

Fed, Andrew, and Carole:

Good morning! I hope that this email finds you well and enjoying the summer months. I am writing to you today for two reasons: 1) I ran into Carole at Polk State a week ago when we were at the FLBOE meeting; 2) what I openly shared with my fellow executive board members two days ago at our summer planning/strategy meeting, with the hope that our FEA governance boards would bring those concerns to all of you next month.

But next month is too late, so I am writing to you today.

Let me preface the rest of what I say by stating that none of what I say is to be taken personally. As the heads of our organization, you play very public, political roles, and as such you are held responsible for them. However, I intend for this feedback to be semi-private in that I've only CCed Rob and Stephanie on this email; we don't need another letter sent to all locals like last year...

I will also say that, in speaking with Rob both during and after recording the podcast, he has highlighted how difficult a transition it has been to go from board member in the classroom to being the president of one of the largest locals. And though I envision you three having been in charge for a year now, in reality it has only been since the gavel went down last October.

Be that as it may, we still feel very much like the same old FEA..."sign our petition"; "use this hashtag"; "put this picture on your social media profile" And while these are important steps to raise public awareness, they're not nearly enough.

And I'm tired of reading comments or hearing directly from others how "weak" Florida unions are. When will we show our strength? When will we start showing up and protesting? As the head of all local affiliates, FEA should be providing the leadership and organizational help, but there's NONE!

Case in point--and a completely blown opportunity--was last week at the FLBOE. I had the good fortune to meet Stephanie Yocum, the new president of Polk Education Association. Great lady with lots of vigor. She managed to bring about 4-5 members from her local. The tried and true Public Ed faithful from the Polk County School Board were there (Billy Townsend, Sarah Fortney, Lisa Miller--and though she lost her bid against Kay Fields, Jennifer Sabin was in attendance as well); Jessica Harrington and Scott Hottenstein from HCTA were with me; and big-time parent advocates such as Kathleen Oporeza and Cindy Hamilton were there. But all told we perhaps had 15 people TOTAL.

We need to have at least 100 people every time, more if possible. Each and every one of these FLBOE meetings needs to be treated like a local school board meeting from here on out. When I had to read in the paper about Corocran's crazy comments to Diana Greene when the FLBOE meeting was held in Tampa (I was at work; it was early May), I circled 7/17 on my calendar and knew that come hell or high water I was going to show up at that meeting and speak my mind. Then, when Kathleen put out an event on FundEducationNow, I would have expected a bigger presence from at least the local affiliate (again, I do not put any of this on Stephanie; she's brand new).

And when we get 100+ to show up at these FLBOE meetings, *every single person* should sign up to speak. Even if the chair cuts the comments down from 2 minutes to 1 (or even 30 seconds), each person could come up to the mic and share a simplified funding message. As politically appointed persons, they have far more sway than any of us would like them to have, most especially the commissioner and his deep ties to Tallahassee. Plus, if more board members start to chime in like Mr. Olenick did, the more we will get in the media.

Make no mistake--this should be FEA's endgame. Until we dominate the news cycle, we will get no traction. Just ask Rob and Stephanie about our experience here in Hillsborough in late 2017. You bring 1,000 people to rally in downtown Tampa and the *Times* starts running almost daily coverage about pay disputes, and all of a sudden we're at Publix and people feel sorry for us and talking about why we deserve our raises, etc. The same thing happened when we got everyone talking about the sales tax referendum last year too.

Speaking of last year, right before the election, I remember looking at three different Florida-only/statewide polls about the issues most important to all voters. Healthcare was always ranked number one; jobs was two, etc; where was public education on these lists? 8 or 9, depending on the one I was reading. Until we crack the top 3--hopefully this will happen in 2020 if we strategize, organize, and mobilize collaboratively and successfully--we won't move the needle on any issue related to education, let alone the most critical one--funding.

If you've seen [my comments at the FLBOE](#), read anything I've [been writing this summer](#), or just seen me acting like a political whip in various social media groups, I keep hammering home the numbers. When I visit with legislators, I make it all about the numbers. Talking in political tones helps no one. As an NPA who tries to be a centrist on balance, I've found that sticking to the math when meeting with the Republicans puts them in a position that gives them no good rebuttal or recourse other than to simply admit that this is where we are and how do we fix it. My request? I've been asking in emails and mentioning in person a 10% bump to the BSA. We all know that's the only unencumbered money that's going to help our situation, especially when it comes to bargaining pay for our ESPs and teachers.

Look, we might not get 10%. Some quick mental math tells me that would cost the state roughly \$1.4 billion. But maybe a concrete number like 10% (much like the very audacious 10% raise/challenge to the total FEFP figure campaign run earlier by FEA--which I loved seeing and sharing) helps get us 5% added to the BSA. Either way, I think this begins with something as simple as showing up en masse to each and every FLBOE meeting. Personally, I have already pledged to myself that if one will be held within two hours' driving distance of my home in Tampa, I will take a personal day to wait 6 hours just to speak for two minutes. That's how important I believe addressing this group will be. Just ask Carole how many media outlets were there simply because the FLBOE was in town. I counted at least 3 local affiliate trucks from the media, plus the state's own broadcasting system. Imagine how many media outlets will come if we rally outside each one, hopefully growing more and more each time!?!

We have a real shot to kick start this with Broward. The next meeting is 8/21, which gives Anna and BTU a month to get some diehards together and go speak. It can't be 100 people with 100 messages, though; 100 people, 1 message, and all about the numbers. The September and November meetings are TBD, but wherever they are we need FEA to help get the locals organized and there as a presence, most especially in the smaller, more rural counties. If we can continually pressure them at these FLBOE meetings through the fall, while still doing our regular advocacy work during the committee sessions, my guess is we can get some significant momentum going while simultaneously (fingers crossed/hopefully) continue to raise awareness about the lack of funding.

The final thing that I would emphasize that has also helped when speaking to legislators or the die-hard school choicers is this: the lack of funding hurts us all. More dollars helps all facets of the education system, most especially the educators who can now spend more in their local communities. And as I've been pointing out to the Republicans who love to tout free market principles and dynamics, additional funding also helps all educators because as wages increase in the traditional public school system, the charters and privates must "compete" amidst a terrible labor shortage, thereby raising salaries at those schools too.

I'll close with the following: Last year, when we sat down in that small conference room to record your round table on the Teacher Voice podcast, I *knew* I wanted you to be the next leaders of the FEA by the time we were done. I believed that you three would be the change that our organization needed. I still believe this now, but I feel there needs to be a greater sense of urgency, single-mindedness, and action to help achieve our aims. Rob speaks of big plans in the works that will be revealed come October. This is good. But we can't wait until then, so let's use these next two FLBOE meetings to our advantage. Let's generate some momentum. Let's get people talking about education, and not just the same ones in the echo chamber. We need to break out of there and get everyday folks on board with our plight. I've just tagged you on Twitter with an infographic that was made by one of my fellow HCTA members, which is essentially comprised of the same numbers I keep saying again and again...if you ask me, it's starting to work.

I hope that all of you have enjoyed the summer. I hope that you don't find this email too impertinent, but I felt compelled to send it in light of the little time that remains between now and 8/21, which is why I couldn't simply let the governance board members bring up this idea at the end of August. But I promise you this: I am, as Jessica Harrington called the three of us, "ride or die" when it comes to Public Ed. Clearly, I don't stand around and wait to take action. I wasted much of my 30s thinking many of the things that I have started saying aloud after 40. At this point I will continue to say what I want, to whom I want, as respectfully as I can, because if I've learned anything in the last three years it's that when I speak people listen. Essentially, I am compelled by principle at this point; as I often tell my wife who doesn't quite share the same zealous passion I have for all of this, "I do it because I can, and therefore I must". It is in this spirit I trust you have read this email. I'm only trying to help the best way I can, and for me that usually begins and ends with words.

Thank you for your time, attention, and understanding in these matters/ideas. I am always willing and able to help FEA. All of you have my cell number, email, website, etc, etc. If you need me or want me to spitball ideas on a conference call, I'm sure I can come up with plenty more.

Have a great day and remainder of the week!

Sincerely,

- Ryan Haczynski