



Amador County Unified School District

FAQ #5: Spending & Hiring

May 24, 2019

Updated June 3, 2019

In an effort to share more information and be responsive to recent questions and comments from the community, the following is provided. If you have more questions, please feel free to reach out to Superintendent Amy Slavensky at 209-257-5353 or Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Jared Critchfield at 209-257-5345.

This information provides more response to three email messages to all staff from Dr. Slavensky, dated September 21, 2018, October 19, 2018, and November 9, 2018. There are also four previous FAQs dated September 27, 2018 and November 20, 2018, January 11, 2019, and February 8, 2019 available here: <https://www.amadorcoe.org/departments/business/frequently-asked-questions/>.

1. We've heard accusations that Dr. Slavensky hires her friends. What is the truth?

Candidates for teacher and support staff positions at the school level are interviewed by a school panel and the hiring manager is the school principal. Dr. Slavensky is not involved with hiring at the school level. School administrative positions, such as the principal position, are district level leadership positions, and Dr. Slavensky is very involved with making these recommendations for Board approval.

Two years ago, there was a need to fill two hard-to fill vacancies, a math teacher at one high school and a science teacher at the other high school. (Statewide, math and science teaching positions are considered hard-to-fill positions.) The first day of school was quickly approaching and there were no applicants. Dr. Slavensky was concerned and wanted to help so she posted the Edjoin.org link about the job posting to her personal Facebook page to help advertise. Her sister saw the post and reached out to her friend whose daughter had recently graduated from college with a strong math and science background. The individual applied, was interviewed by the school panel, and was hired by the school principal.

Dr. Slavensky has worked in several school districts for over 30 years and has developed working relationships with many colleagues during this time. Just as all good educators do, she learns from others and taps into the talents and expertise of others. She does this to benefit our students. Recently, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Sean Snider decided to tap into the expertise of one of Dr. Slavensky's former colleagues, Juliann Wolney, to facilitate the grades TK-K teacher assessment committee. Ms. Wolney has extensive and current experience in both early childhood education and elementary education and greatly assisted our teachers in bridging and aligning the preschool through kindergarten progression and assessment of learning.

2. We've heard accusations that Dr. Slavensky sells educational books through her daughter's book business. What is the truth?

Dr. Slavensky has a daughter, but her daughter does not own a book business. Dr. Slavensky has not made any purchases with District funds to benefit herself.

3. We've heard accusations against Dr. Slavensky about recent overspending? What is the truth?

During the current fiscal year, general fund expenditures are not approved if they have not already been budgeted and approved by the Board through the 2018-19 LCAP and Budget Adoption processes. Only restricted funds, such as Title 1, Title 2, and other grants, that cannot be used to help rebuild the reserve funds if not spent, are used to support professional development, teacher collaboration time, supplemental materials, etc. There is an approval process handled by our Business Office that is followed for any new expenditure requests.

At the May 22, 2019 Board of Trustees meeting, there were questions about certain warrants on the warrant list. Warrants reflect outgoing expenses across the District. The warrants (as provided in the Board packet) do not explain the funding source, school, or district department that is purchasing the items. This detailed documentation for each purchase is available for review in the Business Office. Board members frequently call or email Mr. Critchfield with their questions about warrants prior to Board meetings so they understand what they are approving.

Here are some answers from Mr. Critchfield:

- Apple Store, Arden Fair (\$20,000) – The District will be reimbursed for these iPads from a grant through Stanislaus County Office of Education. Donna Custodio coordinated this opportunity for 50 elementary teachers to attend arts education integration training. Every teacher who attended received an iPad for their classroom as part of the grant.
- Lozano Smith Attorneys at Law (\$11,481) – The majority of this expense is related to property and land acquisitions. Union Pacific Railroad owns the majority of the parking lot outside the multipurpose room at Ione Junior High School. The District has been paying to lease the property for many years. We are working with legal counsel, utilizing eminent domain, to acquire the property permanently which will be a cost savings move. Also, we recently purchased a piece of property with Developer Fees in front of Ione Elementary School. There are many legal matters for property acquisitions by school districts.
- The Spyglass Group Telecommunication Consultants (\$144,600) – Spyglass worked with the District in performing a Board-approved telecommunications audit of our entire system. This project has taken almost a year to complete. They were able to secure a rebate of \$289,200 for overcharges over the last three years. The contract with Spyglass called for them to receive half of any rebate as payment. In other words, they secured the district \$289,200 so we paid them half of that. This is new revenue in the amount of \$144,600.
- Danielson Group or Dancofoods.com (\$19,000) – This is not an educational consulting firm, although there is one by a similar name. This is one of our food vendors and this was a purchase from our cafeteria fund to feed our students breakfast and lunch everyday.
- Equastar Energy Consultants (\$5,000) – Board approved construction consultant Eloy Vento works for Equastar Energy. He has helped us on a multitude of projects including the Culinary Arts facility at Argonaut. Most recently, he has assisted with closing out Department of State Architect projects that go back many years.

- Office Depot (\$10,761) – There were a variety of schools and reasons for this warrant including an Amador High School Associated Student Body (ASB) purchase for laminating and binding, Engage New York Math Materials TK-6 purchased with the Low Performing Students Block Grant
- Permabound (\$1869) – Purchases were paid for with school site funds for library materials and library books.

4. We've heard accusations against Dr. Slavensky about past overspending? What is the truth?

Prior to the Unaudited Actuals Report in September 2018 when it was learned that our reserve funds are not adequate, it is true that our spending practices were different than they are now. Now, we are more careful. Then and now, those decisions were and are based on student and school needs planned through each school's Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and the ACUSD/ACOE Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Along with the Board approved Adopted Budget, these are the policy documents that guide the work and spending of the District.

Specifically, there seems to be a concern about an out-of-state professional development opportunity that elementary principals, teachers, and district office leaders participated in over two years ago. Here are the facts. This was an unusual opportunity to kick-off new learning in support of the new English language arts textbook adoption for a cohort of leaders and teacher leaders, who would then return to the District and share what was learned over time with colleagues. It was the well-known Ohio National Literacy Conference on January 28-31, 2017. Representing all six elementary schools, 14 employees attended this Board-approved professional learning experience. The cost was approximately \$2,100 per person and the total did not exceed \$30,000. 75% of the funding was Title 1 and Title 2, restricted funds that if not spent cannot help to rebuild the reserves. The other 25% was funded through LCFF and aligned with our LCAP goals to improve student achievement. The time was valuable and added to our current firm foundation of effective reading and writing instruction for all students.

Since September 2018, we have taken many steps to reduce spending. As required, a plan was submitted to and approved by the California Department of Education. The plan can be found here: <https://www.amadorcoe.org/uploads/pdfs/ACUSD-Cost-Savings-Plan-Submitted-to-CDE-3.15.19-1.pdf>. Appreciation is extended to the Board of Trustees and many staff members who assisted with the development and implementation of this plan.