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Covering the business side of education

New parent group in town has district's ear and approval, but all they have online is a super vague web site. Who the heck are they, and who's backing them?

<http://chicago.suntimes.com/news/7/71/204715/parents-who-want-to-attend-school-fair-asked-to-provide-names-emails>



Board of education member said to be investing in companies the district is spending money on, including a big contract. Is she? What happened?

<http://chicago.suntimes.com/news-chicago/7/71/223620/cps-profitable-investment-board-ed-member>

Company doing business with the district — that used to employ the CEO — now being examined by federal investigators, along with said CEO. Wait, what?

<http://chicago.suntimes.com/news-chicago/7/71/529946/murky-past-company-boss-cps-probe>

Where to start?

SECRETARY OF STATE! Business filings. Incorporation papers and annual reports. Should list the company's name and address, who their agent/attorney is, decent phone numbers, who the owners are – and they're telling the state so there's no fudging as you might on a web site. Make nice with whoever handles these.

<http://www.ilsos.gov/corporatellc/>

Sorry if you live in Delaware or they incorporated there. Date aside, you're SOL

District's online vendor list. Here's everyone CPS has paid so far this year. And the

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address where they mail the check:

http://www.csc.cps.k12.il.us/purchasing/supplier_report_2015.xml

990s if it's a non-profit. Officers, board members, highest-paid people. Did they issue grants? Did they win grants? How many employees? It's all in there. www.guidestar.org
Free registration gets you pretty far.

ATTORNEY GENERAL or whoever regulates charities. Illinois' requires charities to register and file an annual report. Ask for all of it.

<http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/charities/search/searchItems.jsp>

MBE/WBE filings. Who owns, who put in \$\$\$, what the plan is? Amazing if you find this. Patience, though. Companies can seek the certification on city, county, state or federal levels. Trick is finding where they are. Most times you'll need a FOIA to view.

LAWSUITS. Complaints against them – or even by them – can be really telling. Do they get sued a ton? Do they lose? Any of the major players divorced – an ugly divorce file also tells a lot. Search both federal and state.

BANKRUPTCY COURT — jackpot. So much laid out on paper for a judge. Needs a login, costs something per page. But golden if you luck into one.

EDGAR – for the SEC's financial filings. Is the company public?

<http://www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml>

Note to self, aka so obvious it's dumb but I need to be reminded:

- Google
- The district's web site.
- **Your own archives (duh). why isn't this always my first step?**
- Their own web sites– some are really braggy.
- Trade publications in that industry where maybe they let their guard down?
- YouTube

Business-y stuff within the school or district:

- Ethics filings. Find who has to file, make a recurring note of when they're due and file a routine FOIA. #StuffToHoard
- Vendor lists w total spent last year if district doesn't keep online #Hoard
- Contracts, ALSO procurement documents – bid proposals, bids, vendor approvals.
- Invoices AND proof of payment.

Stay organized and good luck!