Follow the **Money**: Digging Into School District Finances

EWA Webinar, Aug. 2, 2017

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National education reporter
*The Wall Street Journal*

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@tawnell
Get the data!

- Purchase orders
- Check logs
- Credit card information
- Paycheck information (salary database w/stipends)
- Detailed budgets (not the Powerpoint)
- Bond information
- Leave pay (regular, assault)

Historical data is your friend!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECT DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>2011 ORIGINAL BUDGET</th>
<th>2012 PROPOSED BUDGET</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6112 Sub for Professionals</td>
<td>12,261,042</td>
<td>10,742,318</td>
<td>-1,518,724</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6116 Stipends Prof</td>
<td>25,726,400</td>
<td>14,576,512</td>
<td>-11,149,888</td>
<td>-43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6117 Prof Part-Time/Temp</td>
<td>579,793</td>
<td>355,914</td>
<td>-223,879</td>
<td>-38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6118 Extra Duty Prof</td>
<td>6,257,806</td>
<td>4,833,598</td>
<td>-1,424,208</td>
<td>-23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6119 Prof Sal</td>
<td>710,089,871</td>
<td>666,517,091</td>
<td>-43,572,780</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6121 Overtime</td>
<td>1,376,500</td>
<td>1,104,458</td>
<td>-272,042</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6122 Subs for Support Emp</td>
<td>1,758,049</td>
<td>1,406,717</td>
<td>-351,332</td>
<td>-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6125 Sub/Extra Duty Pay Support Non Position Related</td>
<td>61,533</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-61,533</td>
<td>-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6127 Support PT/Temp</td>
<td>1,201,888</td>
<td>1,110,353</td>
<td>-91,635</td>
<td>-8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6128 Extra Duty Support</td>
<td>1,476,464</td>
<td>2,514,568</td>
<td>1,038,104</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6129 Support Sal/Wage</td>
<td>137,154,919</td>
<td>132,490,595</td>
<td>-4,664,394</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6139 Cell Phone Allowance</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6141 FICA</td>
<td>12,165,123</td>
<td>11,881,090</td>
<td>-284,033</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6142 Health/Use Ins</td>
<td>33,164,354</td>
<td>30,937,614</td>
<td>-2,226,740</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6143 Wkrs Comp</td>
<td>10,460,468</td>
<td>10,045,210</td>
<td>-415,258</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6144 TRS on Behalf Pyrmt</td>
<td>53,600,000</td>
<td>58,000,000</td>
<td>4,400,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6145 Unemp Comp</td>
<td>3,355,730</td>
<td>5,222,421</td>
<td>1,866,691</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6146 TRS</td>
<td>20,686,959</td>
<td>19,320,151</td>
<td>-1,366,808</td>
<td>-7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6149 Other Emp Benefits</td>
<td>429,563</td>
<td>401,741</td>
<td>-27,822</td>
<td>-6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total: 1,031,808,992 | 966,855,681
Other costs to look for...

• Stealing from Peter to pay Paul (school-choice balancing act)

• Athletics

• Marketing
Public schools turn to marketing to win back students from charters  wsj.com/articles/public… via @WSJ #schoolchoice

Public Schools Turn to Marketing to Win Back Students From Charters
In an era of school choice, traditional public schools are fighting back with expensive marketing campaigns and retooled offerings to appeal to students.
wsj.com
GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas—Billboards, glossy mailers and ads at movie theaters here promote the offerings available at public schools. In Los Angeles, dozens of 8-foot-high banners with photos of college-bound students line a busy road, targeting families with school-age children.

Westonka Public Schools in Minnesota sends parents a baby bag filled with a district-logoed bib, a welcome letter from the superintendent and a course catalog. In an era of school choice, with charter schools and even other districts threatening to cut into their enrollments and funding, traditional public schools are fighting back with expensive marketing campaigns and retooled offerings to appeal to students.
Know the difference between “approved budgets” and “actual budgets”

- **Approved budgets** are mostly “wishful thinking”

- **Actual budgets** are hard facts after:
  - Budget amendments
  - Change orders
## Proposed –vs- Actual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School year</th>
<th>Proposed budget</th>
<th>Audited actuals</th>
<th>Diff</th>
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<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>1,415,964,464</td>
<td>1,472,697,728</td>
<td>56,733,264</td>
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<td>2015-16</td>
<td>1,388,055,961</td>
<td>1,518,588,946</td>
<td>130,532,985</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>1,387,245,544</td>
<td>1,343,468,100</td>
<td>-43,777,444</td>
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</table>
The “budget amendment”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2014-2015 Original Budget</th>
<th>2014-2015 Current Budget</th>
<th>Changes in Programs or Policy</th>
<th>Change in Current Budget</th>
<th>Balance Neutral Transfers</th>
<th>Amended Budget October 22, 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5700 Local Revenues</td>
<td>871,259,566</td>
<td>871,259,566</td>
<td>641,169</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>871,259,566</td>
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<tr>
<td>5800 State Revenues</td>
<td>380,763,575</td>
<td>380,494,944</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,494</td>
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<td>380,763,575</td>
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<td>5900 Federal and Other Sources</td>
<td>47,988,150</td>
<td>47,988,150</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>47,988,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7900 Other Financing Sources</td>
<td>871,259,566</td>
<td>871,259,566</td>
<td>641,169</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>871,259,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>1,300,011,391</td>
<td>1,300,011,391</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>641,169</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,300,652,560</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditures by Function</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - Instruction</td>
<td>754,074,507</td>
<td>754,265,912</td>
<td>4,631,306</td>
<td>257,756</td>
<td></td>
<td>758,900,454</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 - Instructional Resources and Media Services</td>
<td>21,991,230</td>
<td>21,991,330</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,070,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development</td>
<td>7,700,098</td>
<td>9,477,525</td>
<td>50,916</td>
<td>54,746</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,470,679</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 - Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>29,854,434</td>
<td>28,603,512</td>
<td>170,634</td>
<td>185,721</td>
<td></td>
<td>29,985,974</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 - School Leadership</td>
<td>83,043,902</td>
<td>64,744,795</td>
<td>1,350,955</td>
<td>269,652</td>
<td></td>
<td>84,393,407</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 - Guidance, Counseling and Evaluation</td>
<td>49,799,795</td>
<td>53,400,029</td>
<td>380,736</td>
<td>(94,431)</td>
<td></td>
<td>53,772,334</td>
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<td>32 - Social Work Services</td>
<td>2,497,099</td>
<td>2,497,099</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>2,497,099</td>
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<td>33 - Health Services</td>
<td>10,219,895</td>
<td>10,219,895</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>10,219,895</td>
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<tr>
<td>34 - Student Transportation</td>
<td>30,065,973</td>
<td>35,512,739</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,496</td>
<td></td>
<td>35,909,739</td>
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<tr>
<td>36 - Co-Curricular Activities</td>
<td>28,992,955</td>
<td>28,992,504</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>451</td>
<td></td>
<td>29,032,213</td>
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<td>41 - General Administration</td>
<td>45,207,893</td>
<td>48,468,000</td>
<td>3,260</td>
<td>45,676</td>
<td></td>
<td>48,563,477</td>
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<tr>
<td>51 - Plant Maintenance and Operations</td>
<td>147,613,225</td>
<td>150,112,085</td>
<td>3,599</td>
<td>33,798</td>
<td></td>
<td>150,446,883</td>
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<tr>
<td>52 - Security and Monitoring Services</td>
<td>22,199,467</td>
<td>22,914,887</td>
<td>7,115</td>
<td>5,542</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,969,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 - Data Processing Services</td>
<td>34,006,137</td>
<td>34,763,952</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,652</td>
<td></td>
<td>35,424,059</td>
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<tr>
<td>61 - Community Services</td>
<td>8,803,442</td>
<td>8,453,848</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>349,647</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,843,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - Debt Services</td>
<td>9,985,341</td>
<td>9,985,341</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,985,341</td>
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<tr>
<td>81 - Facilities Acquistion and Construction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 - Chapter 41 Payment</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 - Payments to JAEF</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97 - Payments to Tax Increment Fund</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 - Other Intergovernmental Charges</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 - Other Intergovernmental Charges</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>1,300,011,391</td>
<td>1,218,537,776</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,628,314</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,325,164,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>(18,526,380)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(18,526,380)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>(18,526,380)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Fund Balance July 1&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>$ 251,210,973</td>
<td>$ 251,210,973</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 291,220,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Ending Fund Balance June 30, 2015</td>
<td>$ 251,210,973</td>
<td>$ 272,794,512</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>(5,385,145)</td>
<td>$ -</td>
<td>$ 267,409,367</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONSIDER AND TAKE POSSIBLE ACTION TO ACCEPT THE COMPLETION OF WORK FOR THE CONTRACT WITH GILBERT MAY, INC. DBA PHILLIPS/MAY CORPORATION FOR THE RENOVATION OF IRMA LERMA RANGEL YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SCHOOL; APPROVE CHANGE ORDER #1 ($44,416.69 CREDIT); AND AUTHORIZE FINAL PAYMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BOND PROGRAM ($5,017.87 BOND FUNDS)

Background Information:

On February 24, 2011, per Board File #59959, agenda item #23, the Board of Trustees authorized the District to negotiate and enter into a contract with Gilbert May, Inc. dba Phillips/May Corporation, for renovation of Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School in conjunction with the Bond Program in an amount not to exceed $1,047,990.00.

Contract History:

| Original Contract Amount | $1,047,990.00 |
| Change Order #1           | -44,416.69    |
| Revised Contract Amount   | $1,003,573.31 |

Changes scope of work; contractual change
Watch for “hidden” costs

Expenditures that don’t show up on check registers, budget amendments or change orders:

Employee settlements!
Watch for departing employees who leave but stay on the payroll under settlement agreements...

COMPROMISE, SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made by and between the Dallas Independent School District, its agents, trustees, successors, representatives and employees (“District”), a political subdivision of the State of Texas located in Dallas County, Texas, and Carmen Develle, her representatives, heirs, executors, and assigns (“Employee”). This Agreement is the final settlement agreement between the District, Trustees, and Employee, and it controls the relationship between them after the date of this Agreement.

RECITALS

WHEREAS, Employee is presently employed by the District as an at-will employee in the position of Chief of Human Capital Management with the District; and

WHEREAS, disputes and controversies exist between the parties, and Employee and the District desire to settle all existing disputes and controversies in an amicable and beneficial manner; and

WHEREAS, Employee desires to resign from her position and as an employee of the District, and the District agrees to accept her resignation.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual representations, promises and agreements contained herein, including the recitals set forth above, and with the express intention of settling and extinguishing all obligations, demands, claims, causes of action and liability of whatever nature relating to Employee’s employment with the District, the parties voluntarily agree as follows:

AGREEMENT

1. Resignation. In exchange for the consideration described below, and the mutual representations, promises, and agreements contained herein, Employee agrees to submit her letter of resignation immediately upon execution of this Agreement, such resignation to be effective at 6:00pm on January 29, 2015. This letter of resignation is attached as Exhibit “A.” The District hereby accepts the resignation, releases the Employee from all duties associated with her employment, and as of 6:00pm January 29, 2015, the Employee will not report to her previously assigned work site.

2. Consideration. In consideration for Employee’s agreement to resign, Employee shall continue to be paid her monthly salary and all benefits due, less deductions for federal income tax, Medicare, life insurance, health insurance, and credit union withholdings, if applicable, through June 30, 2015. Payment shall be made according to the District’s customary payroll practices.

3. No Further Obligations. Payment of the aforementioned sums by the District to Employee and the exchange by the parties hereto of the consideration enumerated herein shall constitute full and final satisfaction of the District’s obligations to Employee. In addition, unless
The Dallas ISD personnel chief who resigned Thursday over instant messages that disparaged her co-workers could receive at least $55,500 in a settlement that requires her to work with trustees and administrators to defend any claims, complaints or legal proceedings brought against the district.
A majority of Dallas school trustees agreed Thursday to limit Superintendent Mike Miles' unilateral ability to pay lucrative settlement agreements.

Led by trustees Lew Blackburn and Dan Micciche, the school board discussed requiring Miles to get board approval before DISD can pay departing employees. The move comes after several board members, most notably Micciche, have voiced frustration with Miles giving some employees settlements instead of firing them.
Look for not-so-obvious `money stories’ at the school level.

- Unforeseen expenses
- Unconventional ways districts are making ends meet
Schools, Colleges Contend With Costly Mold

Aging structures are ripe for fungal problems; Indiana U. spends $568,220 for fixes at two dorms
Move over cupcakes. As uniforms become more common from California to Maine, “Jeans Day” is becoming a fundraising powerhouse.
CHECK REGISTERS

• Request monthly

• Get the full log, which includes check numbers, account numbers, etc.

• Do follow-up FOIAs for receipts and more info
Breaking down the check register...

- Account codes
- Vendor name/check recipient
- Item description
- Check amounts
- Check number/check dates
- Quantity of items purchased
Dallas ISD had been cutting its budget for several years to deal with reduced state funding. Teaching positions were eliminated and class sizes increased.

We wondered if the school district was cutting the right things. Were there other cuts that could be made with no direct impact on student learning? So, where’s the fat?
What next?

- Used Microsoft Excel to analyze over 775,000 lines of check register transactions for items in the district’s general fund, which the district determines how is spent.

- We used the account codes to sort purchases. Food items here, trinkets here, trips here....

- We eliminated items that were tied to the education of children – supplies, food, etc. – and purchases that directly benefited children, such as meals during athletic trips. We erred on the side of caution. (This process took about a couple of weeks – but would have taken much longer without the account codes steering us.)

- Grouped transactions by item description in Microsoft Access. This gave us an idea where the money was going.
Next steps...

- We used Excel to sort the data by vendors, and then amounts.

- Then, we put in dozens of requests for receipts and background documentation. This gave us the details.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Menu Description</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monterey Room Rental</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Campbell Centre Continental - Fresh Pastries, Assorted Muffins and Plain/Filled Croissants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sliced Fresh Seasonal Fruit Display with Honey Yogurt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assorted Bagels with Cream Cheese and Preserves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffee, Decaffeinated Coffee, Hot Tea and Hot Chocolate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assorted Flavored Syrups and Condiments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orange Juice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Meeting Package Buffet</td>
<td>$26.95</td>
<td>$323.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spinach Salad and Antipasto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Beef Entree or Salmon if Possible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Chicken Entree Grilled with Balsamic Reduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roasted Potatoes and Green Beans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assorted Dinner Rolls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cheesecake Grand Marnier and Pecan Pie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coffee, Decaffeinated Coffee and Hot Tea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CROWNE PLAZA
DALLAS NEAR THE GALLERIA
THE PLACE TO MEET.
Crowne Plaza Dallas Near The Galleria
14315 Midway Road
Addison, Texas 75001

Telephone: (972) 961-2740 Reservations: (100) 377-9778
Fax: (972) 961-3877

Pamela
972-925-3363

Dallas Independent School District
Sheri Garrett
3700 Ross Avenue - Room # 216A
Route ADM
Dallas, TX 75204
US

Date: 08-20-07

A/R Account Number: [redacted]
Amount Paid: $

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Invoice</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Debit</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Balance</th>
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<tr>
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ENTERED
OCT 2 6 2007
DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
ACCOUNTS PAYABLE
Dallas ISD spent millions on extras, analysis of check register shows

DISD paid $2,496 to rent the Hilton Anatole's Grand Ballroom and equipment for a June 7 human resources meeting. The district's interim superintendent recently directed a deputy to draft a letter to employees about new limits for such room rentals.

By TAWNELL D. HOBB and MATTHEW HAAG

Staff Writers

Published 18 June 2011 11:39 PM
Dallas ISD spent millions on extras, analysis of check register shows

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS and MATTHEW HAAG
Staff Writers
Published: 18 June 2011 11:39 PM

Restaurant food and catered meals: $2.2 million.

Hotel stays and room rentals: $2.3 million.
Registration fees and travel costs: $3.8 million.

Consultants and other outside help: $44 million.

And there’s more.

The Dallas Independent School District spent at least $57 million over four years — or one year’s average base pay for 1,086 teachers — on purchases such as pricey meals, costly trips, lucrative consulting contracts and overnight stays at hotels in the Dallas area and beyond.

The Dallas Morning News analyzed the check register from the district’s main fund starting with purchases from August 2006, the month after DISD ended an oft abused employee credit card program, to December 2010.

The review of more than 775,000 lines of purchases, receipts and documents provides a look at funds that are loosely tracked and spent with little oversight.
Four-star hotels, conventions among Dallas ISD travel expenses

The Dallas school district spent at least $4.7 million on costs related to employee travel

-$368-per-night rooms in the four-star Marriott Marquis Hotel overlooking Times Square.

-$1,224 for tickets to Walt Disney World Resort

...a $2,495 registration fee for a DISD principal to attend a four-day conference at Harvard University
Some of the district's purchases include:

- More than $300,000 spent at Atlanta Bread Co. and about $86,000 at Chick-fil-A.
- Promotional items, such as mugs, wristbands, T-shirts and hats, that cost at least $1.7 million.
- Renting meeting space and catering meals from Aramark Events and Catering at Infomart, costing at least $488,000.
Dallas Schools' Check Register

posted June 19, 2011

This searchable database shows checks issued from the Dallas Independent School District general fund between July 2004 and April 2011, listing recipients of $10,000 or more. The results show the total issued to a given vendor in that period. Names were not standardized, so related companies may appear as individual records.

For fuller descriptions of the purpose of each check, click on the vendor's name.

Click here to read the full story about DISD spending.

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Stuck in your annuity?

If you have a $500,000 portfolio and own an annuity, you have a lot at stake. Make sure you understand the details by downloading Annuity Insights: Your Guide to Better Understanding Annuities by Forbes columnist Ken Fisher’s firm. This guide is designed to help you better understand these investments. Act now!

Click Here to Download!

FILE ONLINE TODAY

If you get audited, we’ll represent you for free.
Dallas school trustees, facing major budget cuts for the upcoming school year, vowed Monday to find ways to reduce excessive spending.

Trustees, responding to a Dallas Morning News report on Sunday that detailed questionable expenditures, said they plan to crack down on costs for legal services, pricey meals and room rentals.

New board President Lew Blackburn said he's willing to go so far as to require staffers to raise money for their own food purchases.

"I'm OK with not feeding the staff," he said.

Blackburn said he plans to lay out his thoughts on spending during a speech on board priorities at Thursday's board meeting. He predicted new procedures would be in place by January.
Don’t forget about those credit cards...

An iPod on Christmas Eve
$399

Boxes from The Container Store
$2,489

Gift cards from Toys “R” Us
$3,100

Shopping with a DISD MasterCard
Priceless

Exclusive:
A Dallas Morning
News investigation
found thousands of
suspect purchases on
district credit cards —
and serious questions
about whether anyone
is watching how the tax
dollars are spent.

Inside
One DISD secretary has used her
district credit card to buy
$200,000 in merchandise — at
an Air Force base. She has also
stocked up on an additional $200,000
in other stores in two years. Her
boss, says the fund’s been completely
but she doesn’t think anybody
knows.

She says they were did an AWA

The KENT FISCHER, TAWNEE B. BOBBS
and HOLLY MCONDY

With little oversight, Dallas Independent School
District employees swipe their district-issued credit
cards hundreds of times a day, spending about
8.2 million a year on everything from office sup-
plies and cookbooks to meals and giveaway window-
books. About 1,200 cards.

YOUR SCHOOLS,
YOUR MONEY,
are in circulation, and
they keep the checks
running. With them,
administrators and teachers can buy day-to-day
supplies, without the hassle of placing on a district
purchase order. But rarely does anyone check up
on the card users, review their receipt or question
what they’ve bought.

They’re spending on items like these — a $200
blanket and pillow set from The Land of Nod,$
$1,700 in athletic equipment, $200 in merchandise
from Bath and Body Works, and a $3,600 change
to an online dating service, America’s Best.

See THOUSANDS June 20x

$
Headlines from DISD credit card abuse...

86 disciplined for DISD credit card misuse
Termination, probation among punishments for procurement abuses

DISD credit cards: 2nd user sentenced
Ex-secretary who spent $64,000 on herself gets 18 months in prison
Red flags...

- Credit card purchases for even amounts can indicate gift card purchases.
- Understaffing in office overseeing purchases; unanswered questions
- Frequent change orders and/or budget amendments
- Big budget swings
- A decreasing reserve, or emergency, fund
- Back-to-back purchases to stay under spending limits
WAS THE PROMISED PRODUCT DELIVERED?
Dallas ISD trustees hear study on creating nontraditional schools

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS  
STAFF WRITER

Published: January 9, 2014 10:30 PM  Updated: January 10, 2014 1:17 AM

Dallas ISD should expand its successful magnet programs and explore nontraditional ways to educate students, such as virtual learning, says a study reviewed by the school board Thursday.

Education consultants Moak, Casey & Associates presented the study on various public school options. Some trustees want to look beyond the traditional public school model to provide students more choices while enhancing the learning experience.

The study emphasized the need for more magnet schools. Magnets, which include many of the district’s best campuses, have admission requirements and focus on specialty areas.

The 20 highest-enrolled magnet campuses operate at 99 percent capacity, according to the study. Fifty-seven percent of those who applied to attend this school year were denied admission, while 15 percent more were placed on a waiting list.

More Montessori schools also are needed, the study said, citing high demand to attend the
What’s in that report? Is it worth the $100,000 price tag?

-- 306-page report
BUT...
-- Padded with school district charts and maps
-- Five research studies from other groups; available on the web
-- Printouts of two proposed Texas bills that never became law
-- Contained basic knowledge:
The magnet programs are popular
Next steps:
• Look at specs promised in request for proposal, or RFP, and contract details

Promised:
  - Budget analysis
  - Facility analysis
  - Transportation analysis
  - Site visits of facilities/programs
  - Community input

Last step:
• Talk to district officials
• Interview consulting company rep

Reaction
• District superintendent on the defense
• Consulting rep comes clean
Consultant: School choice report for Dallas ISD not $100K worth of work

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS
STAFF WRITER
Published: January 25, 2014 9:39 PM   Updated: January 27, 2014 9:29 AM

Dallas ISD Superintendent Mike Miles last week defended a consulting firm’s report on schooling options when asked if it was worth the $100,000 price tag.

But a day later, a consultant at Moak, Casey and Associates acknowledged their report for the district was lacking after The Dallas Morning News raised questions.

“We haven’t done $100,000 worth of work,” consultant Curtis Culwell said. “We have not fulfilled our contract.”

Culwell presented highlights of the report on school choice at a school board briefing on Jan. 9. No one questioned the work at the time, and Culwell didn’t tell the board it was incomplete, as he’s saying now.

“They didn’t ask me,” he said Thursday.

Culwell told a reporter after the briefing that the report cost $100,000, as he stood with chief...
Dallas ISD trustees to discuss school choice report found to be lacking

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS
STAFF WRITER
Published: January 29, 2014 11:03 PM Updated: January 31, 2014 6:12 AM

Dallas ISD trustees plan to discuss a consulting firm's report on school choice after one of its authors acknowledged it was incomplete.

The report by Moak, Casey and Associates was to cost the district $100,000. It was expected to provide a road map to help trustees plan for nontraditional schools and programs.

Superintendent Mike Miles defended the report last week when asked if it was worth the six-figure price tag. A day later, consultant Curtis Culwell told The Dallas Morning News that the firm had not done $100,000 worth of work or fulfilled its contract with DISD.

Culwell said the report is more general than requested. He said his firm is willing to do more work at the district's request or just bill for the work done.

Some DISD school board trustees said they found the report deficient.
End result:
Cost cut in half.
Don’t forget those paychecks
The salary database...

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New Dallas ISD communications chief's $185,000 salary raises eyebrows

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS
Staff Writer
thobbs@dallasnews.com
Published: 05 June 2012 11:14 PM

New Dallas ISD Superintendent Mike Miles has set annual salaries for four chiefs in his cabinet — with one in particular raising eyebrows.

Chief of communications Jennifer Sprague will have a base pay of $185,000 — making more than Dallas Police Chief David Brown and the city's top communications officer, Frank Librio. And on a national scale, it's more than White House spokesman Jay Carney's $172,200 salary.

Sprague currently makes $86,652 as public information officer of Harrison School District 2 in Colorado Springs, where Miles is superintendent.

Miles officially starts in DISD on July 1, but is working in the district on a part-time basis. He has spent part of his time building his staff.

Related

Communications chief Jennifer Sprague's $185,000 salary tops that of not only her city of Dallas counterpart, but also the city's police chief.
More Dallas ISD employees making six-figure salaries

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS
Staff Writer
Published: 25 November 2012 11:12 PM

Budget cuts in Dallas ISD have resulted in the elimination of hundreds of positions across most salary levels. But those in the six-figure salary range have grown and are at a high this school year.

Salaries in the district have been a source of contention for some community members who believe Superintendent Mike Miles is setting pay too high, mainly for people in his Cabinet, where salaries range from $180,000 to $220,000. Miles’ base salary is $300,000.

A Dallas Morning News analysis found that DISD has 129 employees, not including pending hires, who make $100,000 or more. That’s up from 111 last school year and 121 the year prior.

Salaries for those 129 workers add up to more than $16 million annually.

Those figures are a big jump from 2008-09, when 79 employees had six-figure salaries. The steady increase came as the nation struggled through a stubborn recession and high unemployment. Meanwhile, DISD was rebounding from a financial debacle that resulted in hundreds of layoffs.
Dallas school board president wants top leaders to take 25% pay cut
The headlines:

**Car stipends guzzling cash**
Some in DISD getting large allowances but traveling little

**DISD superintendent proposes elimination of most employee car stipends**
LEAVE PAY can add up to big bucks!

• Every couple of months request a list of all employees on paid/unpaid leave, length of time and why.

• Has anyone been on the list overly long? Are investigations taking longer than usual to complete? Paid leave = money.

• Don’t forget about `assault leave’
Assaults by DISD students on staff have doubled in recent years

09:55 PM CDT on Saturday, March 22, 2008

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS / The Dallas Morning News
tdhobbs@dallasnews.com

Diana May didn’t think to look down after leaving a portable building at Seagoville High School. So she didn’t see the tripwire strung across a walkway.

The special-education teacher landed hard on the cement, receiving multiple injuries, mainly to her neck and lower back. She spent two and a half months recuperating.

"I wasn’t meant directly for me, but they could have warned me," she said of the three students punished for setting the wire in March 2006. The kids watched her fall, then ran back into a classroom, she said.

"You shouldn’t have to worry about stuff like that, but you do have to worry," Ms. May said. "There’s just not the respect for teachers that you should have.

Elizabeth M. Claftey

Diana May had to fight for retroactive assault leave pay after she fell over a tripwire at Seagoville High School. A DISD hearing officer in June awarded her nearly three months of retroactive assault leave pay and

That's why we'll donate up to $100 to the local cause of your choice.

Comerica Bank

Featured Latest News Video

Healing begins for Mount Vernon after murder of Robert Whiteside

Anatomy of a photo shoot: Nastya Lukin and her five Olympic medals

Preparing for the first day at Samuelll High School

Attendees enjoy groovy time at first GroveFest

Gloves off as Obama-Biden ticket debuted Saturday
Assaults on school employees

This shows which Dallas Independent School District campuses had assaults of any level - from threats to physical altercations - by students on school employees and volunteers during the 2006-07 school year. An incident may have involved more than one student. Campuses are shaded by the ratio of incidents to enrollment. Click on the campus to learn more.

KEY
- No incidents
- Few incidents
- More incidents
- The most incidents

Anne Frank Elementary School
5201 Celestial Road, Dallas
Incidents: 2
Enrollment: 1152
Rate per 100 students: 0.17
After voters approve the bond package, there’s still work to do...

• Are the promised projects getting done; or is money being used for pet projects?

• What projects are getting priority; how is it determined?

• Which firms are getting the work?
Black firms got little of DISD bond work

Black businesses received 7% of work from bond program, review finds

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS
Staff Writer thobbs@dallasnews.com

Black businesses may be getting less than a fair share of Dallas ISD contracts, a Dallas Morning News review has found.

For years, some Dallas ISD black trustees have been skeptical about whether black business leaders have been getting their fair share of contracts from construction bonds.

District administrators assure them again and again that minority- and women-owned business enterprises, or MWBEs, are getting their piece of the bond pie.

But a Dallas Morning News review has found that black businesses received just 7 percent, or $90 million, of the work under the last bond program, which totaled $1.35 billion. That’s compared with 19 percent, or $240 million, for white women and 17 percent, or $212 million, for Hispanics.