IT INTO A BRIGHT
FUTURES ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL? THIS MEETING INSTEAD ENDED
IN THE FUNDING OF A \$29 MILLION DOLLAR MODERNIZATION PROJECT
FOR NORTH PALM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

I suppose this is why, when we have to lay off employees as we had to do in the spring of
2010, after Governor Scott and the legislature cut educational funding and as we had to
do this fall after our enrollment was not as projected, that I become frustrated with a
broken system.

The system is broken because children are not being educated equally. The system is
broken in my opinion because the highest earning percentage of our population and
many, if not most, politicians do not send their children to public schools- BOARD

MEMBERS, I ASK, DO/DID YOU SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SCHOOLS? I hope the answer is yes.

Charter Schools are trying to breathe innovation and life back into a broken system, but law makers have metaphorically speaking, put McDonalds in charge of Burger King. As I read through this year's Palm Beach County School District Budget Narrative I was excited to see that Superintendent Malone wrote referring to the .25 millage voted on in the November 2010 election, and I quote, "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."

I was excited by this as I thought perhaps; being a Choice Program we were going to be awarded a portion of these funds. I quickly wrote the district and asked if our FEFP revenue would be changing to reflect our portion of these dollars and I was just as quickly told "NO" that these funds were to protect district programs. **I guess it took that for me to realize that we are NOT a district program; we are in a gray area.**

The message of gray area was again made loud and clear yesterday at the Showcase of Schools. I had been told once before that this Choice Program Event was "for the district's choice programs, not charter schools". Since then we have been allowed to attend, but we have to pay to attend, this year, \$500; however, all district schools were admitted free of charge. When we arrived at the fairgrounds yesterday and looked for the location of our booth, not only did I observe that all charter schools seemed to receive smaller booths, but that we were **at the back of the convention center.** The map which was handed out to parents and displayed throughout the center listed large boxes in the middle of the flyer "Elementary Schools- displayed in green, Middle Schools- in blue, High Schools- red" and in the bottom corner of the hand out we were listed under "Other Schools"- in grey. All of the schools listed under the heading "Other Schools" were charter schools, yet we did not even receive the respect of the title **Charter Schools-** instead we are considered **"Other"**

5

What we are asking today is for equality for our students and at a minimum we are asking for the School District of Palm Beach County to vote on the decisions regarding funding for charters schools, specifically capital dollars and the spending of the discretionary millage. We understand that by statute you are not required to share EITHER of these two funding sources with us; however, **we would like for the board to vote either for or against this decision.** It is after all a decision, just because you are not required to share these funds does not mean that you can continue to ignore the fact that you could vote yes to share AND BE FAIR WITH these funds FOR charter schools.

CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TOO AND **this school board is either for us or against us- UP UNTIL THIS POINT, GIVEN YOUR LACK OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IN THIS AREA, I WOULD SAY THAT YOU ARE AGAINST US.**

LET OUR MESSAGE BE LOUD AND CLEAR-

WE ARE ASKING FOR THE SCHOOL BOARD TO VOTE FOR OR AGAINST FUNDING ISSUES WHERE FUNDS COULD BE, BUT ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BE, SHARED WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS.

WE ARE ASKING FOR EQUALITY FOR OUR STUDENTS, AND WE DO NOT WANT TO BE CONSIDERED "OTHER" AND SENT TO SIT AT THE BACK OF THE ARENA.

