



**BCSD Fact Checker**

Date: July, 2019

Mission: To inspire, engage, educate and empower every student.

Misinformation:	Correct Information:
<p><b>Source:</b> Online petition with Change.org</p>	
<p>In 2016 she spent \$25,000 of BCSD funds on lawyers to fight a simple Public Records Request under the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) and lost in court</p>	<p>The lawsuit was against the Blaine County School District. The Superintendent followed the advice of the Board Chair and the District's attorney. The lawsuit period dated from June 8th through October 16th, 2016. The total amount of legal expenses incurred during that time was \$16,590.80. This is a combination of the law offices of Adam B. King and John Ashby of Hawley Troxell.</p>
<p>Currently, Dr. Holmes is paying BCSD general fund money to multiple attorneys to defend her against multiple lawsuits: she spent \$5,500 on legal bills in Feb, 2019 and nearly \$8,000 in March. April and May bills will likely be much higher, as she continues to meet with attorneys and, for example, insists on fighting an expensive 1st Amend lawsuit that could have been settled with an apology. A recent history of her high legal bills is below:in 2015-16, BCSD spent ~\$69,000 on legal fees, in 2016-17 BCSD spent ~\$71,000 on legal fees, in 2017-18, BCSD spent ~\$68,000 on legal fees</p>	<p>Legal fees include review of policy, contracts, bids, public records requests, insurance matters, human resource matters, student matters, and liquidation of school-related property. Whenever legal documents are involved, the Superintendent, Board Clerk, and/or Director of Finance seek legal counsel. \$187,950 was budgeted for the 2019-20 fiscal year for Purchased Services. The budget is approved by the Board of Trustees.</p>
<p>She has lavished the bloated – and growing – BCSD administrative staff with exorbitant benefits, including full funding of THREE retirement plans, five insurance policies, cell phones, laptops, and a variety of other perquisites unbecoming public servants.</p>	<p>The budget was reduced by \$2.5 million including cutting administrative positions of the Assistant Superintendent, Director of Transportation, Accounting Manager, and one Teaching and Learning position since 2015-16. More authority and decision-making have been delegated to the schools. This will be the third year that the Board has passed a balanced budget that does not use reserve funds, and instead has actually grown the District's reserves by approximately \$1.0 Million through the end of the 2017-18 school year.</p> <p>The District provides one retirement plan for all staff members as required by the State of Idaho. For administrators, certified, and classified staff, the District pays a portion of the employee contribution as well. Administrators have a second retirement plan provided by the District which was started in 1985 as a way to attract administrators. Administrators lost family insurance benefits during the negotiations and agreed to a salary schedule in order to save the district money in the future through a cap and smaller increases between steps. All benefits are the same for administrators/directors and certified staff with the exception of the second retirement plan.</p>
<p>In 2017-18, the extra administrators retirement plans (i.e. beyond the ONE required by state law) cost BCSD \$423,000. For a district of 3,400 students, 23 administrators cost taxpayers \$15,312 per day, just in salary and retirement.</p>	<p>For a district of 3,400 students with 530 employees, the District spent \$44.3 Million (rounded) from the General Fund for salary and benefits expenses in the 2018-19 school year, which is approximately 81% of the General Fund budget. The cost of salary and benefits for 22 administrators is approximately 7% of the 2019-20 General Fund budget. All administrators work more days than teachers and other school-based staff.</p>

<p>She has dramatically grown central administration headcount including a PR Department that costs north of \$250,000 per year. (A PR Department that the public specifically said they did not want.</p>	<p>District administration has been reduced. Eliminated positions include: Assistant Superintendent, Director of Transportation, Accounting Manager, and one position in Teaching and Learning. One position has been added at the school level: an assistant principal shared between Hailey Elementary and Hemingway STEAM schools.</p>
<p>She pursued actions that led school administrators to unionize (very rare) and, as a result, these admins received significant raises (which she denies, but is matter of public record) ... they now cost the district more than ever.</p>	<p>The Board of Trustees pursued actions that led school administrators to unionize at the <a href="#">April 2016 Board of Trustees meeting</a>. One-time salary increases allowed the District to move administrators to a salary schedule that provides a 1% increase with a cap at 20 years vs. the previous 1.5% per year with no cap.</p> <p>A comparison of the <a href="#">Certified (teachers) Salary Schedule and the Salary Schedule for Administrators</a> shows that the highest paid teachers have a daily rate of \$490 while the daily rate for Administrators at levels A, B and C (Directors) have a smaller daily rate.</p>
<p>She bluffed the callow Board of Trustees into renewing her contract – with a big raise – for an additional 3 years, 2 years before it expired. She told the Board she was a "finalist" for a job with another district. The other offer was never substantiated. The buffaloed Board rushed to renew her contract and added a one-year severance provision (meaning she gets a full year of pay if she is not fired for cause).</p>	<p>The Superintendent salary is \$180,208. The Superintendent's contract addendum ties her salary increases to the same increases provided for staff.</p>
<p>She has regularly ignored community feedback on important issues (e.g., on: spending priorities, communications / public relations department, school calendar, future of the community campus, part time employment for WRHS' outstanding college counselor to transition the department). She is deft at shutting down civil dialog with arcane — and often invented — legalism.</p>	<p>Please read the <a href="#">2016-17 budget</a> for a list of \$1.3 million in savings, including reducing the Communications department budget.</p> <p>The school calendar decision is made by the Board of Trustees. Wood River High School desires a full time college counselor, not half time, in order to best serve students. The decisions regarding how to use the WRHS staff allocation belongs to the School Principal and the Building Leadership Team. The decision is not made by the District Office or the Superintendent. As evidenced by the <a href="#">public comment at Board of Trustees' meetings</a>, the public is fully engaged in exercising their First Amendment rights within the Board of Trustees' parameters for public comment.</p>

<p>She has named herself chairperson of every advisory committee, thereby controlling what the Trustees see and hear from the committees. Community members on those committees are out-voted by the employees Holmes has assigned to them. The Policy Committee, in particular, has been controlled by Holmes for several years now, resulting in BCSD Policies that are extremely restrictive for staff, students and the public, while giving the Superintendent the lion's share of power and control, even over the Trustees.</p>	<p>The Board of Trustees requested Dr. Holmes to chair the committees as per <a href="#">Board Policy 220</a>. She does not vote in the committee meetings. She does facilitate and take notes. Any member of the public is welcome to attend the meetings and make a comment.</p>
<p>In the rare cases when her stacked advisory committees do not support her policies (as the teachers staffed grading committee did not do re: her new, cockamamie grading schema) she simply rams the policy through her "rubber stamp" board.</p>	<p>Teachers have been working on standards based learning and how to report on what standards students have learned or grading for four years. A small group of principals and district administrators have facilitated these committees and continue to do so. The Superintendent does not attend these meetings.</p>

<p>She lords over the committee that makes recommendations as to which students get locally-sourced college scholarship money. This helps her strike fear in the hearts of students.</p>	<p>Dr. Holmes served once on the Jim Lewis Scholarship Committee in 2016 at the invitation of the Blaine County Education Foundation. This is the only time she has served on any scholarship committee in BCSD. She does help Hailey Rotary raise funds for student scholarships and delights in attending the scholarship presentations at each high school.</p>
<p>She refused to act/investigate when informed by parents of salacious behavior between a high school administrator and staff member. And, between a staff member and students. Only when there was a big public outcry did she say it was "investigated." Yet, many of the alleged victims have testified that they were never contacted.</p>	<p>Any violation of policy is taken seriously, as evidenced by past actions taken with staff who have violated policy and put students at risk of harm. Evidence and/or details must be presented in order to warrant either a grievance or facilitate an investigation.</p>
<p>She has falsely accused a senior BCSD executive and a board member of having sexual relations, thereby resulting in another lawsuit, this time for slander.</p>	<p>There is no lawsuit.</p>

<p>She has ignored several internal complaints of a hostile work environment, harassment, bullying and retaliation. Multiple excellent employees and teachers have recently left BCSD as a result.</p>	<p>Any violation of policy is taken seriously, as evidenced by past actions taken with staff who have violated policy and put students at risk of harm. Evidence and details must be presented in order to warrant either a grievance or investigation.</p>
<p>She needlessly censored a student representative's report to the Board that politely highlighted students' dissatisfaction with a change to graduation date, refused to apologize, and now faces a federal civil rights lawsuit over freedom of speech.</p>	<p>The district is prohibited from discussing pending litigation.</p>
<p>She needlessly shut down a student's harmless A.P. Government class survey, refused to apologize, and now faces a federal civil rights lawsuit over free speech.</p>	<p>The district is prohibited from discussing pending litigation.</p>

<p>She ignored two bullying incidents in WRHS PE classes (same PE teacher) that have resulted in serious injuries/broken bones, criminal investigations, and at least one lawsuit.</p>	<p>Neither incident was ignored. Discipline is first the responsibility of the teacher and/or principal. The principal ensured that proper discipline was given and the Superintendent reviewed the decision to ensure they were properly handled.</p>
<p>She has ignored a senior Human Resource administrator's repeated attempts for action regarding significant HR issues (including an issue regarding disabilities and sex scandals). The HR executive pursued whistleblower action and was shut down. For a near certainty, there is another Federal lawsuit forthcoming.</p>	<p>Reports of wrong-doing are never ignored. Action is predicated on the evidence. There is no pending lawsuit.</p>
<p>She makes hires of unqualified "yes people." She does not post jobs in a timely manner and she does not interview a customary number of candidates. Her number one hiring criterion seems to be for candidates who will unquestioningly do her bidding.</p>	<p>The Superintendent does very little hiring, only direct reports such as principals or directors. For each hire, she uses an interview committee. In each BCSD hire to date she has hired the individual recommended by the committee. The rest of the BCSD staff are hired by their direct supervisors.</p>