

**Official Minutes of the Monday, April 2, 2018
Board of Education Meeting**

Call to Order The Board of Education of Community Consolidated School District 59 in County of Cook, State of Illinois, held a meeting in accordance with provisions of the Open Meetings Act, according to Illinois law, at the District 59 Administration Center, 2123 South Arlington Heights Road, Arlington Heights, Illinois on Monday, April 2, 2018. The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM.

Ms. Janice Krinsky responded to President Somogyi's request for volunteer to serve as Secretary Pro Tem in the absence of Mr. Sunil Bhave, Board Secretary.

Roll Call **Members Present:** President Barbara Somogyi, Vice-President Janice Krinsky, - Members: Tim Burns, Karen Osmani, Sharon Roberts, and Mardell Schumacher

Members Absent: Sunil Bhave Secretary

Others Superintendent, Dr. Arthur Fessler; Associate Superintendent, Tom Luedloff; Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, CBSO, Vickie Nissen; Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Kelley Zeffahs; Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Maureen McAbee; Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services, Karen Starr; Assistant Superintendent for Innovative Learning and Communication, Ben Grey; Executive Director of Facilities and Operations, Tony Rossi; Executive Director of Literacy, Dr. Kim Barrett; Executive Director for Innovative Learning, Dr. Katie Ahsell, Director of Social Emotional Learning; Ross Vittore, Executive Director of Innovative Learning; Director of Communications and Design, David Pohlmeier; and Recording Secretary, Kathie Lange.

Also Present Dr. Rob Bohanek, Ridge Family Center For Learning Principal; Phil Stevens, Grove Jr. High School Assistant Principal; Larry Ganan, Clearmont Elementary School Assistant Principal; Griselda Tapia Salt Creek Elementary School Assistant Principal; Dr. Nicole Robinson Salt Creek Elementary School Principal; Rupley Elementary School Principal, Diana O'Donnell; Michele Lara, Salt Creek and DEA Exec. Board; Director of Fiscal Service, Janet Russo; Purchasing Assistant, Nicole Hansen; Lindsey Frank, SEL Coach; Jan Fisher, Coordinator of Purchasing and School Nutrition; Byrd Elementary School, Christine Cirrincione; Sara Magnafichi, Byrd Elementary School; Jodi Briggs, Devonshire; Nicola Avena, Rupley Elementary School; Salt Creek Elementary School, Emily Jordan

A scanned copy of the Guest Sign-In Sheet from April 2, 2018 is attached to minutes of this meeting (Attachment #1).

Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 STUDENT CELEBRATIONS

4.01 Grove Cluster - Rupley and Salt Creek Presentation

Mrs. Diana O'Donnell and Mrs. Nicola Avena (Rupley Elementary) and Dr. Nicole Robinson and Mrs. Emily Jordan (Salt Creek Elementary) introduced students from each school. The principals, teachers and students shared the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in District 59. The students ended the presentation with an invitation for Board members to participate in an SEL circle demonstration. [Click here](#) to view the slide presentation.

5.0 DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.01 Board Reorganization

- a. Adoption of Board Policy Manual
- b. Determination Of Length Of Office -- President, Vice President And Secretary To the Board Of Education
- c. Establishment of Stipend For The Board Secretary
- d. Nomination and Election of President
- e. Nomination and Election of Vice-President
- f. Nomination and Election of Secretary
- g. Set Time, Dates and Location for Regular Meetings of the Board of Education for the 2018/19 School Year
- h. Appointment of IASB Governing Board Representative

Mrs. Somogyi opened the discussion with an invitation for Board members to express interest if they like to run for an office or as the IASB Representative.

- Mrs. Osmanski expressed interest in running for Vice-President.
- Dr. Burns expressed interest in helping with the duties of Secretary on an interim basis if needed.
- Ms. Krinsky expressed interest in running for President.

Nominations and Elections of Officers of the Board of Education will take place at the April 23, 2018 Board of Education meeting.

5.02 Expanded Discussion on IL Every Student Succeeds Act

Dr. Fessler shared that the criteria is still under development. The board discussed the upcoming implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act for Illinois. To read the executive summary of the new act, please [click here](#).

Board members supported the idea of planning ahead on how best to communicate information about ESSA to parents.

Mrs. Schumacher stated her objections to the 80/20 dual language model and requested information on how the first two-way dual language students have done as far as mastering the English

language. Mrs. McAbee will provide information on those students' Access scores.

5.03 Evidenced Based Funding Model

Ms. Vickie Nissen shared a presentation on the new Evidenced Based Funding Model. [Click here](#) to see the slides.

6.0 COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mrs. Mary Cosenza Vicars addressed the Board of Education on multiple topics. A copy of her address is attached to the minutes of the meeting (Attachment #2).

Judy Cox addressed the Board of Education on the topic of the District 59 curriculum. A copy of her address is attached to the minutes of the meeting (Attachment #3).

Mr. Leo Cox addressed the Board of Education to highlight findings in some of the District's financial documents. A copy of his address is attached to the minutes of the meeting (Attachment #4).

Mr. Jim Stuber addressed the Board of Education to express concerns and opinions about District 59.

Mr. Dan Makowski addressed the Board of Education on the topic of student success and test scores.

Mrs. Jaime Esler addressed the Board of Education regarding her concern for the division that she sees in her community and on the Board. She shared her experience as a parent of a 3rd grade student at Juliette Low. A copy of her address is attached to the minutes of the meeting (Attachment #5).

A community member (Lynn) addressed the Board of Education to express her concerns about the education her child is receiving in District 59 and her concerns about academics in general.

A parent of a first grade dual language student at Juliette Low addressed the Board of Education on the topic of the dual language model and how she values/appreciates living in an area with a diverse population.

An Arlington Heights resident and parent of a Juliette Low student addressed the Board of Education to share her reasons for choosing to purchase a home in District 59 and to share her experience as a parent of a student attending Juliette Low.

8.01 PTAB Authorization to Intervene On Assessment Appeals

MOTION by Mrs. Roberts, seconded by Dr. Burns to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, an owner or manager of a parcel or parcels of real property located within the boundaries of the State of Illinois has the right to file an appeal challenging the assessed value of a parcel or parcels of real property with the State of Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board (“PTAB”); and

WHEREAS, an appeal before the PTAB seeks a reduction in the assessed value of the parcel or parcels; and

WHEREAS, a reduction in the assessed value of a parcel or parcels granted by the PTAB on property located within the boundaries of the Board of Education of Community Consolidated School District No. 59 will lead to the issuance of a real estate tax refund from the Board; and

WHEREAS, a taxing district has the right to intervene in proceedings before the PTAB in order to protect the taxing district’s revenue interest in the assessed value of a parcel or parcels; and

WHEREAS, the time period during which a taxing district may intervene is within 60 days after the taxing district’s receipt, from the local Board of Review, of notice of the filing of an appeal by an owner or manager of a parcel or parcels of real property; and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that it is necessary, desirable, advantageous, and in the public interest to defend the Board’s real property tax base by intervening in PTAB appeals filed on parcels within the boundaries of the Board.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Education of Community Consolidated School District No. 59 , Cook County, Illinois, as follows:

1. The Board finds that all of the recitals contained above are true and correct, and that the same are hereby incorporated herein by reference.
2. The Board hereby authorizes Franczek Radelet P.C., as its legal representative, to:
a) file a Request to Intervene in Appeal Proceedings in all 2015-2019 assessment-year appeals filed at the PTAB for which the Board receives notice from the Cook County Board of Review, and b) represent the Board’s interests in these proceedings.
3. All motions and resolutions or parts thereof in conflict with the provisions of this Resolution are, to the extent of such conflict, hereby repealed.

8.03 Ridge Family Center For Learning Inter-Session Programming Fee Proposal

MOTION by Mrs. Roberts, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the 2018/19 balanced calendar for the Ridge Family Center for Learning Elementary Program provides time during the school year for two inter-sessions: 1) September 24 - October 3, 2018 (8 days); and 2) April 1 - 5, 2019 (5 days);

WHEREAS, attendance at an inter-session is an addition to the school year calendar and families are required to pay a fee to participate in an inter-session;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education approve the following fee arrangements at the Ridge Family Center for Learning for the 2018/19 school year:

Sep/Oct 2018	Inter-session	(8 days)	\$160
Apr 2019	Inter-session	(5 days)	\$100

Adopted this 2nd day of April 2018, by the following roll call vote:

Roll Call	Ayes:	6	Burns, Krinsky, Osmanski, Roberts, Schumacher, and Somogyi
	Nays:	0	
	Absent:	1	Bhave
	Abstain:	0	

Motion Carried: 6-0-1-0

8.04 Proclamation for Volunteer Appreciation Week April 15-21, 2018

MOTION by Mrs. Roberts, seconded by Ms. Krinsky to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Community Consolidated School District 59 has the good fortune of many dedicated community and parent volunteers who regularly provide support and assistance to children and staff;

WHEREAS, Volunteers give unselfishly of their time and talents to assist children and staff in meeting the district's mission;

WHEREAS, National School Volunteer Week is a time to say "thank you" to our volunteers who make outstanding contributions to our school district; and

WHEREAS, members of the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education desire to recognize those who have contributed during a school year to help Community Consolidated School District 59 *Prepare Students to be Successful for Life*;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT April 17-21, 2018 is hereby proclaimed as School Volunteer Appreciation Week within Community

Consolidated School District 59 in recognition of the contributions provided by volunteers working throughout the 2017 - 2018 school year for the benefit of our children and staff.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the President and Secretary of the Board of Education will sign the proclamation attached hereto and a certified copy of the proclamation will be sent to each school within Community Consolidated School District 59.

Roll Call	Ayes:	6	Burns, Krinsky, Osmanski, Roberts, Schumacher, and Somogyi	
	Nays:	0		
	Absent:	1	Bhave	
	Abstain:	0		Motion Carried: 6-0-1-0

8.05 Approval of Enchanted Backpacks to Rupley School

MOTION by Mrs. Osmanski, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher to approve the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT on the 2nd day of April, 2018, the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education accepts the Enchanted Backpack donation of student and school supplies, with an estimated value of an additional \$9,000.00, from Enchanted Backpack for Rupley School.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT on the 2nd day of April, 2018, the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education accepts the Enchanted Backpack donation, 155 N. Wacker Drive, Suite 1680, Chicago, IL 60606.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Superintendent shall communicate to the donors, in writing, expressing the appreciation of the members of the Board of Education, and that these donations shall be listed in the “official” minutes of this meeting.

Roll Call	Ayes:	6	Burns, Krinsky, Osmanski, Roberts, Schumacher, and Somogyi	
	Nays:	0		
	Absent:	1	Bhave	
	Abstain:	0		Motion Carried: 6-0-1-0

8.06 Approval of Donors Choose Donation for Grove Junior High School

MOTION by Mrs. Roberts, seconded by Ms. Krinsky to approve the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT on the 2nd day of April, 2018, the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education supports the request to solicit donations in the amount of \$800.00 from Donors Choose, DonorsChoose.org, 134

West 37th Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10018 which when received will be used for four stand mixers for the FACS class at Grove Junior High School.

Roll Call	Ayes:	6	Burns, Krinsky, Osmanski, Roberts, Schumacher, and Somogyi	
	Nays:	0		
	Absent:	1	Bhave	
	Abstain:	0		Motion Carried: 6-0-1-0

9.0 SPECIAL INTEREST TOPICS

9.01 FOIA Requests

Ms. Zerfahs shared that there were three FOIA requests and all have been responded to.

10.0 NEW/CONTINUING BUSINESS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

10.01 Board Calendar

10.02 Date For Superintendent's Evaluation

Mrs. Somogyi stated that Mrs. Lange will reach out to the Board to find a date for the Superintendent's Evaluation.

11.0 REPORTS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Dr. Burns attended the North Cook Dinner along with Mrs. Somogyi, Mrs. Osmanski, and Mrs. Schumacher. He shared that from a conversation with one of the attorneys at that meeting, there could be a potential problem with how the Board goes into Closed Session due to taking a break before after motioning to go into Closed Session.

Dr. Fessler will get a legal opinion.

Mrs. Osmanski enjoyed the tour that student ambassadors provided of Conant High School and the legal presentation. Mrs. Osmanski shared that Elk Grove Village will be hosting a Celebration of Cultures on Friday, April 6, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. and the District 59's Got Talent event, sponsored by the District 59 Education Foundation, will be held on April 21, 2018 at Harper.

Mrs. Schumacher shared that there will be a celebration at Clearmont on May 25th for 4th grade students who participated in the Cursive Kids class.

Dr. Burns shared that he and Mrs. Somogyi will be attending the National School Board Association Conference in San Antonio later in the week.

12.0 REPORTS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S TEAM

There were no reports.

13.0 CLOSED SESSION

MOTION at 9:32 p.m by Dr. Burns, seconded by Mrs. Schumacher to adopt the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT on the 2nd day of April 2018, the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education recess in a closed meeting for discussion of “The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the District...”, Collective negotiation matters between the District and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1,2)

Roll Call Ayes: 5 Burns, Krinsky, Osmanski, Schumacher, and Somogyi
 Nays: 0
 Absent: 2 Bhave and Roberts
 Abstain: 0 Motion Carried: 5-0-2-0

Mrs. Roberts entered the room at 9:33 p.m.

14.0 RECONVENE

MOTION at 9:38 p.m by Mrs. Osmanski, seconded by Dr. Burns to adopt the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT on the 2nd day of April 2018, the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education meeting is reconvened.

Roll Call Ayes: 6 Burns, Krinsky, Osmanski, Roberts, Schumacher, and Somogyi
 Nays: 0
 Absent: 1 Bhave
 Abstain: 0 Motion Carried: 6-0-1-0

15.0 ADJOURNMENT

MOTION at 9:39 p.m by Dr. Burns, seconded by Mrs. Osmanski to adopt the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT on the 2nd day of April, 2018, the Community Consolidated School District 59 Board of Education meeting is adjourned.

ATTACHMENT #1 SIGN IN SHEET FROM 4/2/2018

GUESTS	
NAME	ADDRESS
Sara Magnafichi	Byrd
Scott Foula	EGV ✓
TONY DAMPTZ JR.	EGV
Rob Bohanek	Ridge
Phil Stevens	Grave
SARA DRUCKER	SALT CREEK
Loranza Roberts	EGV Ruptey
Jina McHorney	Salt Creek
Griselda Tapia	Salt Creek
Nicole Robinson	Salt Creek
Denalia Roberts	EGV Ruptey
Chen mei	Salt Creek
Nicola Avena	Ruptey
Ginnswey Franck	AD Building
Nicole Hansen	AD Building

Emily Wasmel	Byrd
Kathy Azickin	1007 W. Weaver, Arlington Heights
Randy Kester	EGV Ruptey
June Esler	AH
Jodi Briggs-Drey	AH
McHorney	SC
Judy & Leo Cox	Elk Grove

ATTACHMENT #2

Mary Cosenza Vicars April 2, 2018

Why does she care? She doesn't have any kids in the school. Her voice shouldn't count. She doesn't have any skin in the game. She is mainly concerned about her property values.

These are some of the comments that I have heard since I have been involved in District 59 issues:

I have lived in my home for almost 31 years. I was President of the Homeowners Association for two terms. I have helped run local mayoral and trustee campaigns. I helped remove a nightclub from our neighborhood because it violated village ordinance. I got some of my neighbors to treat their ash trees when the village would not treat them for the ash borer disease. I was on a commission that draft a village ordinance which the board approved. I was very active in the PTO and on school committees at Juliette Low and Holmes. Currently I volunteer with poor families. I am not here to brag but to ask you, do I sound like a person who has no skin in the game? Does that also mean that only two of the seven board members have skin in the game because only two have children in 59? Whether I have convinced you that I do have skin in the game, the government thinks I do because it allows me to vote for my District 59 Board members.

Do I care about my property values? I don't think anyone in the room can honestly say that they don't care. I bought my home almost 31 years ago. If I sold today, I would make money on my home. Can some of you who bought shortly before 2008 say the same thing? So, who is more concerned with property values—the younger families or us older folks?

Others say that when I voice my concerns at a board meeting or on social media, including Board member Janice Krinsky, I am negatively bashing the school. Keeping quiet is what we have done, and where has that gotten us? For a long time, folks have moved from District 59 to get into a better school district and others will continue to do so, until the scores improve. What is different about today than years ago is that young families look on the Internet to check out the schools, before they look at a house. We have low scores and a downward trend, cause for concern. When Joan Burke read what Zillow said, "You are better off buying a home in 57 rather than 59," do you think that she was the only one that read that? When you look at Juliette Low and how few students have met or exceeded standards on this test, does that make you want to buy a home in my neighborhood if you would like to send your children to public school? When Art said that there are only 100 neighborhood children attending Low, while neighboring districts are bursting at the seams with students, doesn't that tell you something? When children of folks in the neighborhood buy homes in other parts of AH, when our homes are more reasonable, doesn't that also tell you something?

So, we can only say positive things about our district, but until we start working together to address the serious academic issues that our schools face, we are hiding our heads in the sand. You can have your art fairs, talent shows, Pepsi Challenge, but I want higher PARCC scores. How would improving PARCC scores hurt our kids and hurt our communities, as some have accused me? It's time that we work together to look at how we can improve the academics in our schools for all kids—not just the those in TDP or the English-speaking kids in the Dual Language Program. It's time we think about all our kids in the District—not just your own. I would say that all of us have some skin in the game.

Attachment #3

Judith Cox Presentation to the District 59 Board- April 2, 2018

I'm still looking for a District 59 curriculum. In deciding what to speak on today, my mind was all over the place. So I decided to revisit an area that I find puzzling and troubling..the District 59 curriculum.

A good curriculum, as defined by multiple research based sites, is “ built on evidence based pedagogy, research, introspection and shared experiences”. The curriculum is WHAT is taught- the assignments that are given, the books that are read, the projects that are assigned, the videos used, the readings referred to, the units being emphasized, the separate lessons taught daily, and the vocabulary What I found in District 59 were ‘learning experiences’ that were either so specific as to be meaningless or so broad that it was difficult to know what were the expectations on the part of the learner.

A well-designed curriculum means upper grades build on prior knowledge learned in the lower grades. Expectations, knowledge and skills at each grade level should be the same across the district so that a student moving from one school to another will be learning the same material. (although the material may be presented in a different way depending on the teacher) . A good curriculum should reliably address the same learning goals and hold the same opportunity for student achievement across the board.

Before I came to speak today I had to use what I had been taught, or learned, to plan, write and organize my thoughts. I read materials, both in paper form and on-line, jotted down ideas from what I remember as a learner, and put together this presentation. This is called using Prior knowledge.

It is the job of the primary school to conscientiously and purposefully build prior knowledge, vocabulary, and background content, so the students can understand new ideas and build a foundation on which to tackle more complex projects and problems. Children need to have a rich oral, reading and writing vocabulary They need to be taught important words (words that help a child better understand the world...animals, occupations, geography etc.) Students need to be exposed to new words multiple times before they can “own” them. They need to “live’ these new words. They need to enjoy words and love learning. Children in all grades need to be exposed to a range of increasingly complex literature and informational texts and tasks. Simply having the content available in libraries and on line is not enough. Children need adults to guide them to the content and adults to help them understand it. And I have yet to find any reference to the role of parents in their children’s education.

What are the students of District 59 reading? I can find no reference to any written material or books that I can access. I have not found any reference to terms, vocabulary, facts, shared readings, word studies, or specifics as to the informational texts and books used. All of the “experts” referred to by the District sent me to websites with materials for sale. What the District owns or uses from these “experts” is still unknown to me.

In education change is expected...Districts adopt or develop programs as needed and review of curriculum and change is a constant. But in the case of 59 they eliminated most of the old curriculum and started from scratch. From what the District has told the public, there was no time for the “experts” to adjust to the new standards. I find this hard to believe since all of the other districts in the area have managed to find and adopt a new curriculum. It seems that our District’s curriculum was developed as needed. They are still in the midst of the initial development and are at the stage where the curriculum is subject to a vigorous review process. In the meantime.....

If the district is only interested in evidence that fits their ideology and if they are ignoring other ideas and evidence that doesn’t fit into their agenda, they are doing the children, the parents, and the community a disservice. We all deserve more, especially our children. Their education is their future.

Attachment #4

Leo J. Cox
660 F Versailles Circle
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

Recently, I have had a chance to review a number of financial documents that are found in School District 59 reports that are located on the internet. These more than one hundred page long reports are long on data but short on narratives. They are backward looking, but they offer insights into the direction the District is heading. I don't have a formal background in finance so as a lay person, the volume of data is somewhat intimidating. As a result, I have a number of questions which I will be submitting in the future. However, some things just jumped out at me during my reviews.

Debt service costs as a percentage of budget continue to trend downward, which is fine, but the cash available, or money in the checkbook, as represented by the July 1 Beginning Balances data, has taken a precipitous drop in the last two years.

The administration staff's Organizational Chart has morphed from 2009's seven "boxes" for administrative personnel positions to fifteen boxes in the 2017 budget, with three of those boxes listing "Coordinators" - plural. Times change and we have to change with them, but when more than doubling administrative staff positions is coupled with declining test scores, it seems to indicate that something is wrong – somewhere. We have to figure out where. Others will talk about curricula and methods, but it is also important to see how the money available is being utilized for the benefit of the students.

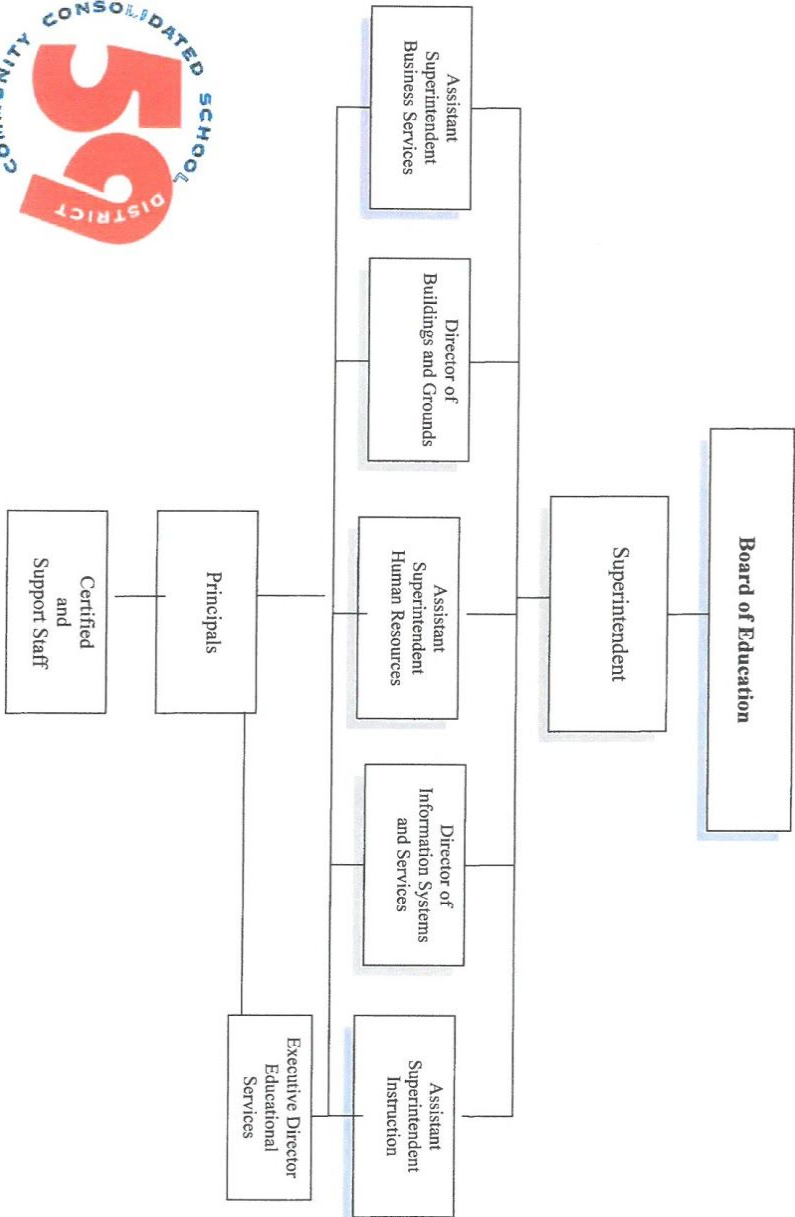
For instance, in the District's Long Range Fiscal Plan there is a statement: "As a result of the presentations from Forecast 5 (a vendor) and with the Board of Education's approval, the 5Cast and 5Sight software modules will provide the Board of Education with tools needed

for financial modeling, reporting, benchmarking and forecasting.” Great. So, is the \$132,000 paid to the Skyward company in 2017, for services described in their web site as “Financial management and human resources software”, a duplication of software or did Forecast 5 just fail to work out as promised. As I said, narratives are missing.

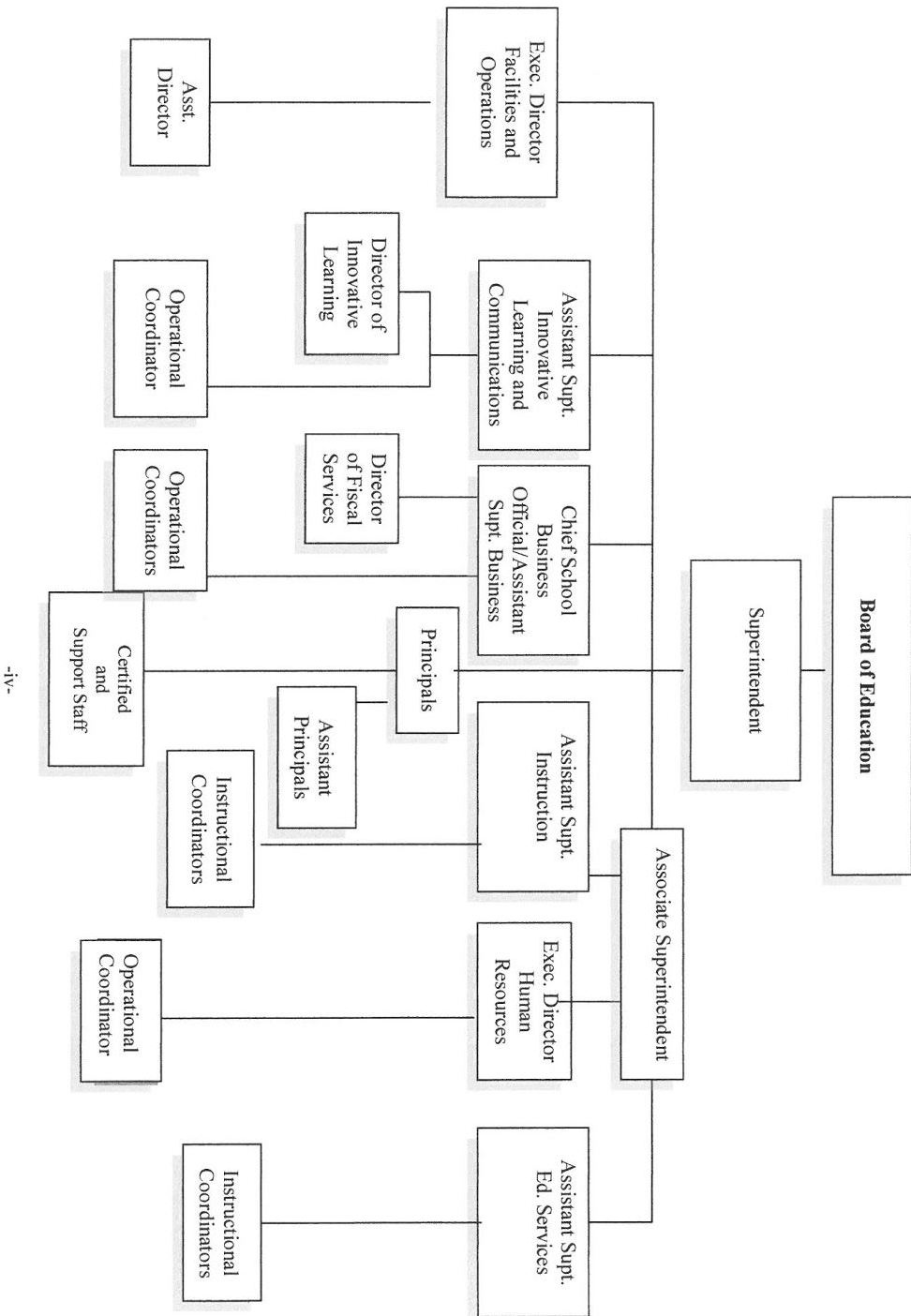
The most current Vendors over \$25,00 list which is for 2016-17, has some things that need more explanation than just a line item mention. Based ^{again} on vendor company web sites, two companies that provide school and office furniture either supplied, or billed, more than \$999,000 dollars for their products last year. Firms whose web sites described themselves as professional development and teacher training services were awarded nearly a quarter of a million dollars (\$221,000), and an individual whose web site describes him more as a Tony Robbins type motivational speaker than an educator, was paid \$115,000. Website design for \$75,000 dollars?

At a time when the District is searching for an additional five million dollars in budget cuts, which must not detract from students’ learning, it is time to look at the cost of such big-ticket items in addition to the “cutting around the edges” list that has already been developed. The District appears to have the money. Now is the time to make sure that that money is totally focused squarely on the children of the District.

**Community Consolidated School District 59
Organizational Chart**



Community Consolidated School District 59
 Organizational Chart



ATTACHMENT #5

My name is Jaime Esler, and I have a 3rd grader at Juliette Low. Having a child in a D59 school means that I have a front row seat to his education and what goes on in the classrooms. It is so hard to sit at these meetings, or see things posted on social media, that are blatantly incorrect. I can understand how the mistakes happen – the people making those statements don't have that same front row seat as I do. But the problem is that other people take these misstatements as 100% truth, and that snowballs into more outrage, more anger and more inaccurate statements. It is a vicious cycle. The only way to break the cycle is to educate yourself more on what happens in the schools, and to not generalize about all students and all schools.

As we have all seen, words are a very powerful tool. And because of their power, they should be used responsibly.

I can only shudder to think about what would happen if a parent looking to enroll his or her children into a D59 school came to one of these meetings. A prospective parent should walk in expecting to get a glimpse into the great things being done in the district, and get an understanding of how issues were being dealt with. Instead, that prospective parent would see a divided community, but more importantly, a divided board. So much time is being spent blaming and not listening to one another, and the people that are suffering as a result are the very children we should be fighting for. We can, and should, do better.

There are always ways to improve. Every company I've ever worked for had goals that needed to be achieved. And at every job I've ever had I was measured on my progress throughout the year. D59 should also be held to goals. I have no problem with that. I do, however, have a problem with the sole measuring stick of our student's academic success being an inaccurate standardized test. Teaching to a test will not make our children better 21st century learners. Teaching to a test will not make these children better employees. In my opinion, teaching to a test will not raise our property values.

I'm a tax attorney, and as part of my job, I am responsible for hiring people. I can promise you that I would never hire a candidate that could recite the tax code to me. That's a useless skill. I have a copy of the Code at my desk. I can look anything up that I need. I would, however, hire an individual who can problem solve – who can analyze the sections of the Code and formulate an answer to an issue. Who can think outside the box and apply different concepts and rules to the problem at hand. Who can explain the issues to me. That is a valuable skill to have. Teaching those skills and concepts will make our children better 21st century learners and set them up to be successful in life.

I spoke last meeting that despite low PARCC scores, our children are thriving in the classrooms. I would like to provide another example. The first-grade class at Juliette Low studies poetry. The kids are taught about and write different types of poems, such as haikus, narrative poetry, limerick poetry, and free poetry. At the end of the unit, they invite the parents to a "Poet's Day Lunch," and they stand up and read their poems to the audience. There's your glass half full – an example of great things being done in classrooms. The assignment was challenging, fun and, at least for my son, allowed his imagination to soar. It made him excited to go to school and learn. And again, that assignment won't be reflected in a PARCC test score.

Thank you.