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Subject: **Union-Free Charter Schools**
Date: January 19, 2007 1:40:38 PM EST
To: kara Hornung <kara@edreform.com>



 1 Attachment, 218 KB

Dear Pembroke Pines Charter School Leader;

There's no doubt you have heard the buzz all summer and fall about the Broward Teachers Union (BTU) push to unionize charter schools in your area. Here at the Center for Education Reform (CER) we have been working to ensure that you and your teachers, along with your local media, remain informed about the latest developments.

We have had great response from leaders and teachers alike in other states that have faced similar circumstances as the Pembroke Pines area charter schools. We have been asked by these teachers in other states to educate them on alternative professional teacher organizations and as to the benefits of charter schools remaining union free. We'd like to offer you similar information.

Attached we have provided a fact sheet as well as some comparative information about alternative teacher organizations in Florida that your teachers may be interested in learning more about. We are also in the process of mailing you hard copies of the fact sheet and hope that you receive them by Monday.

Because teachers from other states like Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey have asked us to help get the word out among their colleagues in other charter schools, we are willing to provide your school with enough "info packets" to be passed out to all of your staff. You may respond to this email or call and let us know of your interest and how many packets you will need and we can ship or fed-ex them out immediately.

Additionally, we can connect you with resources in the Miami/Broward area that are available to point out in a general way what you as a charter school leader can do to respond to the efforts of the BTU. This information can be provided individually or on a collective basis.

I am currently on travel in snowy Buffalo, NY but you may feel free to call my cell phone to connect with me directly today or over the weekend. You may also call our office.

Thank you for all of your hard work you do to educate America's children.

Sincerely,

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[FloridaFactSheet.pdf \(218 KB\)](#)



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Quick Facts for Florida Charter School Teachers

As a charter school teacher and advocate it is important that you know a little bit more about the organizations that are trying to win your favor in the Sunshine State.

You may wonder what's wrong with letting these unions into charter schools. The best explanation is to see how the NEA and the AFT really feel about the charter school movement all across the country:

- The largest teachers union in the country, the National Education Association (NEA), committed 1.75 million dollars of membership dues just in 2005 to push an agenda aimed at hurting innovative programs and charter schools.
- In August 2004 the American Federation of Teachers released a misleading study dedicated to confusing the public by misrepresenting achievement data from charter schools. The AFT's report was criticized by more than two dozen researchers from around the country for using data irresponsibly.
- Earlier this month, the Florida School Boards Association and several county school districts, including Broward, launched a lawsuit challenging the new Florida Schools of Excellence Commission which will provide charters a new avenue for approval and oversight.
- Union leaders in Florida successfully fought a plan approved by the state board of education to provide hardworking teachers with bonuses and that would attract new teachers to the state. The union believed rewarding certain teachers who worked hard would hinder the collective bargaining process and create division among teachers.
- In Niagara Falls, NY, the Niagara Charter School faced heavy delays when seeking approval to open in the fall of 2005. The school board was hesitant to open the school, despite large demand from parents, because of union pressure.
- In 2003 New York's AFT Affiliate called for a moratorium on new charter schools calling them "a luxury we can no longer afford." The Massachusetts union backed a similar moratorium.
- In Connecticut, the union successfully opposed equity funding for all charters.

Unions stifle communication with parents, fellow teachers and leaders because members are expected to walk in "union" while charter schools try to find the right teacher fit for their classrooms. Charter schools are held accountable for results, while unions promote retaining less qualified teachers simply based on tenure. Unions also fight to lock any teacher bonuses based on student achievement and they tend to hinder a teacher's commitment to the classroom.

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

Union bosses say the darnest things

The major teachers unions do not have the interests of teachers or students in mind. Take the following quotes as examples:

- In response to scandals, the AFT Executive Council issued new rules for its local affiliates on the transmission of dues. The AFT final disclosure report showed as many as 25 locals who failed to transmit dues on time in 2002-3. One local affiliate owed \$40,000 in back dues, and plans to enforce a dues hike and budget cuts to cover the debt.
- Al Shanker, long-time president of the AFT in 1985: "When school children start paying union dues, that's when I'll start representing the interests of school children."
- Former NEA president Mary Futrell in 1982 said "There's no alternative to political involvement. Instruction and professional development have been on the back burner for us, compared to political action."

ALTERNATIVE TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

We know that teachers want to be protected, and there are alternative professional teacher organizations that are focused only on the services they provide to teachers, not on the agenda they can push. The following are just a few examples of the services provided by most alternatives:

Why join an alternative teacher association?

- Liability insurance
- Access to legal assistance
- Supplemental insurance benefit plans
- Cheaper dues than large unions
- No political spending
 - The two major unions spend millions annually on spending through Political Action Committees (PACs)
- Meaningful interface with district administration.

Other Florida and National organizations that promote professionalism for teachers

- Professional Educators Network of Florida (PEN), <http://www.penfl.org/>
 - At-a-glance, PENFL offers teachers the following benefits:
 - Full legal, liability and personal savings benefits for only \$150, annually compared to the average \$600-\$800 annually the unions deduct from teacher salaries.
 - Up to \$2 million of liability insurance, compared to approximately \$1 million from the unions.
 - Special theme park and other discounts for members.
 - Several membership categories including a first year teacher discount.
 - Legal representation across a number of professional capacities.
- Association of American Educators (AAE) <http://www.aaeteachers.org/>

These groups are intended to promote high standards among teaching professionals in their respective disciplines. The groups are not collective bargaining units and therefore do not purport to speak on behalf of all teachers in a particular school or district.

For additional information please contact The Center for Education Reform at 1-800-521-2118 or via email at cer@edreform.com.