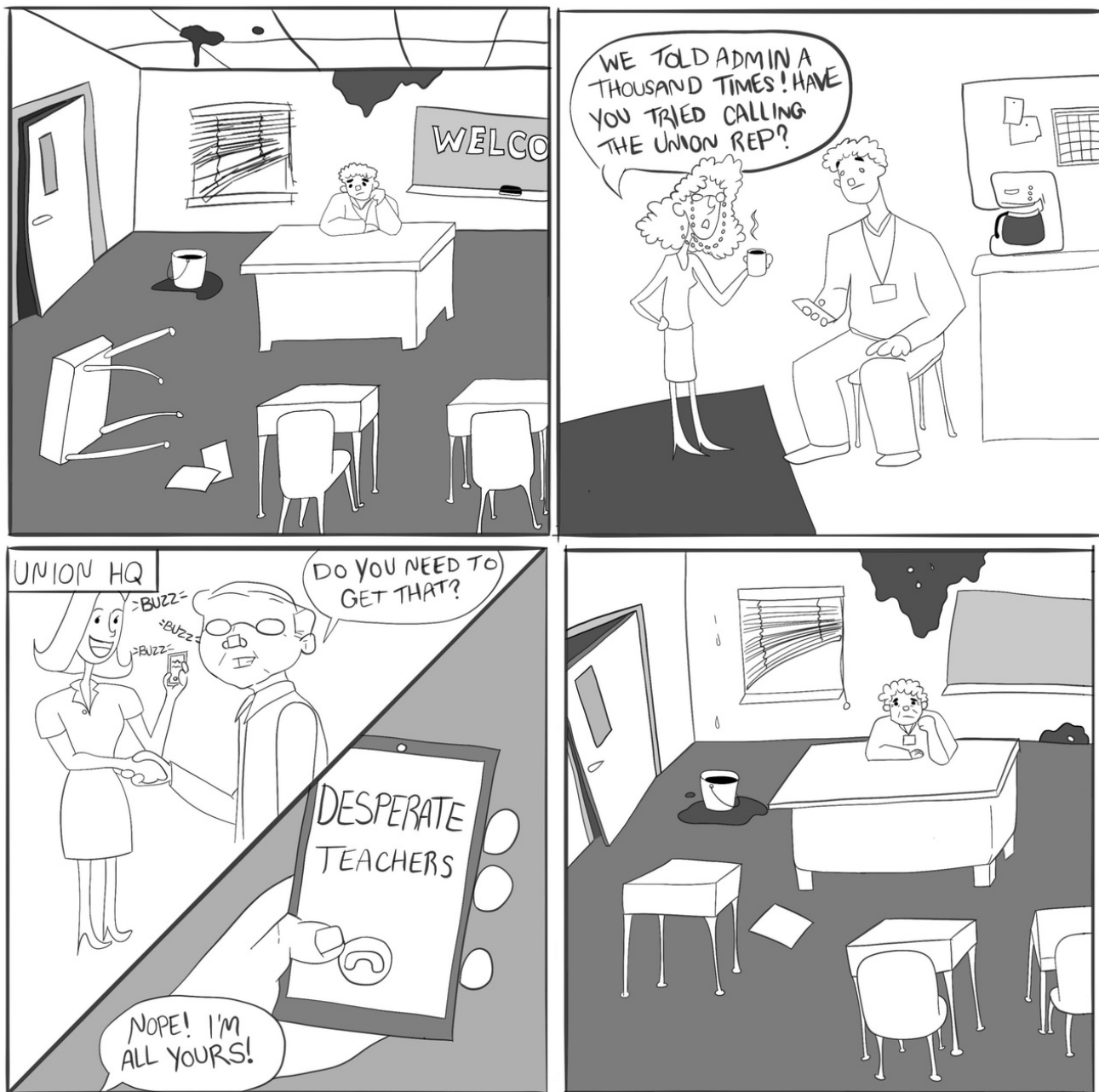


BEYOND THE HEADLINES

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ARE THE VICTIMS OF PRIVATIZED EDUCATION



BEYOND UNIONISM

My first year of teaching would not have happened if it wasn't for someone from the union going out of their way to help me. I took a job at the Palm Beach County Career fair, and the union was very present. They met people at the door, answered questions about the certification process, and guided others to schools or grade level zones. It felt like there was someone looking out for me. The president assured me that the union had a good relationship with the school board, and things began to look different to me. **I had always thought that the purpose of the labor union was to be a form of a resistance against management.** We couldn't be friendly with the school board when if they didn't consistently improve our conditions.

I learned that the only real fight is within the people in direct confrontation with administration and the district. Union leadership is often too busy with bureaucracy or furthering their own political motives. How can the union claim to be arbiter of worker's rights when one of the most common phrases I heard from coworkers when asking them why they haven't joined the union was that "the union didn't help them" when they actually had a problem? Our rights are being violated while union leadership celebrates passing another recertification election mandated by the state. We need actual resistance because the state is passing laws making those elections more difficult each year. Eventually there won't be a union left to vote for.

Establishment unionism is rife with electoralism and legalism, but the courts are too slow to protect us, and the endless stream of anti-education policy is impossible to stop. **We can't win from this indefensible position that the union structure currently presents.** The problem, as I see it, with unionism, as it applies to South Florida, is that the structure mimics the structures we are directly up against. Union meetings, at least as I've seen at CTA, mostly involve eating food and discussing a handout of concerns that union leadership want you to be aware of. There is no room for discussion, there is no conversation regarding attacks on the profession. We are asked to sit quietly while those in communication with the state level union organizations tell us what to do. Concerns are diverged to committees who then bring things into sub-committees and eventually fizzle out. And if you bring any kind of notion of being progressive or don't agree with the union board you are ostracized or iced out. Your job as a member is to agree with leadership, hand out flyers, and vote in the recertification elections.

Compare this to Florida in 1968. Teachers were the first to force any organized labor action in the state. Across the state, they organized a strike against the policies of then Florida governor, Claude Kirk. The demands were simple, fund education and increase teacher salaries. The sentiment still rings true. Also still true are the limitations the union imposed on itself. Teachers, unfortunately, did not have the backing of the community and other sectors of Florida labor. It is my belief that we are following the same logic moving into the near future. The Florida Education Association or FEA renders services to the united local unions under their umbrella.

The FEA is a member of the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association.

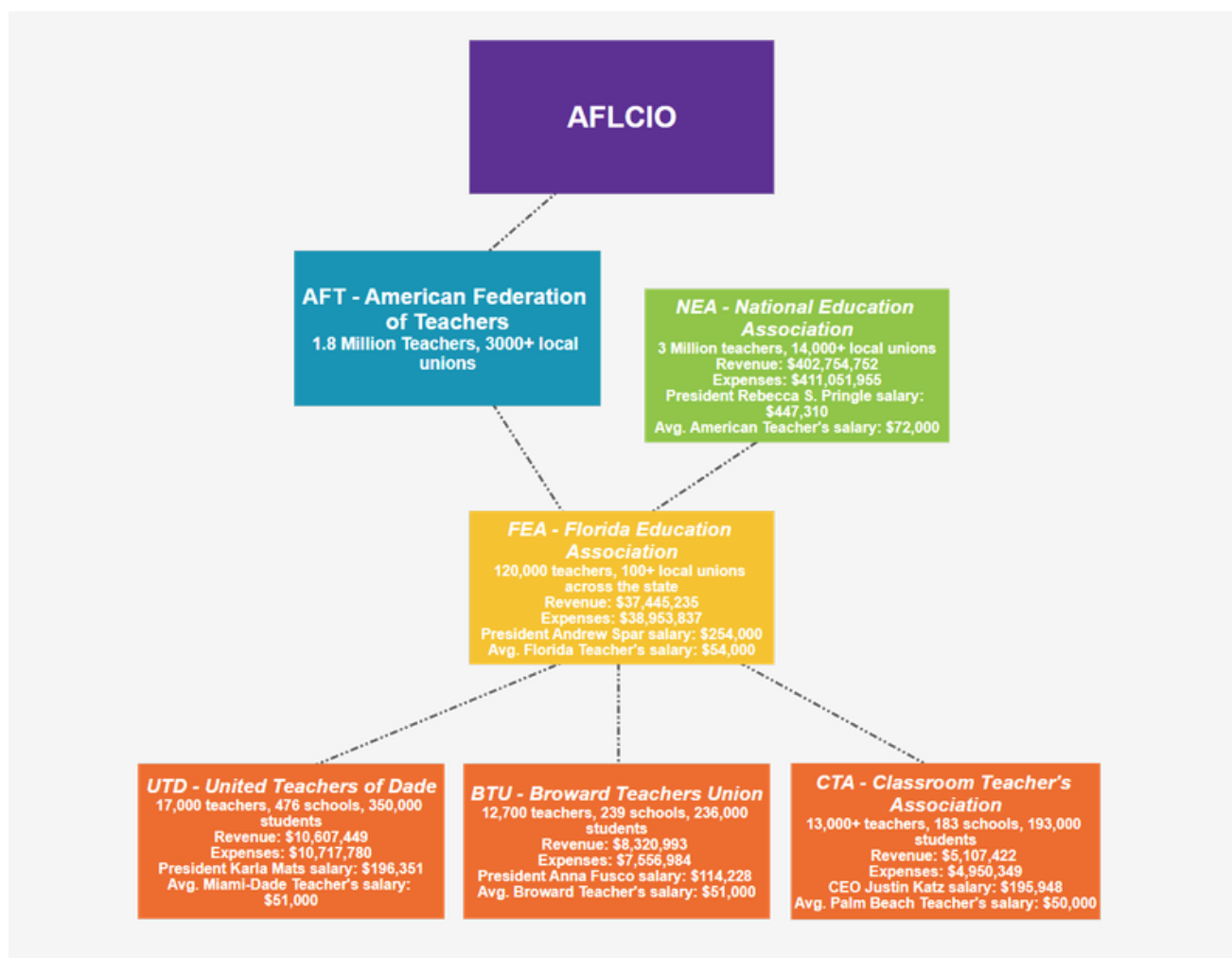
By and large, this organization aligns with the Democratic party because they are the party that offers concessions while our dues fund their election campaigns. The FEA says it aligns with whatever candidates are willing to fund education the most. Here lies our problem.

The bureaucratic structures of our political system and economic system define the ways that we build power. The FEA wants to be a "rank-and-file" organization, but that would mean that the workers themselves are the rank-and-file, not paid staff who ensure that the objective of a disconnected election fund is achieved. We have the power to affect real change beyond the workplace and the ballot box. In 2024, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 367, a Tacoma grocery workers union got wins in the way of tenant protections. They saw that their workers were sleeping in cars and they took action in their interest.

In comparison, the most that FEA has accomplished in the state has been to run their own candidate through a primary against the DNC backed option. This is certainly big, but not enough. In 1968, our strike was mostly a disaster because strike funds were low, we didn't coordinate with the public, or as the system calls them "stakeholders", and we were easily replaced by willing substitutes. **Our unions are under one umbrella, and that umbrella has some holes.**

"We need to bring together the loved ones and families who teachers support."





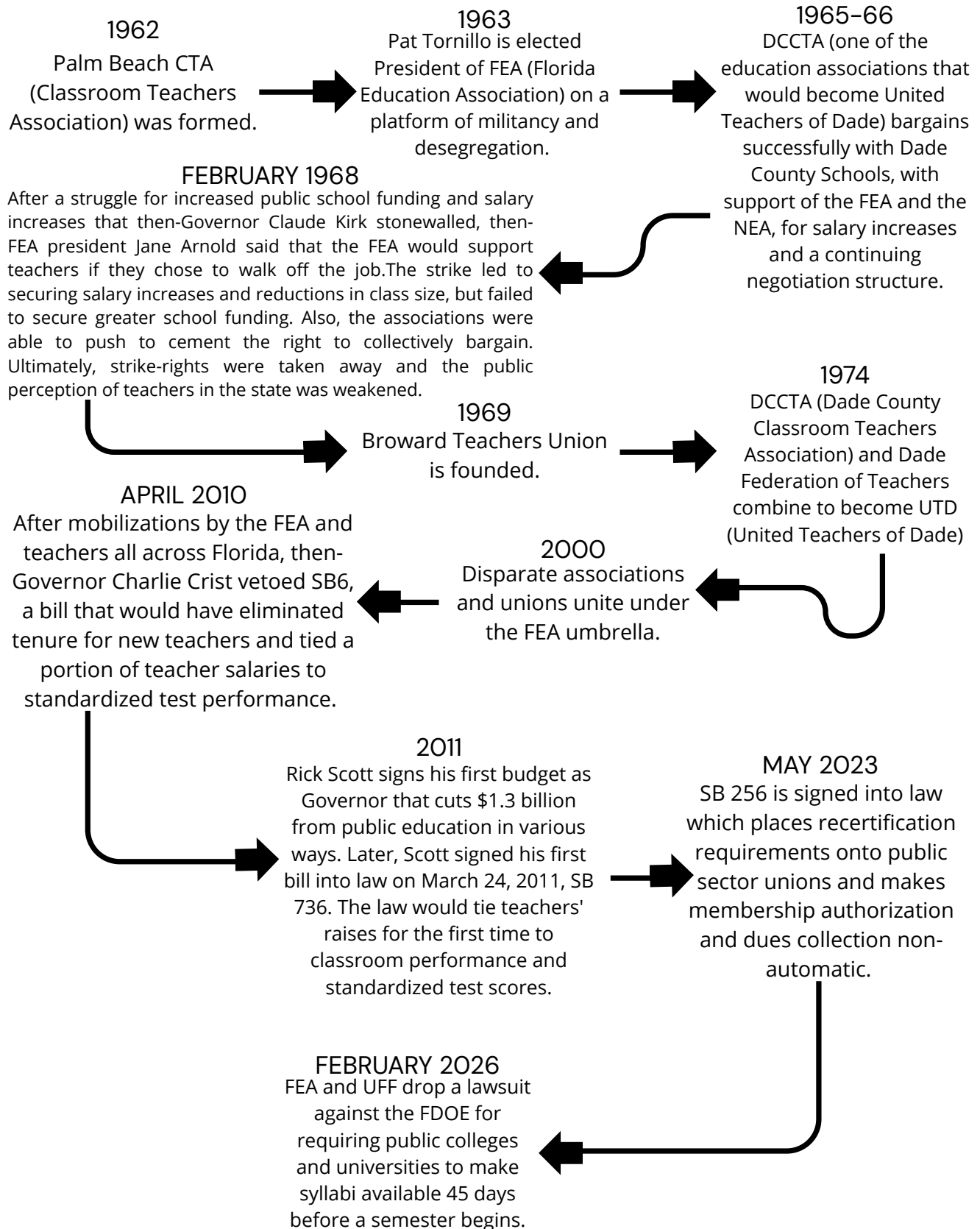
We can see that continuing to play defense against the state or pushing an approved candidate doesn't work, yet the unions continue to advocate for that same strategy while severing the connections amongst teachers and the wider community. **Wages continue to decrease, COVID funds have run out, and school enrollment is down across the state. FEA is a buffer from the worsening conditions and fascist policies administered from Tallahassee.** Our unions have been fighting a losing war with Florida's administration for as long as I've been alive. The few 'wins' we've had are already under challenge and did little but stem the bleeding. What we need is a real labor-based resistance that reaches beyond our individual campuses and workplaces.

Independent unions and organizations are what we need to bring about real social change that can affect our education system. We need to bring together the workers who have been disenfranchised from "unionism" as it has been billed in Florida since the re-establishment of the FEA. We need to bring together the loved ones and families who teachers support.

We have to connect the food service workers to the nurses to the classroom teachers to the bus drivers. Everyone who works for the schools, is supported by the schools, and maintains the schools should be involved in their functioning. Unions have an objective, but currently that objective is shortsighted. The betterment of society and the affectation of conditions of all workers is our goal, but the strategy is tired and played out. What we need is a common understanding of the importance of public education and how those with power are seeking to profit off our contributions to the common good of learning. Unions are often used as political steppingstones in careers, stolen from, or coopted by those looking to privatize the system. Unions are crucial, but they aren't working for teachers, so we need an alternative. All unions in all sectors should be working to change their communities in more progressive ways. We need to look to places where unions collaborate with the community and organize around issues that affect everyone, not just their workers. **What we need is beyond unionism.**



***Florida teachers were able to coordinate to organize for civil rights.
Why has that spirit waned?***



ILLUSION OF CHOICE

THE FOLLOWING IS A FICTIONALIZED CONVERSATION BETWEEN A MIAMI PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHER “MISS EDUCATION” AND A PARENT “MAHMI”

Mahmi: "Hey Miss Education, I just wanted to let you know I will be signing the kids out of this school at the end of the week. You were always great to my daughter but my son's teacher and class are just not cutting it. I did some googling and spoke to other parents and I am going to try the voucher system and put them in a private school and if not then one of those nice new charter schools. The kids will wear uniforms and have smaller class sizes. I love you, but let's be honest: you're the best thing here. Our local public school has become a dump. I want to give my kids change. I'll miss you, though."

“The kids will wear uniforms, have smaller class sizes. I love you, but let's be honest you're the best thing here. Our local public school has become a dump.”

Ms. Education: I will miss you all too, Mahmi, your family is wonderful. I won't lie to you though, this hurts my heart to hear. I understand you want what's best for your children and wish for our school to improve but taking part in the voucher program will only turn our school into a "dump" even faster! I am sorry to hear your son's teacher is struggling, she has one of the largest classes in 2nd grade. She is spread very thin. Have you tried speaking to her about intervention for him? I only ask because all feedback helps us improve here. I know the average person isn't aware but Charter and private school vouchers do not "save" children from failing schools; they exacerbate the problem, years of confusing and misleading legislation have gotten us to this point. When parents opt out of public education through vouchers or charters, it often feels like a personal rejection to public school teachers, many of whom are overworked, underpaid, and navigating resource-strained classrooms. Meanwhile, parents are convinced that public schools are failing their children, teachers aren't doing their jobs, and their school boards are incompetent. We are all victims of a broader privatization scheme and funding crisis. This process of decline is manufactured by those turning education into a for-profit business. The policies enacted under the guise of "choice" often pit us against each other, undermining trust and collaboration between parents, teachers, and the community.

Mahmi: Well, no I hadn't really reached out to my son's teacher. I figured nothing would change if I did. I honestly wanted to get him out of that class and into a smaller class, maybe at a charter school because of his ADHD. I know charter schools aren't all awesome but some are really good. Small class sizes, high test scores, stricter rules. I think I can find a good one to put them in.

Ms. Education: Charter schools are certainly marketed that way but they serve as a much sneakier way to get funding away from public schools and into the hands of private interests. Charter schools are advertised as tuition free, innovative schools run by non-profits. Arguments for school choice often center around charter schools having more freedom from regulation. Charters, operated by private entities, often non-profits with CEOs earning large salaries, do not have the same obligations. Charters answer to their shareholders, not parents. Unlike public schools, many charters are not required to hire certified teachers. They cut corners in teacher pay, classroom materials, and facilities, using public funding to generate private investments. These institutions may deny entry or encourage withdrawal of high-needs students through selective admissions, targeted advertising, or counseling practices. AKA these schools can pick, choose and refuse who they want to accept at any moment. This results in a two-tier system: well-funded charters serving less-demanding students, and underfunded public schools carrying the burden of those most in need. Market competition doesn't drive quality here; it incentivizes exclusion. Education is not a product, it is a public good. In addition, hopefully your charter school also has a bus service, some have great systems while others have no infrastructure. Charter schools are truly hit or miss.



Mahmi: So you're telling me charter schools make money from us parents?

Ms. Education: Yes! Everyone in this equation makes money except teachers and public schools. This is a statewide effort to defund public education. That's what I meant that even the vouchers made it worse. Privatization is wrapping its tentacles around Florida Free Public education, trying to squeeze it to death till the only thing left are expensive private/ charter options for children in our state. No more access to "free learning" Privatization, or the auctioning off of our public education system, has allowed our schools to decline, at the cost of the teachers, the parents, and most importantly, the students. That means cutting costs and raising revenue, regardless of the effect it has. Full privatization happens when corporations are in full control, but various stages of partial privatization, sometimes called public-private partnerships, often lead to similar declines in educational value.

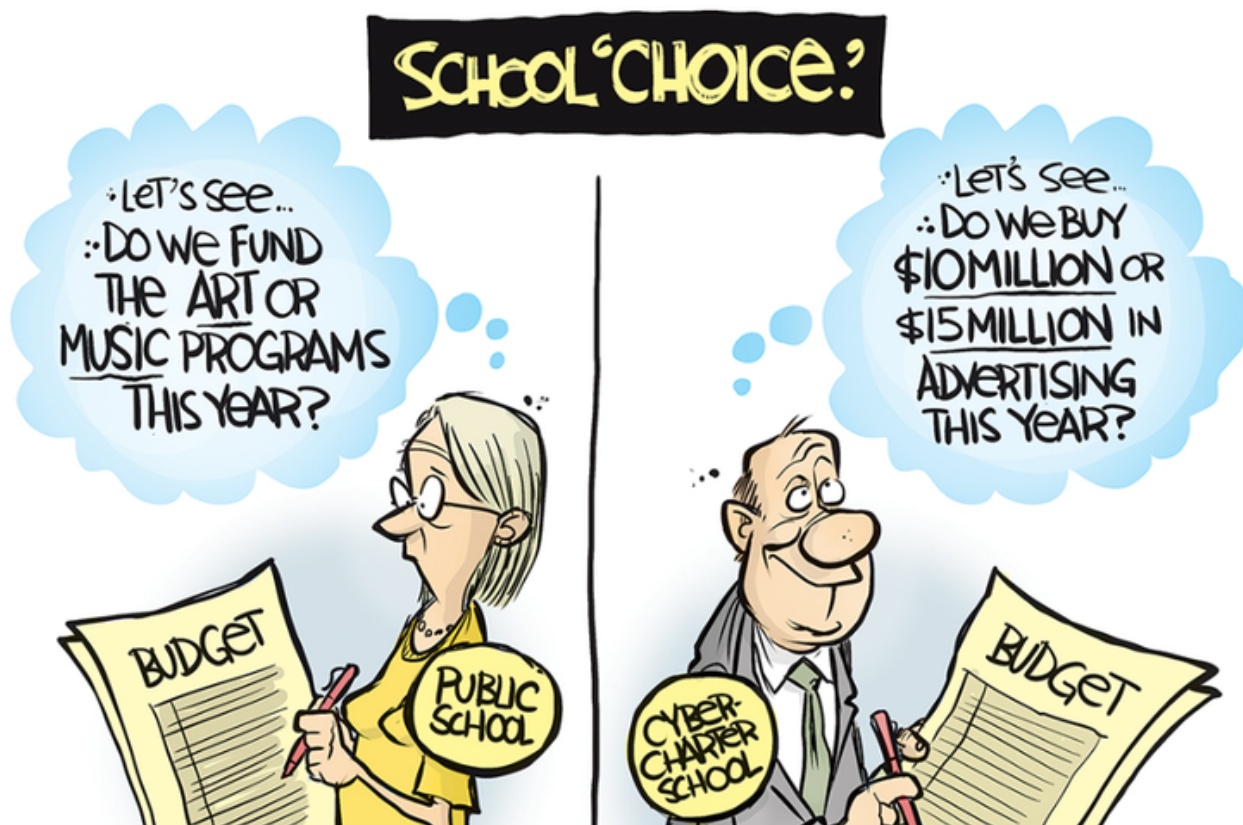
Mahmi: Well I know the people at the top have always been greedy and I can get in theory why they would want to make money from privatizing education, but how does giving parents money in the form of vouchers make them money?

Ms. Education: No I get it, this is confusing.... It took me a while to understand how everything with vouchers was all connected, but I followed the money. Vouchers are certificates of government funding that pay for students to go to private schools instead of public schools. It is an equivalent amount to how much the government would spend on a student in a public school. They are touted as "opportunities" but in reality, the private schools make a profit from taxpayer funds while dealing with less regulation than public schools, often leaving students in the cold. Since private schools are 'schools of choice' they are free to reject students based on arbitrary standards. In the past (and occasionally, also in the present) this has been used to reject Black and Brown students. Currently, in addition to being used to segregate by race, these standards tend to discriminate against students with disabilities who need extra resources, which would cost the private schools more money. Private schools are also not obligated to have fixed tuition, the affordable rate you have entered your child in with can and will increase next year. While a student may be able to go to a prestigious private school "for free", they will still struggle to afford books, uniforms.

Mahmi: So, what should I do? I understand; I might be jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Clearly a lot of research is going to be needed. If I take the voucher, will they be accepted to an affordable private school and if they get accepted into a charter school will there be certified teachers in the classroom, reliable oversight as well as a school bus service that runs near where we live? I can't keep them here, the school's rating dropped last year too. I just feel like my back is against the wall. Why is it so hard to get my child a quality education?



Ms. Education: Well, the truth is, Privatization is why. Teachers and parents are central to the success of education, but ideological forces are dividing us. School choice is one of those forces.



Ms. Education: While communities deserve access to high-quality education, the current charter and voucher systems rob them of true choice, replacing it with a privatized illusion. If charters were truly superior, why would they lobby every year for more public money? In Florida, each student who takes a voucher removes over \$8,000 from the public school budget. With these corrupt public-private dealings, these losses compound until equitable education becomes impossible. There is little to no evidence that supports privatizing education; in fact, many studies show it may have a negative effect. To preserve our future, we must support local educators, engage with other parents, and challenge the myths that threaten public education. Since you and your children deserve the best education system, it is on us to build it together. Step one is just getting more involved, email your son's teacher, be upfront about your concerns, and speak to the admin if you need to. Joining the PTA is a great way to get to know the teachers and staff and become involved in what happens here, come to school board meetings, field trips etc. You have access to this school right here free of cost and have more agency over the trajectory of your child's grades than you realize.

We have to work together.



FLVS: A TECH ROAD TO DEFUND AND DUMB DOWN

In Florida, parents now have the option to enroll their child in the state's virtual school program called Florida Virtual School (FLVS). But what parents don't know is that FLVS advances the privatization of government by hurting public school budgets forcing institutions to use their virtual system. The incentive for parents is that they can get paid \$8,000 per kid for enrolling their child as a full-time student in this virtual school program. A parent with 8 kids took all of them out of public schools to enroll in FLVS, this means if they all complete their courses the parent will receive \$64,000 in total. But where does that \$8,000 comes from? And what makes this deal too good to be true? Let's first dive into how schools in Florida get funded.

FLVS advances the privatization of government by hurting public school budgets

Florida public schools get funded through 2 sources: a portion from property taxes and a budget selected by the state legislature. The budget from the state is divided among districts and allocated to schools based on students' attendance. On average, schools (charter or public) receive \$8,000 per full time enrolled student, often referred to as FTE money. To make sure this money is being allocated properly, brick and mortar public schools get audited at least twice a year to ensure students' attendance.

As a "public school," FLVS is funded similarly, except that they don't get money per enrollment. They only get funded once a student finishes a course. This new public virtual school funding model started as an experiment in 1997, and by 2000 FLVS was its own independent entity run by a government-appointed board of trustees. Unlike real public schools that are managed by a local school district with board members dictated by the people through elections, FLVS operates as a centralized state school managed by those DeSantis deems worthy to run a state virtual educational entity (that they all happen to be shills for "school choice" and private schools is something we'll get to eventually).

In 2013, a Florida statute demanded all high school students complete an online course to graduate, forcing students to enroll in FLVS. This means that now students in both public or charter schools are forced to take an online course within their brick and mortar school buildings. This may seem beneficial to students as they are able to gain advanced technological skills, but the reality is far from positive.

Budget cuts have forced real public schools to cut teacher's positions, leaving the institutions to engage in FLVS to meet the year's curriculum. Think of it this way: if a small school with 30 teachers for 500 students cuts 5 positions, the school is now in need of using FLVS to teach the 5 to 15 courses from the teachers who were let go. So now, the schools have to pay FLVS because the child is using specialized software instead of the existing brick-and-mortar facilities. This affects the school's budget further. But how does a public school engage students in an online course without an adult present? Well, it cannot. Right now, these real schools around Miami are filled with computer labs where students are crammed into one room learning every possible subject. They're even taking PE courses by computer! In these classrooms there is a teacher present because you cannot leave kids or teens unattended; however, they're a mere adult presence. Since each student is working on a different subject and at a different ability level, it's impossible for a single teacher overseeing the class to actually facilitate learning. **Even worse, teachers do not have access to the curriculum of FLVS or any of the educational materials the students are using, putting yet one more roadblock in the way.** It's like one doctor trying to treat every patient in their hospital, from heart attacks to ingrown toenails: impossible to do well, and impossible to avoid devastating problems.



Try to imagine a classroom where you think learning is taking place. No doubt students are talking, engaging with each other or with class materials, and progressing through a task. It's vibrant. But the average FLVS classroom - when things are going "as they're supposed to" - is dead silent. Students aren't on the same pace, or sometimes aren't even in the same class, so headphones must be in. They watch videos interspersed with multiple choice questions, infographics, and recordings. The diligent students will dutifully march through slide after slide until it's time for a scheduled phone call with their teacher, which teacher's insist to take outside so as not to break the deafening silence in the room. This doesn't feel like learning. Learning has sound and social engagement to it, the marks of productive participation. Silence like this is better suited to a funeral. The only vibrancy possible is when the children mutiny, abandoning their siloed material. This is the FLVS facilitator's worst nightmare, because the person sitting in the room with these children can't get them back on task based on content knowledge or on-the-spot assessment - instead, they have to operate purely on threats of punishment. The new age of education slipped back to the past, when a school Marm snapped at you for speaking out of turn. It is dystopian and we can't accept this bleak vision as the best future for education.

When the room isn't taken over by complete chaos, students flip between Google, Chat GPT, and their FLVS assignments without pause and without thought. They're aware of the complete joke their education has become, and they're given no reason to think or feel any differently. They speed through content so they can scroll on their phones or play Minecraft or Roblox. And if they're in a full computer lab — if there's, say, 40 or 50 of them - it's impossible for one person to keep their eyes on all those screens to ensure students never cheat. And "AI detectors" or browser tracking? Unreliable, if not impossible.

FLVS is designed to replace the labor of teachers, justifying labor cuts and draining the school's budget at the same time. In return, these virtual programs end up ruining education for children. **Students are now less prepared for the future as "tech preparedness" replaces basic critical thinking skills and tools for inquiry.**

This further erodes an entire generation's education, making them easier to profit off of and control. In mid-January, the U.S. Senate hosted a committee hearing titled: "Plugged Out: Examining the Impact of Technology on America's Youth." In this hearing, Dr Jared Cooney Horvath, a former teacher and neuroscientist who focuses on human learning, had a dire warning about the use of technology in our education system:

"Once countries adopt digital technology widely in schools, performance goes down significantly to the point where kids who use computers about 5 hours per day in school for learning purposes will score 2/3 of a standard deviation less than kids who rarely or never touch tech at school. That's across 80 countries." The data proves what educators across the country are feeling and Dr Cooney reiterates it: **"When tech enters education, learning goes down."**

So, why does the government encourage technological systems proven to harm learning? Giant tech companies are

the driving power behind using more computerized instruction in schools. **This is part of an effort to continue privatization of our public education.**

One of the way fascists consolidate their economic and social power as capitalism destroys our communities and planet. The root cause behind fascism's advancement is always an economic crisis of capitalism.

Economically, the merging of state and corporate interests and the rolling back of regulations and democratic rights are necessary to keep markets growing and to prevent the people from fighting back, and FLVS is a prime example of this tactic.



"I don't go to school. I'm getting my kindergarten degree online."

Florida Virtual School advances the privatization of government by hurting public school budgets forcing institutions to use their virtual system. Yes, it's attempting to replace teacher's labor as schools are forced to make lay offs due to budget cuts, but one of its worst consequences is how tech in classrooms impairs an entire generation's cognitive development, harming students' abilities in critical thinking, numeracy, literacy, and overall cognitive ability for generations to come.





"You can be replaced by teaching software, you know!"

Fascists and capitalist are literally making new generations dumber.

These students are young people now, but these young people will grow up and become our community officials, our school leaders, they will run for office. The health of our society depends on our schools, and weak schools will impact us at every level of our society. We can resist the use of software in classrooms, we can protest against the over filled yet silent learning spaces, and we can tell our school officials that we won't accept this inferior education. But the only way these actions will have an impact is if we take them together!

Education is changing drastically in Florida and we must keep in mind that our state is a blueprint for fascist policies throughout the nation. It is our time to stand together as educators, parents and community members. We need to be united for the benefit of our society now and for our future. If you have a loved one in public school, or you simply can't sit silently any longer as fascism advances, let's join forces. We must start having conversations among our circles on the future of children's education, recognize the threats in our daily lives, and work towards resisting the further consolidation of privatization. Our children's education are the pillars of our future society. Their education determines everything about how our communities will face challenges to come. We have to get organized because as a society we deserve better, just like this students deserve better.

**This further erodes
an entire generation's
education, making them
easier to profit off of
and control.**



GLOSSARY

PRIVATIZATION

The transfer of ownership, property, or business operations from government (public sector) to private entities. Claiming to increase efficiency and reduce costs by replacing public management with profit driven incentives. When in reality, the quality of service and or product of the newly acquired business sharply decline. Corners are cut in the name of profits and the consumers like us suffer as the quality of goods/services that were produced during government ownership decline.

UNIONISM

The actions and policies meant to forward the existence of a union. Especially those made that protect the bureaucratic structure over the rank and file.

CALL TO ACTION

Decisions Florida's politicians make are beneficial to them but are at the direct expense of social and political needs of the constituents who live here. We need solutions that address the root problems of capitalism and imperialism, rather than solutions that put a band-aid on the symptoms of community decay. From Broward County to Miami to Palm Beach County, school closures, privatization, and political neglect are not accidents....they're built into the system.

Join us in growing our strength and building power to fight against our common enemies: capitalists and imperialists. Our liberation and that of the global exploited classes depend on our ability to construct powerful independent organizations. Together, through a political line forged in unity and struggle, we can challenge the system that oppresses us. A system which has no interest in improving our living conditions or guaranteeing our children's education!

Let this be the moment when we work together and view our struggles are interconnected, to stand up against capitalists. History has shown us that our power isn't in spontaneous protests or behind an election booth. Our power is represented when we grow as independent, combative, and principled members of our local community. What affects Broward, Dade, and the Palm Beaches affects all of Florida!

Remember, every voice counts, and all of your insights and personal stories are important. Through mobilizing others around the goals we all share, we have the power to create meaningful and lasting change in our communities and beyond. We've been shown time and time again that political unity and collective power are the way through. We need the input of educators and parents so we can make steps towards building collective power. Get in touch, get organized, and let's build a future free from exploitation and oppression. Let's begin!





ONE STRUGGLE

an anti-capitalist / anti-imperialist initiative

How did reading these articles make you feel? Did you feel inspired to take action? **Perhaps do something BEYOND THE HEADLINES?** But not sure how?

We are all capable of action even though we may not know where to start. Start here with us! We'd like to call writers, photographers, artist, all the creatives for input in what you'd like to see in this newsletter. Let's work together as a community who can identify class consciousness within the issues that affect us.

We are not helpless; you are not helpless. We continue to take beatings as South Florida residents, but we don't have to accept them as normal. **Instead, we can organize!** What do we mean by organize? Do you have friends, coworkers and neighbors that feel the same way you do? Of course you do, reach out, communicate and let's work together to build networks of resistance.

You do have the power to discuss and gather a group of concerned community members to rally around the issues we are facing. You can do this on your own initiative or reach out to groups like us at One Struggle who are already working independently to address our needs, bring awareness and help make change.

If you're eager to know more about us or want general advice on organizing on your own, reach out.



Onestruggle.southflorida@gmail.com



Onestruggle.net



OneStruggle



SeedsofUnity



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