

## LFHS pays private, out-of-state “Special Ed” boarding school tuition, room & board--

Documents released pursuant to a [FOIA request](#) and our own independent research reveals District 115 spent over \$1 million for 2014-2015 and is on track to pay over \$1 million in 2015-2016 for private facility, Special Ed payments. Out-of-state room, board and tuition payments comprise the lion’s share of these private provider disbursements.

For example, from June 2014 through February 2016, the District has paid [Bellefaire Jewish Children’s Center](#) in Cleveland, Ohio **over \$438,894.66 for a single student** (we deduce this from the form of the bills and the District’s redaction of a single student name and date of birth in its response to our FOIA request). Another example is [AIM House in Boulder, Colorado](#) where the District spent over \$80,000 for nine months’ room & board and tuition and even ACT test prep tutoring.

Other private, out-of-state boarding schools receiving tens of thousands in District funding for room, board and tuition include [Summit Preparatory School](#) in Kalispell, Montana, [LaEuropa Academy](#) in Utah, [New Haven Residential](#) (various Utah sites), and [New England Center for Children](#) (Massachusetts and Abu Dhabi).

According to the [Illinois State Board of Education](#),

“Nonpublic special education programs provide educational, therapeutic and/or residential services to students with disabilities. . . Typically, students placed in 14-7.02 programs have *such severe and perhaps complicated clinical and educational needs that school districts may opt to refer their students to outside district placements after exploring other least restrictive options.* (See: [http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/nonpublic\\_se.htm](http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/nonpublic_se.htm), emphasis supplied).”

Under the “Funding” tab on the website, the State Board of Education states: “The approved Nonpublic Special Education Programs are privately run, yet are publicly funded through a referral process from school districts. *A district will receive no reimbursement for students who are placed in a program that is not approved by ISBE.* Additionally, a district is not financially responsible if a parent unilaterally places their child in a nonpublic special education program.” (Emphasis supplied).

To determine whether a privately run, Nonpublic Special Education program is approved by the ISBE, thus making the referring District eligible for at least some reimbursement from the state, one enters criteria at this [website](http://www.hbug.k12.il.us/PrivateFacility/Default.aspx) (<http://www.hbug.k12.il.us/PrivateFacility/Default.aspx>) to get a [list of all approved ISBE providers](#).

We entered criteria for several of the more expensive Special Ed providers revealed by District 115 in the FOIA. They did not turn up on the ISBE approved list and presumably the District will thus not be reimbursed.

Additionally, we do not presently know whether Illinois Special Ed placement [protocol](#) was observed in placing students at any of these facilities as no documents on that point were produced (redacting identifying information) pursuant to the FOIA.

We also do not know whether the District Administration understood or anticipated or simply didn’t care that the state would not reimburse the District either in whole or in part for non-approved, private in- and out-of-state Special Education Programs, leaving District 115 taxpayers fully responsible for paying the bills. Finally, given the plethora of *ISBE approved*, Special Ed day schools in the northern

suburbs and greater Chicago-land area, one wonders whether these out-of-state, boarding school placements were proper on any level, especially as the District's 2015-2016 budget shows an over \$1,000,000 deficit. <http://webprod1.isbe.net/illearn/ASP/LstARCDDData.asp?Show=A>

(One last budget note: estimated disbursements/ expenditures in the budget for this school year [2015-2016](#) (p. 11 of 18) measure over \$16 million for "regular" programs, nearly \$3 million for (in-District) Special Ed, over \$1 million for "Adult/Continuing education" programs and nearly \$2 million for "Interscholastic Programs." Oddly, "Special Education Programs-Private Tuition" line item shows **zero** disbursements/expenditures under "10-EDUCATIONAL FUND". It is not captured on p. 12 under PAYMENTS TO OTHER DISTRICTS AND GOVT UNITS" as "Payments for Special Education Programs"--as that covers "in-state" only. Where is the budget line item for Special Ed out-of-state room, board and tuition on the 2015-2016 budget? The "Expenditure Detail Report by Account" produced in response to our FOIA appears to capture these disbursements/expenditures under the "10" Fund and denotes them as "Tuition-Special Education." (See p. 57 of 65). Yet they don't seem identified as such on the 2015-2016 budget. Finally: estimated disbursements/expenditures on "Gifted Programs"? **Zero.**)

### **Chump Change-- Why is LFHS paying 56% more for its Communications Director than neighboring school districts pay?**

Over the transom came an [Anonymous Document](#) which, coupled with D67 and D115 publicly available documents, suggests the part-time D67 and part-time D115 Director of Communications earns substantially higher (56% higher) than her contemporaries<sup>1</sup>. Allow us to explain:

In July 2015, Superintendent Simeck, the self-described "CEO" of these organizations, wrote two, nearly identical letters to the [District 67](#) and [District 115](#) Boards, recommending a *part-time, all-in salary* of \$104,098 at D67 and a *part-time, all-in salary* of \$97,250 for the Director of Communications position at both Districts, with both jobs held by the same person (hence, part-time for each job).

Simeck's described "cabinet level" Communications Director is *paid at a full-time, per year rate* of over \$208,000 for D67 work and *paid at a full-time, per year rate* of \$195,000 for D115 work (i.e. full-time rates are double her half-time pay for each job). But since both jobs are "part-time", she receives exactly half that amount, about \$201,348, starting August 2015 (She received an additional \$7,395 for scantily itemized work during late June, early July after the Chala Holland debacle, [see p. 4 of 10](#) here where no hourly rate is specified and tasks only cursorily described).

The Anonymous Document drafter's position is that the average rate of **per-year pay** for Communications Directors in comparable area High Schools and Middle Schools (excluding D67 and D115 from the calculation) is **\$117,407 (base and benefits) per year**. Thus, LFHS's Communications Director, paid **\$208,000 all-in per year, makes over 56% more than average** Communications Directors on the North Shore.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The document describes a 4 day a week/10 month contract for these sums but the 2015-2016 contract is allegedly 12 months and 5 days a week, as will be shown. This isn't relevant, however, to the basic assumption that a true, half-time salary, when doubled, is a full-time salary.

<sup>2</sup> We have not broken this down into per student spending: suffice to say both New Trier's and Libertyville's Communications Directors who appear to earn **\$155,000 all-in, take home about 26% less** while serving about 2400 and 400 more students, respectively, than LFHS's Communications Director (see [www.illinoisreportcard.com](http://www.illinoisreportcard.com) for populations)

Superintendent Simeck justifies this over 56% upcharge for Mrs. Whipple in two nearly identical letters to District 67 and 115 boards. Here's what he wrote in his July 2015 [letter to the D67 Board](#):

*At its most recent meeting, District 115 voted 7-0 to approve a similar one-year agreement with Whipple Consulting. From her 20+ years working with both District 115 and 67, Mrs. Whipple has vast connections with media around the area. She is much more than a media consultant. She is a community resident, has a longer history than any administrator in the District, and is remarkably connected.*

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*High wealth districts do a lot of processing, and part of that processing is spending time with the users of the district and their representatives. This is one of many areas of particular strength.*

Other than being “remarkably connected”, “processing” or “spending time with users of the district” (not defined), how else is this salary justified? He continues,

*Because of her many years in the industry, Mrs. Whipple is experienced and accustomed to working with the ever-changing landscape of media relations and the changes in staffing for markets like Lake Forest/Lake Bluff. The advent of the Lake Forest Leader and the recent changes in Patch are evidence of those in just the past few months.*

(And see, e.g. the [last link](#), below).

Simeck goes on:

*Customer Service Orientation – Mrs. Whipple is able to speak “as a mom” and as a veteran of the district and industry. She helps mentor new staff, and is totally unafraid to confront customer service missteps from any of our staff.*

Speak “as a mom”. Mentor new staff. Fearless in confronting “customer service missteps.” “Process users”. *All at the same time!*

*Steady and Calming Presence – Mrs. Whipple is a voice of reason on the executive team. She has a historical perspective that does not exist elsewhere in the organization and at [sic] her executive team.* (Emphasis added)

There's a voice of reason in District leadership?

Simeck concludes:

*Finally and importantly, as the CEO of the organization, it is my considered and clear opinion that Mrs. Whipple is a critical and necessary partner on our executive leadership team who is at the peak of her professional [sic] in terms of experience and performance.*

The Talented Mrs. Whipple's contract expires this year. Will it be renewed?

**Finally—is your child doomed to remain just an “extra” in someone else's made-for-TV-movie?**

<http://www.wciu.com/videos/youandme/principal-chala-holland-s-inspirational-story>

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