

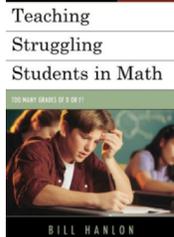
Nevada Public Education



Throwing United Way Under the Proverbial Bus

Bill Hanlon

Community leaders that are most responsible for CCSD's demise, from a district that was recognized nationally as the fastest improving in the nation a decade ago to a state that is now ranked dead last, by diverting educational funds to their cronies are now going to throw United Way under the proverbial bus.



Millions of our tax dollars today are being diverted to people who hide behind organizations that seem to benefit themselves or their friends. These people and their educational profiteering non-profits know full well public education is underfunded in Nevada, yet they continually use their connections to get education's tax dollars, resulting in our students' education being sabotaged.

Rarely, do you actually hear the people's names behind these organizations. It seems our community leaders like to "hide" behind an organizational name rather than put their own name out there. Other "so-called" community leaders conceal their dealings by funneling funds through programs that don't have to release information.

A case in point, United Way was asked by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and a few community "leaders" to funnel privately donated funds to the much-maligned Achievement School District (ASD) to pay, amongst other things, the \$155,000 salary of Jana Wilcox-Lavin, ASD's Superintendent in Residence with the help of a new non-profit, Opportunity 180, run by former State Board of Education Vice President Allison Serafin with a \$10 million dollar gift of your tax money. These are the same people who wanted to give student information to Celerity Educational Group, a company under investigation by the FBI for fraud! Further, these are the same people that wanted to allow Celerity Educational Group to take over and manage one of the Clark County School District schools on the State's "Rising Star" (formerly "Underperforming") list. This, of course, had to be halted after Celerity was raided by the FBI in January, 2017 and their records seized for investigation of egregious wrong-doing! ASD and NDE kept pushing Celerity despite warning.

In September 2016 CCSD Superintendent Skorkowsky sanctioned public informational meetings, under the leadership of Dr. Jeff Geihs, Associate Superintendent of the Turnaround Zone, to inform school communities about the possible impact ASD could have on them. Geihs, accompanied by Trustees, staff from CCSD Community and Government Relations and Human Resources, met with school communities whose schools would have met the qualifiers for ASD conversion based on NDE's proposed regulatory language that has not been passed. At that time,

CCSD began publicly stating the factual and publicized concerns regarding these allegations of fraud, wrong-doing, and corruption charges against Celerity! Yet, ASD and NDE were driven and seemed to be willing to overlook these horrific concerns, which proved to be a concern of the FBI in January 2017 as well! But, I digress.

Yes. You heard me right. Jana Wilcox-Lavin, the Superintendent in Residence running Nevada's ASD is pocketing approximately \$13,000.00 per month through United Way of Southern Nevada. This was done despite the ASD legislation written to allow and accept private donations to go to the employer, in this case the NDE. Why? So the donors could conceal their identity. See, the United Way of Southern Nevada is not susceptible to public records requests. Public employees like NDE are.

As I understand the law, a person who reports to a public employer is considered a public employee, which allows the public access to information like their salary and expenditures. The community "hotshots" who don't want to be identified use organizations to conceal their identities.

Are the well-intentioned CCSD Employees, whose payroll deductions go to the United Way twice per month, aware that the United Way supports and endorses this effort that conceals the identities of people who are trying to undermine public education? CCSD has a moral obligation to notify these well-intentioned employees that the very non-profit they support is supporting the ASD and concealing identities and, if they got their way, place students' personal information and education at risk.

Without a doubt, Ms. Wilcox-Lavin is a public employee, and paid through United Way of Southern Nevada, a non-profit 501c3 obligated/sworn to be non-partisan. These community "leaders" wanted to conceal their identities by funneling funds for the ASD through United Way. But United Way won't (can't) release the names of our community leaders associated with this project unless they give them permission. Wilcox-Lavin knows who they are, she should release the information so as not to harm United Way, but then there's the money. Remember, these people say they "care" about what happens in the community. We have seen how they "cared" for our students' education and personal information.

The community leaders don't want to be identified because they are supposed to be "helping" public education, the release of their names will identify what they are really doing – undermining, sabotaging and crippling public education.

To put pressure on United Way of Southern Nevada and those cowardly "leaders" who won't put their name on their underhanded activities, discussions are now taking place to have educators donate to some other worthy cause rather than United Way because they have become complicit in the cover-up. Now, my guess is the community "leaders" would rather have United Way's programs cut rather than have their own names released – cowards.

NDE and Nevada's conflicted State Board of Education have demonstrated that taking emphasis off the classroom and rewarding friends with tax money has resulted in the state's educational ranking going from the fastest improving in the nation to dead last in the nation. Under the

leadership of Elaine Wynn, Dale Erquiga and Brian Sandoval, the focus was taken off students' classroom experiences learning and replaced it with rewarding their buddies.

Now, with the assistance of the NDE and these gutless and nameless wonders, an organization like United Way of Southern Nevada, will see donations that used to go to them go to other organizations that won't unwittingly get in bed with community and state "leaders" who are undermining education.

That's the same thing that NDE and these leaders' actions did with educational tax dollars – shifting the funding to their friends in these non-profits that has resulted in their directors earning \$400,000.00 per year and sabotaging Nevada's students' education. Dealing with these gutless wonders in education, students got hurt and changed the achievement trajectory from the fastest improving in the nation to a rank of dead last. Now, the actions of these same people will hurt the poorest in our community by running over United Way by the proverbial bus.

NDE and its employee, Wilcox-Lavin, cannot afford to continue to conceal the truth. They should not be doing the public's business behind closed doors. No more cover-ups – no more hiding. The neediest in our community should not have to suffer or compete with the wealthy or politically connected.

For those that want to ***“Be Engaged”*** in education, the first thing you should realize is programs are only as good as the teachers. If what you are doing is not impacting classroom education, then you should ask yourself what the engagement is about? Children need experienced, qualified teachers – not two-year commitments. They need teachers who have acquired instructional & assessment strategies, who have resources that support those strategies. Students need textbooks aligned with the new standards, students need state tests that are aligned locally and nationally. Students need reasonable class sizes – who believes 40 students in an algebra class is reasonable? Students and teachers need supplies and resources that enhance learning. Because we have so many first and second year teachers, they need to have professional development in the content they teach to help their students learn.

What we don't need is more people sabotaging public education and diverting money to their friends. And, we certainly don't need more sneaks.

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