MEMORANDUM

TO:        Honorable Chair and Members of the School Board
            Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

FROM:      Teresa Michaels, Inspector General

DATE:      February 3, 2023

SUBJECT:   Transmittal of Final Investigative Report: Forest Hill Community High School
            Case #21-0014-1 Financial Athletic Supplements

In accordance with School Board Policy 1.092 we hereby transmit the above-referenced final report.

The report addresses the following allegation(s):

1. Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk and
   Spanish/Avid Teacher Laura Hayden enlisted staff members that did not coach a sport to
   collect and receive the 2020-21 annual athletic coaches supplement. Staff members who
   received a supplement transferred a portion of those funds through a mobile payment
   service to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as a payment, thus, the Allegation was Substantiated.

2. Principal Esther Rivera approved athletic assistant coaches’ supplements for employees
   that did not coach the pertinent sport, hence enabling staff to misappropriate monies, the
   Allegation was Substantiated.

The report is finalized and will be posted on the Inspector General’s website;
https://www.palmbeachschools.org/about_us/reports_and_publications/inspector_general_reports.
OIG CASE NUMBER 21-0014-I

Forest Hill Community High School

TYPE OF REPORT: FINAL

DATE OF REPORT: March 21, 2022

Teresa Michael, Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
School District of Palm Beach County

THIS REPORT MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION THAT IS CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT FROM DISCLOSURE UNDER APPLICABLE LAW. DO NOT RELEASE WITHOUT PRIOR COORDINATION WITH THE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.
Office of Inspector General
Report of Investigation #21-0014-I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From June 11, 2021, to September 17, 2021, the Office of Inspector General staff conducted interviews and reviewed pertinent documentation and records related to an anonymous allegation. As a result of the investigation, OIG staff determined Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS), Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk, and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden did violate School Board Policies, 2.61 Fraud, 3.02 Code of Ethics, Administrative Policies and Procedures of the Payroll/Accounting Services Department, the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida and The Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association (CTA), and School District Bulletin #P-14495-CLS/K12C regarding Guidelines for Club and Sports Supplements.

Wells received $1,344 of a $2,124 bowling supplement from Blum via a mobile payment service on December 11, 2020, and transferred $1,913 to Lauren Burk (bowling supplement) on the same day. Principal Rivera said she was aware that Lauren Burk assisted the Bowling Team, and that she approved all athletic supplements. Lauren Burk became an administrator as a Single School Culture Coordinator in February 2020 and was not approved to receive a 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement per Principal Rivera. The 2020-21 FHCHS Seasonal Supplement List confirms that Principal Rivera did not approve of Burk receiving a bowling supplement, knowing that Burk assisted the bowling team. However, despite Burk not being approved to receive a bowling supplement, Wells provided Burk the bowling supplement through a mobile payment service. This alone shows that Wells and Burk undermined Principal Rivera authority to receive the bowling supplement. Furthermore, another employee who was not an administrator could have been given the opportunity to be selected to earn a supplement. See Figures 1a, 1b, and 1 inappropriate bowling supplement from Blum to Wells to Burk.

Figure 1a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Staff(s) who Actually Performed Duties as Coach</th>
<th>Staff who received monies from District Payroll Department for Coaching</th>
<th>Staff who received a Transfer of monies through a Cash-App</th>
<th>Staff who received monies for coaching but did not coach/participate in Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>Lauren Burk &amp; Ryan Wells</td>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
<td>Ryan Wells &amp; Lauren Burk</td>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>Leslie Toussaint</td>
<td>Laura Hayden</td>
<td>Lauren Burk</td>
<td>Lauren Burk &amp; Laura Hayden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Lauren Burk</td>
<td>Ryan Wells</td>
<td>Lauren Burk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hayden is the cross-country head coach. Wells asked Hayden if she would assist with coaching soccer. Hayden agreed but realized a week later that the two sports (cross-country/soccer) overlapped and that she would not help the soccer program. To replace Hayden as the assistant soccer coach Wells asked Burk to assist the soccer program. In error, Hayden received a $2,757 wrestling supplement on March 12, 2021. Hayden was not the wrestling coach. Principal Rivera and Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch said Leslie Toussaint was the wrestling coach, and Toussaint did not submit documentation on behalf of Hayden as an assistant wrestling coach. The FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms Toussaint received the wrestling head coach supplement of $3,611 on March 1, 2021. Moving forward, on March 23, 2021, Hayden facilitated a mobile payment transaction to transfer the inappropriate $2,757 wrestling supplement to Burk. Principal Rivera did not approve Burk to receive an assistant coach’s wrestling supplement due to her position as an administrator. However, despite Burk not being approved by Principal Rivera to receive a supplement, Hayden provided Burk with the inappropriate wrestling supplement through a mobile payment service. The mobile payment transaction receipt between Hayden and Burk shows a transference of $1,800 of the $2,757 wrestling supplement and a photo of Hayden’s comments stating “The best wrestling coach out there.”
Hayden said if she were aware that Burk was an administrator, she would not have facilitated a mobile payment of the wrestling supplement to Burk. Hayden was not the approved wrestling coach, and the wrestling supplement she received was an error. Hayden did not inform the Principal or District payroll officials about the wrestling supplement. Hayden knowingly transferred the inappropriate wrestling supplement she received to Burk, who was not approved to receive a supplement. Hayden and Burk were fully aware that they did not coach wrestling and should not have receive a wrestling supplement. Hayden and Burk undermined Principal's Rivera authority to receive payment for work not performed. See Figure 2, an inappropriate wrestling supplement from Hayden to Burk.

Burk is an administrator (Single School Culture Coordinator) whom Principal Rivera did not approve to receive an athletic supplement. District’s PeopleSoft Personnel Records shows that a Single School Culture Coordinator is categorized as an administrative S2 position. District’s Athletic Manger Valerie Miyares confirmed with the District’s payroll Department that administrative level personnel are ineligible for supplements (Exhibit 14). However, Burk assisted the bowling and soccer programs. The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida and The Classroom Teachers Association (CTA), Appendix-B states in part, “District may fill the position with an employee assigned to a different work site or with personnel not in the T-bargaining unit.” The Director of Accounting Services Nancy Samuels reaffirms the CTA’s directive saying the Principal is permitted to have other employees fulfill a coaches’ position. Principal Rivera is the sole administrator responsible for approving supplements payable to athletic coaches. Principal Rivera did not authorize Hayden or Wells to facilitate a mobile service transaction of the wrestling and bowling supplements to Burk. Principal Rivera said she was aware of Burk assisting the bowling program, but was not aware of Burk assisting the soccer program. Principal Rivera did not approve Burk to receive a bowling supplement. However, despite Principal Rivera’s disapproval of Burk receiving bowling and soccer supplements, Burk received two supplement payments facilitated through a mobile payment service from Wells and Hayden. District Code of Ethics Policy 3.02.4.g, states in part, “each employee agrees and pledges to avoid conflicts of interest or any appearance of impropriety.” District’s PeopleSoft Personnel Records show that Burk, Hayden, and Wells reside at the same residence. Wells indicated to the OIG that he and Burk are in a relationship.

The allegation that Mr. Wells listed staff that did not coach a sport in the school year 2020-21, but collected seasonal assistant coaches’ supplements, and the staff who received
the supplements transferred a portion of the funds through a mobile payment service to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as payment was **Substantiated**.

During the investigation, the OIG identified the following allegation against Principal Esther Rivera. Principal Rivera violated Florida Statute 1012.28(1) and (3) and School Board Policy 1.014 by erroneously approving athletic assistant coaches' supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sports, thus unintentionally enabling staff to ultimately misappropriate monies was **Substantiated**.

On December 7, 2021, OIG staff forwarded a copy of the draft report to Principal Esther Rivera, Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk, and Spanish Avid Teacher Laura Hayden for a response by January 14, 2022. On January 12, 2022, Math Teacher Ryan Wells responded via email. This response has been transcribed in its entirety and attached as (**Exhibit 17**). On January 14, 2022, Spanish/Avid Teacher Laura Hayden responded via email. This response has been transcribed in its entirety and attached as (**Exhibit 18**). On January 14, 2022, Principal Esther Rivera responded via email. This response has been transcribed in its entirety and attached as (**Exhibit 19**). On January 14, 2022, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk review responded via email. This response has been transcribed in its entirety and attached as (**Exhibit 20**). A review of the responses reveals the following.

"Ryan Wells,
January 11, 2022

Response to case 21-0014-I

*Please include this statement in the final report of the above mentioned investigation.*

After reviewing this report in its entirety, I would like to state my involvement as it is not clearly stated in the report by the inspector general. I was the bowling coach in 2020 which there is only one stipend. Ms. Blum received this stipend and then transferred it to me as I was the correct recipient of this stipend. In retrospect, we should have handled this situation differently by having Ms. Blum return the stipend to the district and then it being sent to me. I understand the way we did this was incorrect but the money did end up with the person who was the coach. Ms. Burk kindly volunteered with bowling. I decided that I would give her part of my deserved stipend (not a second stipend) as she helped at all the bowling matches. As the report states, this stipend was given to Blum by mistake so I am not sure how the findings can state this is a kickback scheme or that I enlisted others to receive and underserved stipend.

In regard to the soccer stipend, the report correctly states that I told the athletic director that Ms. Hayden was going to be the assistant coach. When she was unable to fulfill this duty I told the athletic director that Ms. Burk would be taking Ms. Hayden's role as assistant coach. This is also stated in the report. As both of these statements are in the report, again. I am not sure how the inspector general is able to make the claim that there is evidence of a kickback scheme or that I enlisted others as I was not involved with
stipend disbursement, did not receive any of this stipend, nor did I claim people were coaching that were not actually coaching.

Sincerely,

Ryan Wells" [sic] (Exhibit 17).

“Laura Hayden,
Response to Draft Report for Office of Inspector General
Case No. 21-0014-I
Forest Hill Community High School Misappropriation/Athletic Supplements

After reviewing the draft report, I would like to address the following concerns, as I believe some findings by the Inspector General are inaccurate. These are discrepancies from the figures and exhibits, and the follow-up notes by the Inspector General.

I never approached the wrestling coach (Touissant), Athletic Director (Kotouch), or Principal (Rivera) to enlist myself as the wrestling coach. As the report also states that Ms. Rivera gave the stipend by mistake. If I was not listed on this document and the principal admits to her error, this cannot be evidence of a kickback scheme or enlisting others.

At the start of soccer season I did agree with the head boy’s soccer coach, Ryan Wells, to be his assistant coach. During this time, I was still in season as the girl’s cross country coach. The season was extended to make up for the late start of the school year due to COVID-19. Therefore, the two sports (cross country, a fall sport, and soccer, a winter sport) overlapped and I could no longer commit to helping Ryan Wells. In turn, Lauren Burk stepped in and took over as the boy’s assistant soccer coach.

I am not an employee with access to payroll or inputting stipends. If a closer look is taken at the exhibits that the Inspector General included in the draft report, the stipend I received was in my paycheck on March 12, 2021 while all other winter sports stipends were batched and received on March 1, 2021. If the stipend I received was entered weeks later, it must have been done purposely by an administrator with access as all other winter stipends had already been dispersed.

When I received the stipend in my paycheck and its description read WRESTLING JV COACH (WINTER) HS, I mistakenly presumed athletic stipends could be allocated as needed by the principal based on her coaching needs. This has occurred multiple times in past with coaches" [Sic] (Exhibit 18).

“Esther Rivera,
January 14, 2022

Re 21-0014-I

To Whom It May Concern:
In Response to investigative Report #21-0014-I from the Office of Inspector General in the School District of Palm Beach County regarding Allegation #2:

Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) Principal Esther Rivera violated Florida Statute 1012.28(1) and (3) Public School Personnel, Duties of School Principals, and School Board Policy, 1.014.1.2. Responsibilities of Principals by erroneously approving athletic assistant coaches supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sports, thus enabling staff to ultimately to misappropriate monies.

I agree that I "erroneously" approved athletic supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sport. I do not agree that this action resulted in "enabling staff to misappropriate funds" through the use of cash-apps and other methods in exchanging monies not merited between other staff members. Additionally, it is imperative that this investigation provides a foundation for a universal systems-based approach to be created by the School District of Palm Beach County when School Principals are approving athletic stipends as currently there is none existing district-wide. Since I learned of my error, prior to this investigation commencing, I contacted the Department of Professional Standards and my instructional superintendent to make them aware of the mistake. Lastly, I created a school-based system in which coaches must acknowledge the responsibilities of their coaching positions provide evidence of practices and games and maintain records of students/staff involved in order to receive a stipend.

Sincerely,

Esther M. Rivera
Principal" [sic] (Exhibit 19)

"Lauren Burk
Good evening,

Please include the below response in the 21-0014-I/FHCHS Report.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft of report 21-0014-I/FHCHS. Though I respect the findings of the Investigator, I would like to state a few items in this report that are incorrect and written in a negative connotation by the Investigator.

In multiple places within the report, the Investigator states that the stipend list my former Principal, Ms. Esther Rivera, submitted, "disapproved" of me receiving any stipends as I was the Single School Culture Coordinator (SSCC) at the school at the time of this investigation. This stipend list is a list of coaches' names and what sport they are coaching. It is not a document of notes stating who is approved or not approved for stipends. This list does not state that I requested and was denied a stipend as the Investigator eluded. Also, at no point did I ask Ms. Rivera or anyone to provide me with a stipend for any sport while I was the Single School Culture Coordinator. It is also important to note that the IG states I was paid stipends in 2020 after becoming SSCC for
work I had completed as a coach and sponsor prior to becoming SSCC within the same school year. Per Human Resources, it was appropriate for me to receive these stipends; however, the Investigator contacted the Manager of Athletics rather than Human Resources to confirm if the payments were acceptable.

In regard to the money that was sent to me for coaching both bowling and soccer: I told Mr. Ryan Wells that I would assist him with the Fall bowling team, as I had the previous year, and soccer when Ms. Laura Hayden found she could no longer do so. There is only one bowling stipend per school. Mr. Wells was kind enough to send me some of his stipend though I did not request or expect this money. Also, as stated above, I did not receive an additional stipend, but rather I was given some of Mr. Wells’ as he saw fit. In regard to soccer, Ms. Hayden stated to me that she received a stipend that she believed was for soccer as she was initially the Assistant Coach for soccer before telling Mr. Wells she could not assist. Ms. Hayden knew that I had supported Mr. Wells with the soccer team throughout the entire season and she sent me her stipend though I did not request it from her. The Investigator states that I enlisted people to receive stipends. At no point did I ask for or expect any stipends for helping these two teams. Additionally, in the ten years I worked at Forest Hill Community High School, I coached and sponsored various activities each year. Never have I received money for work that I did not complete or enlist others to provide me money.

With appreciation,
Lauren Burk [Sic] (Exhibit 20)

RECOMMENDATIONS

During the investigation, the following management issues were observed and are referred to Principal Esther Rivera and Director of Professional Standards Vicki Evans-Pare for review and consideration.

- The OIG acknowledges that Principal Rivera had taken steps to ensure that the Assistant Principal over athletics, Athletic Director, and all athletic coaches, staff members, and volunteers receive training regarding supplements for extracurricular athletics.

- The OIG recommends the Superintendent review School Board Bulletin #P-14495-CLS/K12 Guidelines for Club and Sports Supplements, as the bulletin was last updated on January 16, 2013. The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association Appendix B-Supplements does not explain or indicate any duties or responsibilities of the Athletic Directors within District schools.

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1 School Bulletin #P-14495-CLS/K12 Guidelines for Club and Sports Supplements
2 The Collective Bargaining Agreement Between The School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida and The Palm Beach County teacher association
The OIG recommends that FHCHS leadership staff create a school operational plan (SOP) to define and describe the responsibilities of the Athletic Director (AD). The aims are to provide the AD with detailed instructions on carrying out all job-related tasks, including the coaches' assignment, monitoring athletic programs, and disbursement of supplements. Listed below are recommended procedural processes to guide leadership with the review of seasonal supplements paid to athletic coaches:

- Head athletic coaches complete and submit daily or weekly attendance logs to the Athletic Director (AD) to demonstrate assistant athletics coaches' and students' attendance.
- The AD verifies attendance logs completed by head coaches and forwards them to the appropriate Assistant Principal (AP).
- The appropriate AP reviews the attendance logs and forwards them to the Principal. The Principal reviews the attendance logs before authorizing supplement payments to athletic coaches.
- Procedure with associated forms are developed as to wherein staff sign and affirm that they are actively participating and performing the duties related to the specified supplement.

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INVESTIGATIVE PREDICATE

On June 11, 2021, the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an anonymous complaint via the OIG Hotline regarding alleged misconduct by Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk, and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden. It is alleged that Mr. Wells allegedly listed staff members as assistant coaches despite the staff members not coaching a sport. The staff members then collected 2020-21 seasonal assistant coaches’ supplements. The staff member who received the supplement allegedly then transferred a portion of those supplements through a mobile payment service to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as payment (Allegation 1).

In the additional allegation, Principal Rivera erroneously approved athletic assistant coaches’ supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sports, thus unintentionally enabling staff to ultimately misappropriate monies (Allegation 2).

The OIG investigation concluded that Allegation 1 and Allegation 2 were substantiated. The investigative findings of the Allegations will be discussed in detail later in this report.

BACKGROUND

Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) is a District school located at 6901 Parker Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL 33405. The total school enrollment is 2,463, with a 19:3 Student-Teacher Ratio. The school serves high school students for grades 9-12.3 Esther Rivera has been the Principal at FHCHS since 2019. Ryan Wells has been a Math Teacher at FHCHS since 2015. Lauren Burk has been the Single School Culture Coordinator at FHCHS since 2020. Laura Hayden has been a Spanish Teacher at FHCHS since 2007.4

FHCHS 2020-21 athletic programs consist of 14 of the 19 Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) extracurricular sporting activities. FHCHS athletics did not participate in the following sports: Water Polo, Lacrosse, Golf, Softball, and Beach Volleyball. FHSAA extracurricular sporting practices and District sanctioned events occur after school operating hours and are categorized into seasonal groups, Fall Sports, Winter Sports, Spring Sports, and Summer Sports.5

Approximately $147,221.96 was paid to FHCHS athletic coaches for the 2020-21 school year (See Tables 1-4). The FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List shows that 37 coaches who coached one or more sports were paid an annual supplement ranging from $731.50 to $4,532 between December 2020 and May 2021. Of the 37 coaches, 12 coached various seasonal sports and received multiple supplements (Exhibit 1). The 12

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3 Palm Beach County School District
4 Palm Beach County School District PeopleSoft Personnel Records
5 Florida High School Athletic Association/FHSAA.COM
coaches that received multiple supplements are highlighted with the color yellow in tables 2-4.

### Table 1
**FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Athletic Supplements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athletic Seasons</th>
<th>Annual Supplement Amount Paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Sports</td>
<td>$54,295.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Sports</td>
<td>$51,916.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Sports</td>
<td>$41,010.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$147,221.96</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
**FHCHS 2020-21 Fall Sports Seasonal Supplement List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th># of Sports Coached</th>
<th>Sport Coached</th>
<th>Supplement Received</th>
<th>Supplement Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bowling-Fall Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Laura Hayden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cross-Country-Fall Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$3,611.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Justin Bonich</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cross-Country-Fall Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$2,410.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jude Blessington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$4,269.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dwayne McClendon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Football-Fall-Sport</td>
<td>01/04/21</td>
<td>$2,593.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brian Pulaski</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kyle Lawrence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>James Basford</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Evan Williams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vincent DeAquila</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ronald Mack</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Football-Fall-Sport</td>
<td>01-04-21</td>
<td>$2,993.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mathew Graham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>*Football-Fall/Spring Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20 &amp; 05-10-20</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tina Murphy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Swimming-Fall Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$3,611.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kimberly Prisno</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Volleyball-Fall Sport(g)</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$3,611.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ashley O’Brien</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Volleyball-Fall Sport(g)</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Emma Kapusta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Volleyball-Fall Sport(g)</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Genene Kinder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cheerleader-Fall Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$1,805.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Madison Kinder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cheerleader-Fall Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$1,092.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ryan Wells</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fall Sport/Female*</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$3,611.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$54,295.46</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Table 3
**FHCHS 2020-21 Winter Sports Seasonal Supplement List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th># of Sports Coached</th>
<th>Sport Coached</th>
<th>Supplement Received</th>
<th>Supplement Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Winter Gender*</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Laura Hayden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wrestling-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-12-21</td>
<td>$2,757.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tony Watson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$4,532.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nicolas Orlando</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>05-24-21</td>
<td>$4,532.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shawn Martin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Westley Shelton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ryan Nani Taylor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$3,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Karivyn Louis-Charles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Clayton Williams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Basketball-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$2,124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Genene Kinder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cheerleader-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$1,805.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Cheerleader-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$1,092.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Liliana Sanchez</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soccer-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Rehana Seeden Vargas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soccer-Winter Sport</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nihara Stedeen</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>03-01-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Isiss Elion Trujillo Trobos</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Caitlin Schubiger</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Winter Gender Equity*</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$51,916.00</strong></td>
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</table>

*Fall sport/female – one time seasonal assigned dollar amount for coaching a female varsity sport

Winter gender sport – one time seasonal assigned dollar amount for coaching a boys varsity basketball sport

Winter Gender Equity – assigned dollar amount for female sports
### Table 4

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<thead>
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<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th># of Sports Coached</th>
<th>Sport Coached</th>
<th>Supplement Received</th>
<th>Supplement Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Track &amp; Field-Spring Sport</td>
<td>05-10-21</td>
<td>$3,611.00</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Evan Williams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Track &amp; Field-Spring Sport</td>
<td>05-10-21</td>
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<td>Volleyball-Spring Sport (b)</td>
<td>01-15-21 &amp; 05-10-21</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Total:</td>
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## ALLEGATION 1

It is alleged that Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden violated School Board Policies, 2.61.3.d.f. Fraud, 3.02.5.c.f.i. Code of Ethics, School Board Administrative Policies and Procedures of the Payroll/Accounting Services, Page-15, paragraphs 2 & 4, The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida and the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association, Appendix B – Supplements, subsection-3, and School District Bulletin #P-14495-CLS/K12C, Guidelines for Club and Sports Supplement; by listing staff members who did not coach a sport to collect and receive the 2020-21 annual athletic coaches supplement. Staff members who received a supplement later transferred a portion of those funds through a mobile cash app to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as payment.

Per School Board Policy 2.61.3.d.and f., Fraud:

"3. **Definition:** Fraud is a willful or deliberate act or omission by which an individual intends to unlawfully deprive the District through an unauthorized benefit, service, property, or something of value by deception, misrepresentation, or other unethical or unlawful means. Fraud acts include, but are not limited to:

   d. Authorizing or receiving compensation for time not worked.
   f. Misappropriation of funds or impropriety in handling or reporting of money or financial transactions of the District;"

Per School Board Policy 3.02.5.c.f.i, Code of Ethics:

"5. **Ethical Standards**
c. Misrepresentation or Falsification – We are committed to candor in our work relationships, providing other Board employees, including supervisors, senior staff, and Board members, with accurate, reliable, and timely information. Employees should exemplify honesty and integrity in the performance of their official duties for the School District. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

f. Public Funds and Property – We are committed to ensuring that District facilities, equipment, supplies, or other District resources are used for District purposes only. Except for occasional and incidental personal use, we will not tolerate improper use of public resources and will report and reimburse the District for costs associated with personal use. The provisions herein shall not be applicable to community or public use of District facilities pursuant to School Board Policy 7.18 (Community Use of School Facilities). Employees entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to:

i. Failing to use public or school-related funds and School Board property for School District purposes and in a manner specified by School Board Policy, administrative procedures or guidelines or by federal or state laws;

Per the Policies & Procedures Payroll/Accounting Services Department Manual, Year-Round and Seasonal Supplements, Page-15, 2 & 4 paragraphs state in part:

"The District pays many additional salary items to teachers for the second year as either recurring year-round supplement or a one-time payment. These supplements are negotiated and clearly defined in the CTA contract. They include activities such as team leaders, department grade chairs and club sponsors as well as coaching of district sports teams, which require various certifications including CPR and First Aid. A developed custom process is used for the payment of these items.

The district seasonal supplements are paid three times per year, basically after each sports season completes. They fall into one of the following: Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer. The program contains edits that will not allow entry if an employee does not meet the required qualifications. The schools have a deadline for data entry for the payment of each season. If data is entered by the deadline, the payment is loaded to payroll in a batch process. The schools can still enter after the deadline, and payrolls load any of these residual items during subsequent processing. Once payments have been loaded to payroll, they are not modifiable on the data entry screen."
Per the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida and the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association, Page-146, Appendix B-Supplements, subsection three, state.

1. "Unless otherwise noted herein, supplements are paid for services/duties performed beyond the regular day. Therefore, employees, excluding High School Athletic Directors, receiving any supplements are to teach or carry a full instructional assignment.

3. The parties agree that should the District determine that no employee at a work site is qualified to perform the responsibilities of a particular supplement or if no employee at that worksite wishes to fill the supplement, the District may fill the position with an employee assigned to a different work site or with personnel not in the T-bargaining unit."


In order to meet state and local requirements and to set a District-Wide standard of equity, each Principal and his/her designee must follow the guidelines below in evaluating their activity program.

1. "Supplements are to be paid according to the duties and amounts specified in the Classroom Teacher Association contract. Supplements may not be traded off. However, high schools may trade off unused athletic coach supplements for the purpose of funding the high school assistant basketball and high school boys head lacrosse coach supplements. (Refer to Bulletin # HSP-1963 issued 10/22/2012 for additional information.)

2. To receive a supplement for coaching, all coaches are required to have:
   a. Current certification in Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and automated External Defibrillators (AED)
   b. Current certification in First Aid (FA)

3. In addition to the above, coaches outside the school system must complete the coach’s application packet, which can be downloaded from the School District Web page at www.palmbeachschools.org/curriculum/

4. An individual cannot collect two supplements for the same sport (i.e., cross-country, swimming, tennis, and golf) unless he/she conducts two separate practices and meets/matches are scheduled separately. Additional supplements are paid for additional duties, not for more participants.
5. To receive a junior varsity of 9th-grade supplement, the coach must hold practices for the team for a minimum of three weeks and coach the team for a minimum of ten scheduled games for all sports except wrestling, football, and weightlifting. The salary will be reduced by 10% for each game not coached unless there are extenuating circumstances.

6. Football and wrestling must have at least three weeks practice and six meets, games, or matches to qualify for a supplement. Weightlifting must have at least three weeks practice and compete in four meets that are sanctioned by the Florida High School Activities Association or the Palm Beach County Athletic Conference.

WITNESS INTERVIEW[S]

On August 4, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) Principal Esther Rivera was conducted at FHCHS in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Rivera” as it relates to the allegation:

Before Rivera’s arrival to FHCHS, Athletic Director (AD) Ronald Kotouch provided documentation (athletic coaches list) to the recently retired confidential secretary Lisa Martin showing sports coached. Since Rivera’s arrival in 2020, Kotouch provided the coaches list to the new confidential secretary Susana Segura, Segura provided the coaches list to Rivera. In the fall of 2020, Rivera said Kotouch was on personal leave, so she completed the coaches’ supplement list for payments.

Kotouch provided Rivera copies of May 14, 2021, May 15, 2021, and May 21, 2021, text message exchanges between himself and math teacher and flag football coach Anjelica Blum. The text message exchanges showed Blum asking Kotouch about math teacher bowling and soccer coach Ryan Wells’ status of receiving a supplement for flag football. The text message further shows Kotouch responding to Blum, indicating that Wells admitted that he did not coach flag football and would give the flag football supplement to Blum (Exhibit 6).

After reviewing the text messages, Rivera had concerns and contacted the District’s Employee Labor Relations Office (ELR) and the Area Instructional Superintendent to relay her concerns about the text messages. ELR informed Rivera of two consequential options to address her concerns. Rivera opted to conduct a conference note meeting. On May 21, 2021, the conference note meeting occurred at FHCHS between Rivera, Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd, Kotouch, and Blum. Loyd did not know the particulars; he was only present because he oversees athletics. At the meeting, Rivera asked Blum to explain Wells’ flag football coaching responsibilities. Blum said she went to Wells for advice and that Wells was an advisor. Rivera replied, “Only coaches who participated actively with the athletic sports/students and were hired for the season would be able to
receive supplements associated with that sport" (Exhibit 7). FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms Principal Rivera did not approve Wells to receive a flag football supplement.

Further, at the meeting, alongside the flag football discussions, Blum voluntarily admitted to Principal Rivera that she received a $2,124 bowling supplement, did not assist the bowling team, and that she provided the bowling supplement to Wells on December 11, 2020, through a mobile payment service (Exhibit 8). Rivera said she is ultimately responsible for approving all supplements payable to athletic coaches and that she mistakenly approved Blum to receive the $2,124 bowling supplement (Exhibit 1). Rivera said Wells assisted the bowling team and should have received the $2,124 bowling supplement, not Blum.

**Investigators Note** Blum attempted to collect a flag football supplement through Wells despite Wells not coaching flag football. In addition, alongside the flag football discussions about Wells, Blum admitted to Principal Rivera during a conference note meeting on May 21, 2021, that she inappropriately received a bowling supplement and did not participate as a bowling coach. **Note**, Rivera who admitted that she mistakenly approved Blum to receive the Bowling supplement completed the athletic supplement list. Blum transferred the bowling supplement to Wells through a mobile payment service on December 11, 2020. Rivera said Wells should have received the bowling supplement. The FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list confirms that Wells did not receive a bowling supplement and that, per Rivera's approval, Blum received the $2,124 bowling supplement on December 7, 2020. See Figure 3, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Blum to Wells.

![Figure 3](image)

Rivera said Wells received two athletic supplements in 2020-21, $3,611 for the fall female sports supplement and $3,611 for a head soccer coach supplement. Wells received the fall female sports supplement because he assisted in supervising fall female sports practices and games when several events were occurring on campus simultaneously. FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms Principal Rivera approved Wells to receive a fall female sports supplement and a head soccer coach supplement. (Exhibit 3).

On August 26, 2021, the OIG contacted Principal Rivera via email. OIG transcribed Principal Rivera August 26, 2020, email responses in their entirety below (Exhibit 3).
OIG, 2020-21 Hayden agreed to assist the soccer program. Shortly after agreeing to support the soccer program, she (Hayden) realized that she could not assist the program due to a conflict of schedule. Nonetheless, Hayden received a wrestling supplement and did not coach wrestling. Hayden said she paid the $2,757 wrestling supplement to Burk because Burk did all of the paperwork for the soccer program. Did you (Rivera) approve, or were you aware that Hayden transferred the $2,757 wrestling supplement to Burk for assisting the soccer program?

Principal Rivera, “I am completely unaware of this occurring. I will have to check to see if Ms. Hayden received a stipend for wrestling as the Wrestling Coach was Leslie Toussaint and not Ms. Hayden. I will speak with professional standards as well as my instructional Superintendent about this if this occurred.”

OIG, In addition, the 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement list shows Hayden received a $2,757 supplement for wrestling.

Principal Rivera, “Thank you for bringing this to my attention. This was an error. I will inform professional standards and my instructional Superintendent of this error. Mr. Leslie Toussaint was the Coach for wrestling and not Ms. Hayden.”

OIG, Were you aware that administrators can or cannot receive athletic supplements at the time of the 2020-21 Fall/Spring supplements disbursement to athletic coaches?

Principal Rivera, “I am aware that administrators cannot receive athletic supplements or any other stipend such as club stipends at the time of 2020-2021 fall/spring supplement.” [sic] Figure 4, an inappropriate wrestling supplement from Hayden to Burk.
Rivera said she had instituted new procedural directives to address athletic supplements. Coaches must now provide sign-in forms to demonstrate student participation.

On August 17, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of 11th & 12th Grade Dean and former Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch was conducted at Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Kotouch” as it relates to the allegation:

Kotouch said Math Teacher and flag football Coach Anjelica Blum emailed him in February 2021. Blum asked if it is okay for coach Ryan Wells to receive an assistant flag football coach’s supplement. Kotouch replied, yes, it is okay. Weeks later, he “jokingly” had a conversation with Wells and said, “you are receiving another supplement (flag football), in addition to your bowling and boys soccer stipends.” Wells replied, “No, I am just giving the flag football supplement to Blum and that he (Wells) did not assist the flag football program.”

Kotouch said he did not mention to Blum that Wells was not receiving a flag football supplement. In May 2021, athletic supplements were disbursed; he had a text message conversation with Blum (Exhibit 6). During the text message exchange, Blum inquired about the status of Wells receiving a flag football supplement. Kotouch told Blum that Wells was not receiving a flag football supplement because Wells said he did not help the flag football program. Blum said she should have had someone else do the paperwork, implying that Wells assisted with completing flag football paperwork, contrary to Wells’ statement to Kotouch that he did not assist the flag football program. Blum said she was paying for all these expenses (hotels, gas) for tournaments and that she was driving to an all-star flag-football tournament in Ocala, Florida, with female flag football players. Kotouch told Blum, “Okay, this is done. You tried to play the system and get an extra stipend. Not cool, but it’s gotta stop now.” Blum said, “I don’t know why you’re coming at me. If this was an issue, you should have told me before the season, not after” (Exhibit 2).

Kotouch said the flag football tournament in Ocala, Florida, was not a District sanctioned event and had nothing to do with FHCHS. Kotouch reported this information to Principal Rivera, and on May 21, 2021, Principal Rivera conducted a conference note meeting between himself, Blum, and Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd (Exhibit 7).

Aside from the Blum and Kotouch discussions regarding flag football, on September 8, 2021, the OIG contacted Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch via email regarding Spanish/Avid Teacher, cross-country/track & field coach Laura Hayden. OIG transcribed AD Kotouch’s September 8, 2021, email responses in their entirety below (Exhibit 4):

**OIG.** Did the AD submit the coach’s names to the Principal for payment approval?

**AD Kotouch.** Coach’s names are submitted to the Principal’s secretary prior to being put into the system for payment.
OIG, Do head coaches submit agenda(s) or names of assistant coaches who assisted the sports program to your office?

AD Kotouch, Coaches, notified me of who their assistant coaches would be and whether or not they would be a volunteer or paid. From there, we (AP over Athletics) would do our diligence to ensure that volunteer coaches were approved to be volunteers and paid coaches had fulfilled their requirements to coach and receive a stipend. I never micromanaged anyone from there. If the head coach of the program identified someone as an assistant, I went off their word that the person identified as an assistant coach was fulfilling their duties to best help that particular program.

OIG, Did wrestling Coach Leslie Toussaint submit an agenda to your office that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team?

AD Kotouch, There was not an agenda submitted from Coach Leslie Toussaint that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team. This was also never communicated by me to the principal's secretary that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team. I will send a google sheet that was shared with the Principal's secretary identifying who should be getting a winter stipends for 2020-21. [sic]

On September 9, 2021, Kotouch provided the OIG a spreadsheet showing coaches who coached a sport during the winter sports season, 2020 (Exhibit 9). The spreadsheet was submitted to the Principal's secretary for the Principal to review and approve. The spreadsheet did not show Laura Hayden as an assistant wrestling coach.

On September 10, 2021, Kotouch provided the OIG an email showing that Ryan Wells told him that Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk would assist the soccer program by handling paperwork and collecting athletic packets and insurance (Exhibit 10).

On August 17, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd was conducted at Forest Hill Community High School in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Loyd" as it relates to the allegation:

Loyd said he was not initially aware of the allegations regarding athletic supplements. At a conference note meeting on May 21, 2021, he became aware of the allegations between Principal Esther Rivera, Athletic Director (AD) Ronald Kotouch, and Math Teacher Anjelica Blum. The OIG provided Loyd a copy of a May 21, 2021 conference note meeting minutes. Loyd confirmed his presence during the conference note meeting (Exhibit 7).

At the meeting, Math Teacher Anjelica Blum alleged that coaches solicited other coaches who did not coach a seasonal athletic sport to be listed as a coach to receive an athletic
supplement. The coaches who did not coach a sport transferred the supplement to Math Teacher Ryan Wells and Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk.

Blum further said Laura Hayden had given Burk or Wells an inappropriate supplement. Blum also mentioned that Principal Rivera and AD Kotouch were aware and approved. In addition, Ryan Nani allegedly received supplements(s) for sports not coached.

**Investigators Note** Blum's statement that the Principal and the AD knew and agreed with Hayden’s decision to give Wells or Burk an inappropriate supplement contradicts the Principal's August 26, 2021 email response statement (Exhibit 3).

**Investigators Note** Principal Rivera; August 26, 2021 email further shows that Ryan Nani assisted all sports programs when AD Kotouch was away on personal leave (Exhibit 3). On October 25, 2021, OIG interviewed PE Teacher, Assistant Athletic Director (AAD), and 11th & 12th-grade Dean Ryan Nani. Nani said he had been the (AAD) at FHCHS since he arrived in 2017 and is currently the AAD. In 2020-21, he coached two seasonal sports. Junior varsity girls' basketball is a winter sport and tennis a spring sport; He said he has never received a supplement for a sport not coached.

On September 9-10, 2021, Loyd provided the OIG a spreadsheet showing that the wrestling program had two vacant assistant wrestling coaches' positions open in the 2020-21 school year (Exhibit 11).

**Investigators Note** Despite the spreadsheet provided by Loyd showing two vacant wrestling positions. Hayden erroneously received a $2,757 wrestling supplement on March 12, 2021, and did not coach wrestling.

On August 18, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Math Teacher Flag Football Coach Anjelica Blum was conducted at Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Blum” as it relates to the allegation:

Blum said she received a bowling supplement and did not coach bowling. Math Teacher Ryan Wells and Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk requested Blum transfer the $2,124 bowling supplement to Wells through a mobile payment service. Blum transferred $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement through a mobile payment service to Wells on December 11, 2020 (Exhibit 8). Blum said $780 of $2,124 bowling supplement was paid in federal taxes (Exhibit 12).

**Investigators Note** Principal Rivera said she mistakenly approved Blum to receive the $2,124 bowling supplement.

Blum said that Wells requested the bowling supplement to provide to Burk. According to Blum the bowling program has two supplements payable to coaches. The OIG informed
and showed Blum the FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list showing that bowling had one supplement of $2,124 and that she received it on December 7, 2020 (Exhibit 1). Blum said she assumed there were two bowling supplements as opposed to one bowling supplement.

**Investigators Note** Rivera said she contacted the District’s ELR Office to relay her concerns about text messages received from Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch (text message exchanges between Blum and Kotouch). Per Rivera, ELR provided consequential options. Riviera elected to conduct a conference note meeting on May 21, 2021, between herself, Loyd, Kotouch, and Blum. The conference meeting minutes show that Blum voluntarily admitted to Principal Rivera that she received the one bowling supplement, did not assist the bowling program and, gave the bowling supplement to Wells through a mobile payment service. At the time of the mobile transaction between Blum and Wells, Principal Rivera was not aware. See Figure 5, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Blum to Wells.

**Figure 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal receives concerning text messages from Kotouch. Text message show discussions between Kotouch and Blum</th>
<th>Principal Rivera contacts Employee Labor Relations (ELR) to report concern about text messages received from Kotouch. ELR suggests consequential options</th>
<th>Principal Rivera elects to conduct conference note meeting on May 21, 2021, between herself, Loyd, Kotouch and Blum</th>
<th>At conference note meeting, discussions occur about the text messages. In addition, Blum admits to Principal Rivera that she received an erroneous $2,214 bowling supplement on December 7, 2020, and did not coach bowling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

On October 25, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Dean, Physical Education Teacher, Assistant Athletic Director (AAD), basketball and tennis coach Ryan Nani was conducted at District’s Headquarters Inspector General’s Office (C-310) in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Nani” as it relates to the allegation:

Nani said he had been the Assistant Athletic Director (AAD) since he arrived at FHCHS and before Principal Esther Rivera’s arrival to FHCHS in 2019. Former Principal Mary Stratos assigned him as the AAD. He assists the athletic director in all work-related capacities such as supervising student-athletes, liaison between athletic director/teachers, field/sports set-up, and updating max-prep program (maintains student athlete statistics) of approved sports.
In 2020-21, along with his duties as the AAD, he coached two sports, a winter sport (basketball) and a spring sport (tennis). Nani said he did not receive any supplements for a sport that he did not coach and that no coach has ever asked him to receive a supplement for a sport that he did not coach and give that supplement to other coaches Ryan Wells Laura Burk, or Laura Hayden.

Nani said he did not review or provide the 2020-21 coaches’ supplement list to the Principal for payment approval that is the responsibility of the athletic director.

**SUBJECT INTERVIEWS**

On August 17, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Spanish Teacher/Avid Coordinator/Cross Country Coach Laura Hayden was conducted at Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Hayden" as it relates to the allegation:

Cross-country head coach Hayden said Ryan Wells asked her to complete fundraising paperwork, physicals, and athletic eligibility packets for the soccer program. At the time, she agreed to assist the soccer program. About a week later, she realized that the two sports seasons (cross-country/soccer) overlapped, and she could not help Wells with the soccer program. Wells suggested that Single School Culture Lauren Burk assists with the soccer program in her place. Hayden and Wells agreed that Burk would assist Wells with the soccer program because Burk completed the soccer program's paperwork for the 2019-20 soccer season.

Hayden admitted receiving a $2,757 wrestling supplement but did not coach wrestling (Exhibits 1 & 9). FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplements List confirms that Hayden received a $2,757 wrestling supplement on March 12, 2021, and not a soccer supplement (Exhibit 1). Hayden said that because Burk assisted the soccer team, she gave Burk the $2,757 wrestling supplement.

*Investigators Note* Hayden did not confer with the Principal or District payroll officials to inform them about the inappropriate wrestling supplement.

Hayden then facilitated a mobile payment service transaction for $1,800, a portion of the $2,757 she received for the wrestling supplement, to Lauren Burk (Exhibit 5).

Hayden gave the wrestling supplement to Burk, unbeknownst that Burk was not eligible to receive a supplement. Per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), the Single School Culture Coordinator position is considered an administrator, and administrators cannot receive supplements. Hayden indicated that if she had known that administrators could not receive supplements, she would not have given the supplement to Burk. On August 17, 2021, Hayden provided the OIG a mobile payment receipt showing $1,800
was sent to Burk on March 23, 2021. This payment was for the wrestling supplement (Exhibit 5).

**Investigators Note** Principal Rivera’s August 26, 2021, email response shows that administrators cannot receive a supplement (Exhibit 3). FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list confirms that Rivera disapproved of Burk receiving a supplement.

Hayden erroneously received a wrestling supplement and did not coach wrestling. Moving forward, despite Burk not being approved to receive a supplement per Principal Rivera, Hayden gave the inappropriate wrestling supplement to Burk. Hayden did not report receiving an inappropriate wrestling supplement to Principal Rivera or District payroll officials (Exhibit 5). See Figure 6, an inappropriate wrestling supplement from Hayden to Burk.

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**Figure 6**

- Principal Rivera erroneously approved Hayden to receive a $2,757 wrestling supplement on May 12, 2021.
- Hayden did not report receiving the inappropriate wrestling supplement to Principal Rivera or District Payroll Officials.
- Burk is an administrator; per Principal Rivera is not approved to receive a supplement.

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On August 17, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk was conducted at Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Burk” as it relates to the allegation:

Burk denied that she and math teacher Ryan Wells listed individuals who did not coach a sport to receive an assistant coaches’ supplement. Burk said she had coached multiple sports at FHCHS over the past ten years, such as tennis, soccer, and bowling, and that she has never had a problem with receiving a supplement.

In 2019-20, she was a teacher and co-coached bowling and soccer with math teacher/head soccer coach Ryan Wells (Exhibit 13). Burk said there was only one stipend for bowling; she coached the girls, and Wells coached the boys. They both agreed to share the one bowling stipend.

In 2019-20, soccer had more than one stipend; therefore, she received an assistant soccer coach stipend. She assisted the soccer program, completed athletic eligibility packets, insurance forms, student supervision, uniform inventory, and attended practices/games. After becoming the Single School Culture Coordinator in February 2020, she was unsure if she would receive an athletic stipend moving forward.
The following school year, in 2020-21, she again co-coached bowling with Wells and expected to share the bowling stipend they agreed for prior years.

Burk advised Wells that there might be an "additional bowling supplement," they may not have to share the one bowling supplement.

**Investigators Note** FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List shows one bowling supplement received by Anjelica Blum (Exhibit 1). Blum admitted she provided a portion of the money she received for the bowling supplement to Ryan Wells through a mobile payment service on December 11, 2020 (Exhibit 8).

In turn, Wells provided Burk $1,913 for the bowling supplement on December 11, 2020, ten months ago (Exhibit 2). District personnel records show that Burk was promoted from a teacher to the Single School Culture Coordinator in February 2020, approximately six months before the official Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) bowling season began in August (Exhibit 14). Per the Principal's August 26, 2021 email reply, administrators are not eligible to receive a supplement (Exhibit 3). See Figure 7, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Blum to Wells to Burk.

**Figure 7**

- Principal mistakenly approved Blum to receive a bowling supplement on December 7, 2020
- Through a mobile payment service, Blum transferred $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement to Wells on December 11, 2020
- Through a mobile payment service, Wells transferred $1,913 bowling supplement to Burk on December 11, 2020
- Burk is an administrator per Principal Rivera administrators are not approved to receive a supplement

Regarding soccer in 2020-21, the arrangement for Burk to assist Wells.

**Investigators Note** Burk became the Single School Culture Coordinator in February 2020, approximately eight months before the official FHSAA soccer season started in October (Exhibit 14).

Hayden said she received the supplement for soccer on March 12, 2021, and transferred the funds to her (Burk) through a mobile payment service on March 23, 2021. Thirteen months after, Burk became the Single School Culture Coordinator (Exhibits 5 & 14). The FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplements List shows Hayden received a $2,757 wrestling supplement, not a soccer supplement (Exhibit 1).

Burk received two unofficial supplements from Hayden and Wells that were not approved by Principal Rivera. See Figure 8, an inappropriate wrestling supplement from Hayden to Burk.
On August 18, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Math Teacher Bowling/Soccer Coach Ryan Wells was conducted at Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Wells" as it relates to the allegation:

In the school year 2019-20, he and Lauren Burk coached bowling. At the time, they were unaware that there was only one bowling supplement. The bowling supplement went to Burk. The Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association (CTA) shows one high school bowling supplement. FHCHS 2019-20 Seasonal Supplements List shows one bowling supplement and Burk received it. (Exhibit 13). He and Burk attended every bowling practice and game. Wells provided the OIG documentation to demonstrate participation, such as email exchanges with the District bowling officials, attending district-bowling meetings, signatures on bowling scorecards, credit card transactions from the bowling alley, and completing fundraising forms (Exhibit 15).

In 2020-21, Wells and Burk agreed to coach bowling, understanding that there was only one supplement. They decided to share it. The FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List shows one supplement for bowling. Anjelica Blum received the bowling supplement and did not coach bowling (Exhibit 1). Blum provided $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement to Wells through a mobile payment service on December 11, 2020 (Exhibit 8). Wells forwarded the bowling supplement he received from Blum to his mother, a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). His mother determined that $1,344 was the correct amount after federal taxes were taken.

Burk became an administrator Single School Culture Coordinator and attended all bowling practices and games.

**Investigators Note** Wells then transferred most of (or a portion of) the bowling supplement he received from Blum to Burk on December 11, 2020, ten months after Burk was promoted to Single School Culture Coordinator (Exhibits 2 & 14). Principal Rivera said she knew Burk assisted the bowling program but was not aware of Wells transferring the bowling supplement he received from Blum through a mobile payment service and transferring the same supplement to Burk through a mobile payment service. Rivera completed the athletic supplements list and mistakenly approved Blum to receive the bowling supplement. However, Rivera said administrators are not eligible to receive supplements. See Figure 9, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Blum to Wells to Burk.
Wells confirmed he asked Spanish Teacher and cross-country coach Laura Hayden to be the assistant soccer coach, and she agreed. When Hayden realized cross-country overlapped with soccer, Hayden told Wells that she could not assist the soccer program because she conducts tutoring after school and the cross-country schedule. Therefore, Wells asked Burk to help, knowing that she would not be paid a soccer coach stipend.

FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List shows that Principal Rivera did not approve Burk to receive supplements (Exhibit 1). Burk assisted the soccer team by completing the same duties (e.g., fundraising, senior night, bus forms, physicals, tracking students) that she performed as a teacher/assistant soccer coach in 2019-20. Kotouch said Wells informed him that Burk assisted the soccer program (Exhibits 10 & 16).

At year’s end, Hayden was on record as the assistant wrestling coach, Hayden gave Burk the wrestling supplement through a mobile payment service (Exhibit 5). Hayden did not coach wrestling. Hayden erroneously received a wrestling supplement and did not coach wrestling. Wells said Hayden forwarded the $2,757 wrestling supplement to him. In turn, he provided the $2,757 wrestling supplement to his CPA mother to ensure that the appropriate federal taxes were taken. Afterward, Wells transferred $1,913 of the $2,757 wrestling supplement through a mobile payment service from Hayden to Burk.

**Investigators Note:** Principal Rivera, August 26, 2021, email reply shows that she was unaware of Hayden receiving a wrestling supplement and transferring the wrestling supplement to Burk through a mobile payment service on March 23, 2021 (Exhibits 3 & 5). FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms Hayden received a $2,757 wrestling supplement, not a soccer supplement (Exhibit 1). **See Figure 10, an inappropriate wrestling supplement from Hayden to Burk.**

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RECORDS ANALYSIS

Exhibit 1: FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List
Exhibit 2: Payment transaction receipt between R. Wells & L. Burk
Exhibit 3: Principal E. Rivera 08-26-21, email response
Exhibit 4: Kotouch 09-08-21, email response
Exhibit 5: Payment transaction receipt between L. Hayden & L. Burk
Exhibit 6: Text Message between R. Kotouch & A. Blum (May 14-15-21, 2021)
Exhibit 7: 05-21-21, Conference Notes Between Rivera, Loyd, Kotouch, Blum
Exhibit 8: Payment transaction receipt between R. Wells & A. Blum
Exhibit 9: Kotouch 09-09-21, email response
Exhibit 10: Kotouch 09-10-21, email response
Exhibit 11: Loyd September 9-10, 2021, email response
Exhibit 12: Blum 10-21-21, email response
Exhibit 13: FHCHS 2019-20 Seasonal Supplement List
Exhibit 14: District PeopleSoft Personnel Record, L. Burk
Exhibit 15: FHCHS Bowling Team
Exhibit 16: R. Wells 08-30-21, email response
Exhibit 17: R. Wells 01-11-22 email reply from 20-day letter
Exhibit 18: L. Hayden 01-14-22 email reply from 20-day letter
Exhibit 19: E. Rivera 01-14-22 email reply from 20-day letter
Exhibit 20: L. Burk 01-14-22 email reply from 20-day letter

From August 5, 2021, through September 17, 2021, OIG staff reviewed the above-listed documents provided by witnesses. The review disclosed the following:

FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list shows various supplements received for Anjelica Blum, Ryan Wells, Laura Hayden, and other coaches (See Tables 5-7). Lauren Burk did not receive a supplement(s) in 2020-21 (Exhibit 1).
The Principal confirmed that she mistakenly approved Blum to receive the bowling supplement on December 7, 2020.

The Principal confirmed that Wells should have received a bowling supplement, and not Blum, in addition to his two supplements received, fall girls sport and soccer. Principal Rivera said Wells received the fall girls sport supplement because he assisted in supervising fall female sports practices and games when several events were occurring on campus simultaneously.

Hayden was not the wrestling coach and should not have received a wrestling supplement. The Principal admits that she completed the athletic supplements list and that it was an error that Hayden received the wrestling supplement. Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch said he did not approve Hayden to receive a wrestling supplement, nor did the wrestling coach request Hayden to coach the wrestling team.

On August 18, 2021, Wells provided the OIG a mobile payment receipt showing that Wells transferred $1913 of the $2,124 bowling supplement originally paid to Blum on December 7, 2020, to Burk on December 11, 2020 (Exhibit 2).

Principal Rivera’s August 26, 2021 email response shows that teacher Ryan Nani assisted the FHCHS sports programs while Kotouch was away on personal leave. Anjelica Blum received a bowling supplement mistakenly and transferred part of the bowling supplement to Ryan Wells through a mobile payment service. Rivera's email further confirmed that Laura Hayden inappropriately received a wrestling supplement and transferred part of the supplement to Lauren Burk through a mobile payment service. Burk did not coach wrestling. Hayden said she gave Burk the wrestling
supplement because Burk assisted the soccer program with Wells (Exhibit 3).

Kotouch provided the OIG an email response on September 8, 2021, showing Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) process for reviewing and submitting athletic coaches’ seasonal supplements for payment approval (Exhibit 4).

Hayden provided the OIG a mobile payment service receipt showing she transferred $1,800 of the $2,757 wrestling supplement to Burk on March 23, 2021 (Exhibit 5).

Principal Rivera provided the OIG text messages between Anjelica Blum and Athletic Director (AD) Ronald Kotouch, showing that Blum asked Kotouch about Wells receiving an assistant flag football supplement. Kotouch told Blum that Wells could not receive a flag football supplement because he did not participate in flag football (Exhibit 6). FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms that Wells did not receive a flag football supplement.

Rivera provided the OIG conference notes minutes between herself, Loyd, Kotouch, and Blum on June 8, 2021. The conference notes addressed Blum’s inquiry about Wells receiving a flag football supplement and Blum stating she did not coach bowling and still received a bowling supplement. Blum gave the bowling supplement to Wells. (Exhibit 7).

Wells provided the OIG a mobile payment receipt showing that Blum transferred part of the bowling supplement to Wells, $1,344, on December 11, 2020 (Exhibit 8).

Kotouch provided the OIG an email response on September 9, 2021, showing the FHCHS Winter coaches supplement spreadsheet, and confirmed Hayden was not a wrestling coach (Exhibit 9).

Kotouch provided the OIG an email response on September 10, 2021, demonstrating that Wells informed him that Burk assisted the soccer program (Exhibit 10).

Loyd provided the OIG an email response on September 9-10, 2021, containing a fall supplements spreadsheet showing two vacant wrestling coaches’ positions in 2020-21 (Exhibit 11).

FHCHS 2019-20 seasonal supplement list shows total supplements received for teacher Lauren Burk. Burk received a $2,124 bowling supplement on December 9, 2019, and a $2,124 soccer supplement on March 16, 2020. The soccer supplement Burk received in March 2020 is
one month after her promotion to Single School Culture Coordinator in February 2020. The total athletic supplement Burk received in 2019-20 was $4,248 (Exhibit 13).

District PeopleSoft Personnel Records show that Burk was promoted to Single School Culture Coordinator on February 20, 2020 (Exhibit 14).

On August 5, 2021, Principal Rivera provided the OIG Bowling photos to demonstrate that FHCHS Bowling Team participated in District sanctioned events. Burk assisted the bowling team with fundraising, senior night, bus forms, physicals, and tracking of students (Exhibit 15).

Wells provided the OIG an email response on August 30, 2021, stating that Burk assisted FHCHS bowling and soccer programs (Exhibit 16).

Wells January 11, 2020, email reply from the 20-day letter emailed to him from OIG on December 7, 2021 (Exhibit 17).

CONCLUSION

It is alleged that Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk, and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden violated 2.61.3.d.f Fraud, 3.02.5.c.f.i Code of Ethics, School Board Administrative Policies and Procedures Payroll/Accounting Services, Page-15, paragraphs 2 & 4, The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida, and the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Associations, Appendix B-Supplements, subsection-3, and School Bulletin #P-14495-CLS/K12, Guides for Club Supplements. In that, staff that did not coach a sport collected and received 2020-21 annual athletic coaches’ supplements. The staff who received a supplement despite not coaching did not return the supplement but instead transferred a portion of those funds through a mobile payment service to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as payment, despite Wells and Burk not being authorized as coaches.

During the course of the investigation, Senior Investigator Robert Sheppard discovered information indicating that Hayden, Burk, and Wells did violate, 2.61 Fraud, 3.02 Code of Ethics, School Board Administrative Policies and Procedures Payroll/Accounting Services, The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida, and the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Associations, Appendix B—Supplements, subsections (1)(2), and #P14495-CLS/K12 Guidelines for Club and Sports Supplements. In that, staff did not coach a sport collected and received 2020-21 annual athletic coaches’ supplements. The staff who received a supplement despite not coaching did not return the supplement but instead transferred a portion of those funds through a mobile payment service to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as payment.
Principal Esther Rivera said Athletic Director (AD) Ronald Kotouch reported concerns regarding Anjelica Blum. Principal Rivera contacted the District’s Employee Labor Relations (ELR) Offices and relayed the same reported concerns. Per ELR’s consequential options, Principal Rivera conducted a conference meeting on May 21, 2021, with Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd, Kotouch, and Blum. At the conference meeting, Blum admitted that she received a bowling supplement and did not coach bowling (Exhibit 7). Blum further admitted that she transferred the bowling supplement to Wells on December 11, 2020. Principal Rivera admitted that she mistakenly approved Blum to receive the $2,124 assistant coaches bowling supplement. Rivera said Ryan Wells should have received the bowling supplement, not Blum, and that she was unaware that Blum transferred the bowling supplement to Wells through a mobile payment service.

Wells said his mother Certified Public Accountant (CPA), calculated the federal taxes to be taken from the $2,124 bowling supplement. Wells received $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement from Blum via a mobile payment service on December 11, 2020, and transferred $1,913 to Lauren Burk (bowling supplement) on the same day through a mobile payment service (Exhibits 2 & 8). Lauren Burk became an administrator Single School Culture Coordinator in February 2020, six months before the official bowling season, and was not eligible to receive a 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement under the terms of the CTA collective bargaining agreement per Principal Rivera. The 2020-21 FHCHS Seasonal Supplement List confirms that Principal Rivera disapproved of Burk receiving a bowling supplement (Exhibit 1). However, despite Burk not being approved by Principal Rivera to receive a bowling supplement, Wells provided Burk the supplement through a mobile payment service (Exhibit 12). See Figure 11, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Blum to Wells to Burk.

Hayden is the cross-country head coach. In error, Hayden received a $2,757 wrestling supplement on March 12, 2021. Hayden was not the wrestling coach (Exhibits 1 & 3). Principal Rivera and Kotouch said Leslie Toussaint was the wrestling coach, and Toussaint did not submit documentation on behalf of Hayden as an assistant wrestling coach (Exhibit 4). FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms that Toussaint was the wrestling coach.

On March 23, 2021, Hayden facilitated a mobile payment transaction and transferred the wrestling supplement to Burk. Burk was not eligible for an assistant coach’s supplement due to her position as an administrator, nor did Burk perform the duties of the wrestling
coach. The transaction receipt between Hayden and Burk shows a photo of Hayden and comments stating, "The best wrestling coach out there." (Exhibit 5).

Hayden said that if she were aware that Burk was an administrator, she would not have transferred the wrestling supplement to Burk. Hayden was not the approved wrestling coach, and the wrestling supplement she received was an error. Hayden did not inform the Principal or District payroll officials about the wrestling supplement. Hayden knowingly transferred the inappropriate wrestling supplement she received to Burk, who was not eligible to receive a supplement, nor did Burk coach wrestling (Exhibit 5). See Figure 12, an inappropriate wrestling supplement from Hayden to Burk

Burk is an administrator whom Principal Rivera did not approve to receive an athletic supplement. However, Burk assisted the bowling and soccer programs. The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the School Board of Palm Beach County, Florida and The Teachers Association, Appendix-B states in part, "District may fill the position with an employee assigned to a different work site or with personnel not in the T-bargaining unit."

Principal Rivera said she was aware of Burk assisting the bowling program but was not aware of Burk assisting the soccer program. FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list shows Principal Rivera did not approve Burk to receive a bowling or soccer supplement. However, despite Principal Rivera’s disapproval of Burk receiving a bowling or soccer supplement, Burk received two unofficial supplement payments for bowling and soccer through a mobile payment service from Wells and Hayden.

Hayden and Wells did not inform Principal Rivera about the personal financial transactions to Burk, nor did they notify District officials of the inappropriate supplements received from the District payroll department. District personnel records further show that Hayden, Burk, and Wells reside at the same residence and that Burk and Wells are in a relationship. District Code of Ethics Policy 3.02.4.g, states in part, "each employee agrees and pledges to avoid conflicts of interest or any appearance of impropriety."

Based on the documentation reviewed and testimony obtained, OIG staff determined there was sufficient evidence to prove that Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Lauren Burk, and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden enlisted staff members that did not coach a sport to collect and receive the 2020-21 annual athletic coaches supplement. Staff members who received a supplement transferred a portion of those funds through a mobile payment service to Mr. Wells and Ms. Burk as a payment thus, the Allegation was **Substantiated.**
ALLEGATION 2

Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) Principal Esther Rivera violated Florida Statute 1012.28(1) and (3) Public School Personnel; Duties of School Principals, and School Board Policy, 1.014.1.2. Responsibilities of Principals, by erroneously approving athletic assistant coaches' supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sports, thus unintentionally enabling staff to receive supplements.

Per Florida Statutes 1012.28(1) and (3), Public School Personnel; Duties of School Principals:

"1. Public school principals shall supervise public school personnel as the District school board determines necessary.

3. Each school principal is responsible for the performance of all personnel employed by the district school board and assigned to the school to which the Principal is assigned. The school principal faithfully and effectively apply the personnel evaluation system approved pursuant to s.1012.34."

Per School Board Policy 1.014.1.2. Responsibilities of Principals:

"1. The Principals' responsibilities and duties are as stated in the appropriate federal laws and rules, Florida statutes, state board of education rules, and school board policies, and as delegated herein. The Principal shall be the administrative and supervisory instructional leaders of the school, and shall be responsible for the policies of the school board as directed by the superintendent.

2. The Principal shall assume responsibility for the leadership of the school staff by providing guidance and assistance in the implementation of the District's curriculum. The management of the school plant and of the financial affairs of the school shall be among the prime responsibilities of the Principal."

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

On August 4, 2021, a sworn recorded interview of Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) Principal Esther Rivera was conducted at FHCHS in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Rivera” as it relates to the allegation:

Principal Rivera admitted that she completed and approved the 2020-21 athletic supplements list payable to athletic coaches. Rivera erroneously approved Math Teacher, flag football coach Anjelica Blum to receive a $2,124 bowling supplement on December
7, 2020; Blum did not coach bowling. FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms that Blum received a bowling supplement on December 7, 2020 (Exhibit 1).

Blum did not initially inform Principal Rivera or District payroll officials about the inappropriate bowling supplement. She informed Principal Rivera approximately six months after, on May 21, 2021, during a conference note meeting between Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch and Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd regarding another supplements-related incident (Exhibit 7).

Moving forward, Blum transferred the $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement to Math Teacher bowling and soccer coach Ryan Wells on December 11, 2020, through a mobile payment service (Exhibit 8). In turn, Wells transferred $1,913 of the bowling supplement on December 11, 2020, through a mobile payment service to administrator Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk (Exhibit 5).

**Investigator Note** Burk has been an administrator, Single School Culture Coordinator since February 2020. Principal Rivera said administrators are not approved to receive an athletic supplement. (Exhibit 3).

Principal Rivera said she was aware that Burk assisted the bowling program with Wells. FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List confirms that Principal Rivera did not approve Burk to receive a bowling supplement and that Blum received the bowling supplement on December 7, 2020. Blum did not coach bowling.

Blum transferred the inappropriate bowling supplement to Wells on December 11, 2020, and Wells transferred the same inappropriate bowling supplement to Burk on December 11, 2020. See Figure 13, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Rivera to Blum to Wells to Burk.

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Blum did not report an inappropriate receipt of $2,124 bowling supplement to Principal Rivera or District Payroll Officials. On May 21, 2021, during a conference note meeting between Principal Rivera, Loyd, Kotouch regarding a supplement related incident, Blum admitted that she received a $2,124 bowling supplement.

Through a mobile payment service, Wells transferred $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement to Burk on December 11, 2020. Burk is an administrator. Per Principal Rivera administrators are not approved to receive an athletic supplement.

Burk ultimately received a bowling supplement through Principal Rivera’s erroneous approval of Blum receiving a bowling supplement (Exhibit 1).

Spanish, Avid, Teacher cross-country, and track & field coach Laura Hayden received a $2,757 wrestling supplement. Leslie Toussaint was the head wrestling coach. Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch said he did not receive any documentation or verbal requests from Toussaint to list Hayden as an assistant wrestling coach (Exhibits 3 & 4). Principal Rivera said she is responsible for approving athletic supplements payable to athletic coaches.

**Investigator Note** On March 12, 2021, Hayden erroneously received a $2,757 wrestling supplement. The FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement Lists confirm that Hayden received an inappropriate wrestling supplement. Hayden did not coach wrestling.

Hayden did not inform Principal Rivera or District payroll officials about the inappropriate wrestling supplement. Hayden transferred the wrestling supplement through a mobile payment service to Burk on March 23, 2021. See Figure 14, an inappropriate bowling supplement from Principal Rivera to Hayden to Burk.

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Figure 14

In error Principal Rivera approved Hayden to receive an inappropriate $2,757 wrestling supplement on March 12, 2021

Hayden did not report receipt of the inappropriate $2,757 wrestling supplement to Principal Rivera or District Payroll Officials

Through a mobile payment service, Hayden transferred $1,800 of the $2,757 wrestling supplement to Burk

Burk is an administrator. Administrators are not approved to receive an athletic supplement per Principal Rivera

Burk did not coach wrestling; however, Burk ultimately received a wrestling supplement through Principal Rivera's erroneous approval of Hayden receiving a wrestling supplement.

RECORDS ANALYSIS

Exhibit 1: FHCHS 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List
Exhibit 3: Principal E. Rivera 08-26-21, email response
Exhibit 4: Kotouch 09-08-21, email response
Exhibit 5: Payment transaction receipt between L. Hayden & L. Burk
Exhibit 7: 05-21-21, Conference Notes Between Rivera, Loyd, Kotouch, Blum
Exhibit 8: Payment transaction receipt between R. Wells & A. Blum

From August 5, 2021, through September 17, 2021, OIG staff reviewed the above-listed documents provided by witnesses. The review disclosed the following:

FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list shows various supplements received for Anjelica Blum, Ryan Wells, Laura Hayden, and other coaches (See Tables 5-7). Lauren Burk did not receive a supplement(s) in 2020-21 (Exhibit 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Sport Coached</th>
<th>Supplement Received</th>
<th>Supplement Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Bowling</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$2,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Female Sports 9th Grade</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$2,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anjelica Blum</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Flag-Football</td>
<td>05-10-21</td>
<td>$3,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$7,859.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Principal confirmed that she mistakenly approved Blum to receive the bowling supplement on December 7, 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Sport Coached</th>
<th>Supplement Received</th>
<th>Supplement Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Wells</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Fall Girls Sport</td>
<td>12-07-20</td>
<td>$3,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Wells</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>03-01-21</td>
<td>$3,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$7,222.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Principal confirmed that Wells should have received a bowling supplement, and not Blum, in addition to his two supplements received, fall girls sport and soccer.
### Table 7: Laura Hayden Athletics Supplement(s) Received in 2020-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Sport Coached</th>
<th>Supplement Received</th>
<th>Supplement Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laura Hayden</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Cross Country (g)</td>
<td>12-07-21</td>
<td>$2,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Hayden</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Wrestling (g)</td>
<td>03-12-21</td>
<td>$2,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura Hayden</td>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Track &amp; field (g)</td>
<td>05-10-21</td>
<td>$3,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$8,688.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hayden was not the wrestling coach and should not have received a wrestling supplement. The Principal admits it was an error that Hayden received the wrestling supplement.

Principal Rivera’s August 26, 2021 email response shows that teacher Ryan Nani assisted the FHCHS sports programs while Kotouch was away on personal leave. Anjelica Blum received a bowling supplement mistakenly and transferred part of the bowling supplement to Ryan Wells through a mobile payment service. Rivera’s email further confirmed that Laura Hayden inappropriately received a wrestling supplement and transferred part of the supplement to Lauren Burk through a mobile payment service (Exhibit 3).

Kotouch provided the OIG an email response on September 8, 2021, showing Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) process for reviewing and submitting athletic coaches’ seasonal supplements for payment approval (Exhibit 4).

Hayden provided the OIG a mobile payment service receipt showing she transferred $1,800 of the $2,757 wrestling supplement to Burk on March 23, 2021 (Exhibit 5).

Rivera provided the OIG conference notes minutes between herself, Loyd, Kotouch, and Blum on June 8, 2021. The conference notes addressed Blum’s inquiry about Wells receiving a flag football supplement and Blum stating she did not coach bowling and still received a bowling supplement. Blum gave the bowling supplement to Wells. (Exhibit 7).

Wells provided the OIG a mobile payment receipt showing that Blum transferred part of the bowling supplement to Wells, $1,344, on December 11, 2020 (Exhibit 8).

**CONCLUSION**

It is alleged that Principal Esther Rivera, Math Teacher Ryan Wells, Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk and Spanish Teacher Laura Hayden violated Florida Statute 1012.28(1) and (3) Public School Personnel, Duties of School Principals, and School Board Policy, 1.014.1.2. Responsibilities of Principals, by erroneously approving staff to receive supplements.
Principal Rivera is responsible for monitoring and supervising all performances of school personnel. Because of Principal Rivera's erroneous approval of supplements, Burk received two unapproved athletic supplements, bowling, and soccer, from Wells and Hayden. **See Figure 15, Principal Rivera approved inappropriate supplements, bowling, and wrestling**

**Figure 15**

Based on the documentation reviewed and testimony obtained, OIG staff determined there was sufficient evidence to prove that Principal Rivera approved ineligible staff to receive athletic assistant coaches' supplements erroneously; thus, the Allegation was **Substantiated**. However, it should be noted that Principal Rivera immediately took action to rectify the situation and promptly report the matter. Principal Rivera has further indicated in her response that she has instituted a process to ensure the legitimacy of coaching supplements going forward.

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*The evidentiary standard used by the School District of Palm Beach County OIG in determining whether the facts and claims asserted in the complaint were proven or disproven is based upon the preponderance of the evidence. Preponderance of the evidence is contrasted with "beyond a reasonable doubt," which is the more severe test required to convict a criminal and "clear and convincing evidence," a standard describing proof of a matter established to be substantially more likely than not to be true. OIG investigative findings classified as "substantiated" means there was sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions occurred and there was a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation. Investigative findings classified as "unfounded" means sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did not occur and there was no violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to substantiate the allegation. Investigative findings classified as "unsubstantiated" means there was insufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did or did not occur and a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation could not be proven or disproven.*
ATTESTATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under penalty of perjury, to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, the contents of this report are true and accurate; and I have not knowingly or willfully deprived or allowed another to deprive, the subject of the investigation of any rights contained in Sections 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes. This investigation was conducted pursuant to School District Policy 1.092, Inspector General, and in accordance with applicable Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General as published by the Association of Inspectors General.

[Signature]
Robert Sheppard, Senior Investigator

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF PALM BEACH

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me this 21 day of March, 2022, by Robert Sheppard, Senior Investigator for the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General, who is personally known by me.

[Signature of Notary Public]
Notary Public or Law Enforcement Officer

This investigation was conducted by Senior Investigator Robert Sheppard, supervised by Director of Investigations Oscar Restrepo and approved by Inspector General Teresa Michael. The investigation was conducted in accordance with guidance from the Association of Inspectors General handbook and within standards as prescribed by Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

Reviewed by: [Signature]
Oscar Restrepo, Director of Investigations
Date: 3/23/22

Approved by: [Signature]
Teresa Michael, Inspector General
Date: 3/23/22
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OIG File
Exhibit 1

REDACTED

Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS)

2020-21 Seasonal Supplement List
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2021-2022 BASKETBALL JV COACH GIRLS HS: P

2021-2022 TENNIS ASSIST COACH (SPRING) HS: P
Exhibit 2

REDACTED

December 11, 2021,
Mobile Payment Transaction Between
Math Teacher Ryan Wells
Single School Culture Coordinator Lauren Burk
Payment details

Lauren Cook

"✓ ✓"

- $1,913

Social activity

❤️ 0  📚 0

Status

Complete

Payment method

Bank •

Transaction details

December 11, 2020, 10:47 AM • Private

Paid to

Type of transaction

Payments between friends

Transaction ID
Morning!

Thank you for meeting with me today. I apologize for this whole situation and wish it was never an issue in the first place.

Please see below for documents we discussed:
- Conversation between Ron, Blum, and myself after I did not receive the Flag Stipend (multiple images).
- Venmo Transactions from Blum to myself then to Burk for the Bowling Stipend.
- I do not have any transactions for soccer as Ms. Hayden must have sent Burk the funds directly (not sure what dollar amount or percentage of the stipend).

- Screenshots of a few emails sent to the treasurer/AD showing duties I performed outside of normal soccer, bowling, and teaching responsibilities (Asst. AD work).

- Folders for the work I did with Coach Ron to earn a stipend: Link to Ticket Reports (you may have to electronically have Mr. Kolouch allow you access). My signature will be on forms other than just sports I coach as I was at many games and deposited and recorded funds.

Please let me know if there are any other documents that you may need and I can try to find them. I hope this issue can be resolved.

Thank You.

Mr. Ryan Wells  
Mathematics Coach  
Forest Hill Community High School  
Office Number:  
Twitter:

10 attachments

IMG_1422.jpg  
90K

IMG_1419.jpg  
139K
Exhibit 3

REDACTED

Principal Esther Rivera
August 26, 2021, Email Response
Investigation

4 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

To: Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

Thu, Aug 26, 2021 at 1:53 PM

Good afternoon Principal Rivera,

I'm wrapping up my investigative report, and I have a few uncertainties which respectfully require your clarification.

- What responsibilities (Sports) did Ryan Taylor Nani perform/conduct? Was he the official/unofficial Assistant Athletic Director??
- I'm aware and understand that inadvertently Blum received the $2124 bowling supplement...Did you approve Blum to transfer "cash-app" the bowling supplement she received to Wells?
- The FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list shows that on December 7, 2020, Wells received a $3611 Female Sports Coach Supplement...Question: Did Wells receive the female sport supplement for Bowling? or???
- 2020-21 Hayden agreed to assist the soccer program, shortly after agreeing to support the soccer program she realized that she could not assist the program due to conflict of schedule...Nonetheless, Hayden received a wrestling supplement and did not coach wrestling...Hayden said she cash-app the wrestling supplement to Burk because Burk did all of the paperwork for the soccer program...did you approve or were you aware that Hayden transferred the wrestling supplement to Burk for assisting the soccer program?
- Were you aware that administrators can or cannot receive athletic supplements at the time of the 2020-21 fall/spring supplements disbursements to athletics coaches?

Thank you Principal Rivera for your timely response...if further information is needed please do not hesitate to contact me at (561) 649-6877/PX#46877

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Thu, Aug 26, 2021 at 2:04 PM

- What responsibilities (Sports) did Ryan Taylor Nani perform/conduct? Was he the official/unofficial Assistant Athletic Director??
- I'm aware and understand that inadvertently Blum received the $2124 bowling supplement...Did you approve Blum to transfer "cash-app" the bowling supplement she received to Wells?
- The FHCHS 2020-21 seasonal supplement list shows that on December 7, 2020, Wells received a $3611 Female Sports Coach Supplement...Question: Did Wells receive the female sport supplement for Bowling? or???
- 2020-21 Hayden agreed to assist the soccer program, shortly after agreeing to support the soccer program she realized that she could not assist the program due to conflict of schedule...Nonetheless, Hayden received a wrestling supplement and did not coach wrestling...Hayden said she cash-app the wrestling supplement to Burk because Burk did all of the paperwork for the soccer program...did you approve or were you aware that Hayden transferred the wrestling supplement to Burk for assisting the soccer program?

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=5307f2626e&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a%3Ar7700643189534904168&simpl=msg-a%3Ar769568573...
Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

Thu, Aug 26, 2021 at 2:16 PM

Esther,

Why did Wells receive the Fall Female Sports Stipend? What did he do?...he received $3611 in the fall season..

Also the 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement shows Hayden received a supplement for wrestling?

Please call if further information is needed...

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch., FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX#: 46577
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Thu, Aug 26, 2021 at 2:36 PM

Why did Wells receive the Fall Female Sports Stipend? What did he do?...he received $3611 in the fall season.

Mr. Wells received the Fall Female Sports Stipend because he assisted in supervising Fall Female Sports practices and games when there were several events occurring simultaneously on campus.

Also the 2020-21 Seasonal Supplement shows Hayden received a supplement for wrestling?

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. This was an error. I will inform professional standards and my instructional superintendent of this error. Mr. Leslie Toussaint was the Coach for Wrestling not Ms. Hayden.
Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 8:11 AM
To: Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

Good morning Principal Rivera,

Did you approve for Blum to receive the $2124 bowling supplement....Did you approve for Blum to cash-app the bowling supplement to Wells or Burk?

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-5877
Fax: 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

---

Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>  Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 8:19 AM
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Good morning Mr. Sheppard. No, I did not approve for Blum to receive the bowling stipend. No, I did not approve Ms. Blum to cash app the bowling stipend to Mr. Wells nor Ms. Burk.

---

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 9:42 AM
To: Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

Thank you......Were you aware that Wells cash app Burk the Bowling supplement he received from Blum...

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33406
Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>  
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  

Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 9:49 AM  

No, I was not aware that Mr. Wells cash append Ms. Burk the bowling supplement he received from Ms. Blum.

Esther M. Rivera  
Principal  
Forest Hill Community High School  
A Title One, IB World School  
6901 Parker Avenue, WPB, Fl. 33405  
P: 561-540-2400  

Follow me on Twitter:  
Follow our School: @FHH_FalconFury
Exhibit 4
Ronald Kotouch
September 8, 2021,
Email Response
Investigation
2 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org> Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 9:47 AM
To: Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>

Good morning sir,

Please explain (FHCHS) process for approving athletic supplements payable to athletic coaches...

- Do you submit coaches’ names to the Principal for payment approval?
- Do head coaches submit agenda(s) or names of assistant coaches who assisted the sports program to your office?
- Did wrestling coach Leslie Touissant submit an agenda to your office that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team?

Please contact my office at your earliest convenience

(561) 649-8877/PX#46877

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, Fl 33406
Phone: (561) 649-8877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org> Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 1:23 PM
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Good afternoon, Mr. Shepard,

- Do you submit coaches’ names to the Principal for payment approval?

Coaches names are submitted to the principals secretary prior to being put into the system for payment.

- Do head coaches submit agenda(s) or names of assistant coaches who assisted the sports program to your office?

Coaches notified me of who their assistant coaches would be and whether or not they would be volunteer or paid. From there, we (AP over Athletics) would do our diligence to ensure that volunteer coaches were approved to be volunteers and paid coaches had fulfilled their requirements to coach and receive a stipend. I never micromanaged anyone from there. If the head coach of the program identified someone as an assistant, I went off of their word that the person identified as an assistant coach was fulfilling their duties to best help that particular program.

- Did wrestling coach Leslie Touissant submit an agenda to your office that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team?

There was not an agenda submitted from coach Leslie Touissant that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team. This was also never communicated by me to the principals secretary that Laura Hayden assisted the wrestling team. I will send a Google sheet that was shared with the principals secretary identifying who should be getting a winter stipend for 2020-2021.
Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 8, 2021, at 9:48 AM, Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]
Exhibit 5
REDACTED
March 23, 2021,
Mobile Payment Transaction
Between
Spanish/Avid Teacher Laura Hayden
&
Single School Culture Coordinator
Lauren Burk
Received $1,800

---

Laura Hayden

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Laura Hayden <laura.hayden@palmbeachschools.org>

Got it... Thank you

On Tue, Aug 17, 2021 at 4:02 PM Laura Hayden <laura.hayden@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

$1,800
Laurita Hayden paid you + $1,800.00
Mar 23
The best wrestling coach out there.
Receipts/IG Investigation
2 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  
Wed, Aug 18, 2021 at 9:08 AM
To: Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>

Good morning Lauren,

If possible, can you please screenshot a copy of the receipt of funds received from L. Hayden...

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
Fax: 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>  
Wed, Aug 18, 2021 at 9:17 AM
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Good morning, Mr. Sheppard:

Attached please find a screenshot of the Venmo transaction between Ms. Hayden and myself.

The comment is in regards to Ms. Hayden explaining that it appeared on her paycheck as wrestling instead of Asst. Soccer.

With appreciation,

Lauren
Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org>
To: Laura Hayden <laura.hayden@palmbeachschoools.org>

Tue, Aug 31, 2021 at 1:28 PM

Hi Ms. Hayden,

I'm wrapping up the investigation and I have a few uncertainties that require your attention. **Question**, Did you coach wrestling?

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org


Laura Hayden <laura.hayden@palmbeachschoools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org>

Tue, Aug 31, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Good afternoon,

**No**, I did not coach wrestling, however this was what appeared on my paycheck under 'Hours and Earnings'.

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Ms. Laura Hayden, M.Ed.
Forest Hill Community High School
11th & 12th Grade AVID Elective Teacher
World Language Teacher

[Quoted text hidden]
Exhibit 6
May 14-15-21, 2021, Text Messages
Between
Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch
&
Math Teacher Anjelica Blum
Wells never got the flag assistant pay

No, he didn't

Will it be on the next one?

He's not getting it

Why not?

He didn't do anything
I talked to him about it at the beginning of the season
So did I the other day

Yea he's not getting one
I emailed you at the beginning of season about it
Yes, I talked to him directly at the end of February
He wasn't getting it anymore

I wish you would have told me.
He wasn't getting it anymore

I wish you would have told me. I would have gotten someone else to handle all the paperwork side of it.

He told me a different story

He was just going to give it to you

It goes towards all the tournaments. Like I'm driving to Ocala now and paying out of pocket for hotels for all star game.

That's what happened with Cook and bowling

Sat, May 15, 4:51 PM

I'm driving home from the all star game and have the girls in the car

Okay, this is done. You tried to play the system and get an extra stipend. Not cool, but it's gotta stop now.

I don't know why you're coming at me. If this was an issue, you should have told me before season, not after.
I don't know why you're coming at me. If this was an issue, you should have told me before season, not after.

It wouldn't be an issue if Ryan did what you told me he was doing

But he didn't do anything

And legit told me he was just giving you a stipend

I don't know why he would say anything at all. But I literally brought the issues to him. I think he did more than he realized he would be.

Fri, May 21, 2:43 PM

Have a problem with the game next week.

District didn't know about it

How was it approved in the past?

I can ask Boca. He's always hosted it.

Okay, Valerie told me it needs to go through a 3rd party and they have...
be, then I should have been notified from the beginning.

Ron AD

Listen, Ryan was giving you the supplement from the beginning

End of story

He didn't do any work for flag football

He flat out told me that he was giving it to you

So please I don't have time for this

Blum

How we spend the money shouldn't matter.

Ron AD

It's a coaching stipend for a coach
I've now had 3 ppl tak to me about this flag football thing. If rather than speculating and doing a he said she said, if you guys want to sit down and have an actual conversation, let me know.

Ron AD

Ryan I talked to you back in Feb that what had been planned wasn't going to work

That's the end of it

I understand that you do a lot with your team but so does everyone else

In regards to coach Blum needing to be paid more
I remember us talking and me saying no I’m not doing paperwork when you asked and that I would be giving it to Blum. I never lied and said I did do paperwork or any other work. Idk what was agreed upon with you two but that’s all I ever said. I don’t want stuff being said that I’m lying cause I didn’t lie about the paperwork nor any other part of this situation.

Blum

I told Ron he would be my assistant. I also went to Ryan in the beginning of season almost every day about team issues, including kicking off my QB, and literally said “let me get your opinion since you are the assistant”. If he wasn’t allowed to be, then I should have been.
End of story

He didn’t do any work for flag football

He flat out told me that he was giving it to you

So please I don’t have time for this

Blum

How we spend the money shouldn’t matter.

Ron AD

It’s a coaching stipend for a coach

Blum

He did what I needed from him, which was be my voice of reason and give advice. Which is exactly what an assistant coach does.
Exhibit 7
May 21, 2021
Conference Note Meeting Minutes
Between
Principal Esther Rivera
Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd
Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch
Math Teacher Anjelica Blum
CONFERENCE NOTES

TO: Anjelica Blum, Mathematics Teacher
FROM: Esther Rivera, Principal
DATE: June 8, 2021
RE: Policies/Procedures/Ethics

The following conference took place at Forest Hill Community High School on 5/21/2021. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the assignment of stipends during the school year.

Present at the meeting were Anjelica Blum (Mathematics Teacher), Ronald Kotorouch (Athletic Director), Antonio Loyd (Asst. Principal) and Esther Rivera (Principal).

Facts, information and/or documents presented for consideration:

1. Mrs. Rivera made the following statements:
   a. On 5/21/2021, I spoke with Ms. Anjelica Blum regarding her request to the Athletic Director, Ronald Kotorouch, inquiring about a Flag Football stipend for Ryan Wells.
   b. I asked Ms. Blum what were the coaching responsibilities of Ryan Wells.
   c. I informed Ms. Blum that only coaches who participated actively with the athletic sport/students and were hired for the season would be able to receive supplements associated with that sport.

2. Ms. Blum made the following statements:
   a. “I went to Mr. Wells for advice. I thought coaches could get paid for advising the team.”
   b. “I did everything for Flag Football. Ryan Wells helped out as an advisor. I thought coaching included completing paperwork.”
   c. “I received the Bowling stipend for the fall and gave it to Mr. Wells.”
   d. “I did not do anything for Bowling.”
   e. “Ms. Cook was the mastermind.”

3. Mr. Kotorouch made the following statements:
   a. “I asked Mr. Wells in February if he was coaching Flag Football. He told me he was not.”
   b. “I received a text from Coach Blum asking why Mr. Wells didn’t get the Asst. Coach stipend for Flag Football.”

4. Expectations/Directives
   a. Effective immediately, no supplemental salary will be issued outside of their assigned function(s). All functions designated for supplements have been delineated in the CTA Collective Bargaining Agreement and/or any other official School District communication.
b. Effective for next season of sports, you are directed to keep documentation of all times of practices, games and attendance sheets for student and coach participation.

5. End of notes.

Should there be any questions, do not hesitate to contact/visit me for further discussion of this matter.

Employee Signature of Receipt: ___________________________ Date: __________

[Signature]

6/8/21

[Signature]
Exhibit 8

REDACTED

December 11, 2020,
Mobile Payment
Transaction Between
Math Teacher Ryan Wells
&
Math Teacher Anjelica Blum
Payment details

AB

Anjelica Blum

"o."

+ $1,344

Social activity

0

0

Status

Complete

Transaction details

December 11, 2020, 10:38 AM - Private

Received from

Type of transaction

Payments between friends

Transaction ID
Morning!

Thank you for meeting with me today. I apologize for this whole situation and wish it was never an issue in the first place.

Please see below for documents we discussed:
- Conversation between Ron, Blum, and myself after I did not receive the Flag Stipend (multiple images).
- Venmo Transactions from Blum to myself then to Burk for the Bowling Stipend.
- I do not have any transactions for soccer as Ms. Hayden must have sent Burk the funds directly (not sure what dollar amount or percentage of the stipend).

- Screenshots of a few emails sent to the treasurer/AD showing duties I performed outside of normal soccer, bowling, and teaching responsibilities (Asst. AD work).

- Folders for the work I did with Coach Ron to earn a stipend: Link to Ticket Reports (you may have to electronically have Mr. Kotouch allow you access). My signature will be on forms other than just sports I coach as I was at many games and deposited and recorded funds.

Please let me know if there are any other documents that you may need and I can try to find them. I hope this issue can be resolved.

Thank You.

--

Mr. Ryan Wells
Mathematics Coach
Forest Hill Community High School
Office Number: 561-540-2435
Twitter:

10 attachments

- IMG_1422.jpg
  90K

- IMG_1419.jpg
  139K
Exhibit 9
REDACTED

Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch
September 9, 2021,
Email Response
**Cheerleading**

- Head Coach
- JV Coach

**Boys Soccer**

- Head Varsity Coach
- Head JV Coach
- JV Assistant Coach
- **Ryan Wells**
- R.Wells@palmbeachschools.org

**Girls Soccer**

- Head Varsity Coach
- Assistant Varsity Coach
- Junior Varsity Head Coach

**Wrestling**

- Head Coach

**Boys Basketball**

- Boys Varsity Head Coach
- Assistant Varsity Coach
- 9th Grade Coach
- Junior Varsity Head Coach

**Girls Basketball**

- Head Varsity Coach
- Assistant Varsity Coach
- JV Head Coach

**Girls Weightlifting**

- Winter Gender Equity Head Coach
- Winter Gender Equity JV Coach
- Winter Gender Equity Freshmen Coach
- Anjelica Blum

**In other sports**

[Signature]

[Handwritten notations:]
- Activity #: 11-05-14-7
- OIG Staff: [Signature]
- Rec’d: 9-21-14
- Redacted: Yes
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- Exhibit/Reference #: [Redacted]
Spreadsheet shared with you: "Winter Supplements"

2 messages

Ronald Kotouch (via Google Sheets) <drive-shares-dm-noreply@google.com>
Reply-To: Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>
To: robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 10:09 AM

ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org has invited you to view the following spreadsheet:

Winter Supplements

Open

Google LLC, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA
You have received this email because ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org shared a spreadsheet with you from Google Sheets.

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>

Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 10:24 AM

Thank you sir, for the winter supplement list....

I attempted to contact you via telephone to cancel our meeting (09/09/21 10:00 AM)....If possible do you have the Fall/Spring lists that you provided to the principal's secretary..

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=530712628e&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1710433559457291672&simply=msg-f%3A17104335594...
Exhibit 10
Athletic Director Ronald Kotouch
September 10, 2021,
Email Response
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  

You’re welcome. I’m looking for those lists now.

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 9, 2021, at 10:25 AM, Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  

The fall supplements were emailed directly to Mrs. Segura from me twice. Once with my recommendations and then again after changes were made by Mrs. Rivera. I can’t find the emails, but I’m sure they are out there in cyberspace somewhere.

The spring supplements were hand written by last year’s AP over Athletics, Antonio Loyd, and handed to Mrs. Segura.

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 9, 2021, at 10:45 AM, Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

You’re welcome. I’m looking for those lists now.
[Quoted text hidden]

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>  

Thank you sir
[Quoted text hidden]

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>  

Good morning Ronald,

Did Ryan Wells submit a request or agenda that Lauren Burk will be the assistant soccer coach in the 2020-21 school year...

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33406
Phone: (651) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org
Ronald Kotouch <ronald.kotouch@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Fri, Sep 10, 2021 at 11:56 AM

He told me verbally that Lauren would be handling the paperwork collection (Athletics packets and insurance) and any administrative work for boys soccer.

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 10, 2021, at 7:51 AM, Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]
Exhibit 11
REDACTED
Assistant Principal Antonio Loyd
September 10, 2021,
Email Response
Investigation
5 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 4:16 PM
To: Antonio Loyd <antonio.loyd@palmbeachschools.org>

Evening sir,

This is Mr. Sheppard from the IG's Office. Respectfully when you have a moment, if available can you provide a copy of the Fall/Spring 2021 supplement list created by Mr. Kotouch. The list shows Coaches who were submitted for pay. Kotouch inferred that you might have copies...If not available please advise.

If further clarification is needed please contact me at (561) 649-6877/ PX#46877

Have a great day.
--
Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch., FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Antonio Loyd <antonio.loyd@palmbeachschools.org>  Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 4:26 PM
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Good Evening,
Supplement lists did not go through me. The list of coaches to be paid were kept between Ms. Rivera and Mr. Kotouch. The only list I was privy to were the coaches list that's attached.

对此 2021-2022 Coaches

Regards,

[Quoted text hidden]

--
With sincere gratitude and appreciation,

Antonio Loyd
Assistant Principal
Forest Hill Community High School
FALCONS S.O.A.R.

"We must be like the Falcon with superhuman acuity and wings that dig through the air." - Self
On Thu, Sep 9, 2021 at 4:16 PM Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

Try again. I have changed your access.

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Antonio Loyd <antonio.loyd@palmbeachschools.org>

Thank you!
Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch. FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
P# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org
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OGS Staff: ____________
Date Rec'd: ____________
Rec'd: ____________
Redacted: ____________
Pages: ____________
Exhibit/Reference # ____________

Exhibit 12
Math Teacher Anjelica Blum
October 21, 2021,
Email Response
I.G. investigation
2 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org>
To: Anjelica Blum <anjelica.blum@palmbeachschoools.org>

Thu, Oct 21, 2021 at 1:41 PM

Hi Anjelica,

Reviewing the cash app receipt, bowling supplement you transferred to Wells on December 11, 2020, why did you only transfer a portion $1,344 of the $2,124 bowling supplement...

If further information is needed please contact my office at (561) 649-8877 or px#46877
--
Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-8877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org

anjelica.blum@palmbeachschoools.org <anjelica.blum@palmbeachschoools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org>

Thu, Oct 21, 2021 at 4:53 PM

Hello Mr. Sheppard,

Money was taken out to account for taxes. Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Anjelica Blum

On Oct 21, 2021, at 1:41 PM, Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschoools.org> wrote:

Hi Anjelica,

[Quoted text hidden]
Exhibit 13

REDACTED

Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS)

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Exhibit 14
District PeopleSoft Personnel Record,
Lauren Burk
## Employment Information

**Position:** Coordinator, Single Sch Culture  
**Position Number:** 10105481

### Work Location Details
- **Effective Date:** 07/02/2020
- **Effective Sequence:** 0
- **HRT Status:** Active
- **Payroll Status:** Active

### Position Entry Details
- **Position Entry Date:** 02/20/2020
- **Location:** Forest Hill High  
- **Establishment ID:** SDPBC  
- **Department:** 0581  
- **Last Start Date:** 08/22/2011

### Job Data Details
- **Regulatory Region:** USA  
- **Company:** PBC  
- **Business Unit:** SDPBC  
- **Department:** 0581

### Employment Data

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### Additional Information
- **Updated/Display:** Include History
- **Activity:** 
- **OIG Staff:** 
- **Date Rec'd:** 9/13/2021
- **Page:** 1
- **Record:** 
- **Redacted:** Yes
- **N/A:** No
- **Req'd:** Yes
- **TBD:** 
- **Exhibit/Reference:** 13
Good morning Ms. Samuels,

My name is Robert Sheppard with the District's Inspector General Office and I'm currently conducting an investigation at Forest Hill Community High School, the investigation involves athletic supplements. Respectfully, would you please review the below questions and advise.

- Are Single School Culture Coordinators identified as administrators?
- Are Single School Culture Coordinator eligible to receive athletic supplements?

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd. Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33409
Phone: (561) 640-5877
Fax: 48877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

---

Nancy Samuels <nancy.samuels@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Bertha Beltran <bertha.beltran@palmbeachschools.org>, Teri Jensen <teri.jensen@palmbeachschools.org>, Barbara Colombrita <barbara.colombrita@palmbeachschools.org>

Mr. Sheppard,

Sorry I was out of the office yesterday. If no teachers are willing to perform the duties at the school, the principal is permitted to have other employees fill the job. Otherwise, the student body would suffer (programs would not be available to them). I believe HR reviews cases that are out of the ordinary.

Nancy

[Quoted text hidden]
Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Yetta Greene <yetta.green@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Dec 6, 2021 at 11:54 AM

Ms. Miyares,

Reference your response to my initial question posed to you in September 2021 regarding administrators (Single School Culture Coordinators) receiving an athletic supplement. **Question,** is there a District policy, a school operating procedure, or any guidelines that supports Single School Culture Coordinators receiving a supplement(s) the same as instructional-line employees?

If further clarity is needed, respectfully, please contact me at (561) 649-6877 or PX#46877

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33408
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

On Mon, Sep 20, 2021 at 10:56 AM Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Yetta Greene <yetta.green@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Dec 6, 2021 at 2:10 PM

Single School Culture Coordinators are an "S2" on the pay scale and fall under the administrative level. It's my understanding that personnel who are considered administrators are not eligible for supplement pay. I would have to check in with Accounting on the District policy. I can be back to you in a bit.

Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Yetta Greene <yetta.green@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Dec 6, 2021 at 2:47 PM

ok

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33408
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Yetta Greene <yetta.green@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Dec 6, 2021 at 2:48 PM

I have confirmed with Accounting that the Single School Culture Coordinator position is not eligible for supplement pay since they are not an instructional position.

Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Yetta Greene <yetta.green@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Dec 6, 2021 at 3:31 PM

Again thank you!!! **Question,** could you please define what is the supplement "winter-sport & fall/sport female"?

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch, FL 33408
Phone: (561) 649-6877

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=5307f2628e&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a%3Ar8251579602483157914&simplied=msg-a%3Ar825323208...
Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Athletic supplements are the one time, seasonal assigned dollar amount for coaching a sport.

"Head Varsity Boys Basketball Coach"

"Female Sports Varsity Coach"

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>

Thank you!!

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3139 Forest Hill Blvd, Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 849-6877
Fax: 48877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org
**Question-athletic supplements**

11 messages

**Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>**

To: TERI Jensen <teri.jensen@palmbeachschools.org>  
Thu, Sep 16, 2021 at 10:51 AM

Good morning Terri,

This is Robert from the IG's Office....Are administrators (Single School Culture Coordinators) eligible/allowed to receive an athletic supplement??

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.  
Senior Investigator (SRI)  
Office of Inspector General  
5132 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306  
West Palm Beach, FL 33408  
Phone: (561) 640-8677  
Fax: 406777  
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

---

**TERI Jensen <teri.jensen@palmbeachschools.org>**

To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>, Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>, Yetta Greene <yetta.greene@palmbeachschools.org>  
Thu, Sep 16, 2021 at 11:49 AM

Mr. Sheppard, I am including Valerie Miyares and Yetta Greene in this email as they oversee athletic programs.

Valerie and Yetta, can you please answer Mr. Sheppard's question?

Thank you--Teri

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>**

To: TERI Jensen <teri.jensen@palmbeachschools.org>  
Cc: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>, Yetta Greene <yetta.greene@palmbeachschools.org>  
Mon, Sep 20, 2021 at 10:56 AM

Only administrative level personnel are ineligible for supplements. These positions usually fall on the instructional line and would be eligible for supplement pay.

Valerie Miyares, MS, CAA  
Manager - District Athletics  
Palm Beach County School District  
Office: (561) 434-7341

[Quoted text hidden]

---

**Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>**

To: Valerie Miyares <valerie.miyares@palmbeachschools.org>  
Mon, Sep 20, 2021 at 10:57 AM

Thank you for the clarification...

[Quoted text hidden]

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Exhibit 15

REDACTED

Forest Hill Community High School
(FHCHS)

Bowling Team
**P.B.C. HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE CENTRAL DIVISION 2020 SCHEDULE**

**MATCHES**
$2.00 PER PERSON PER GAME

**PRACTICE**
$1.00 PER PERSON PER GAME

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Practice starts at 3:30 promptly! Please be on time!

All matches and practices must be held at this center

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<td><strong>Jupiter</strong></td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>21-22</td>
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<td>23-24</td>
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<td>25-26</td>
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<td><strong>9-10</strong></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>10/22</td>
<td><strong>Jupiter</strong></td>
<td>10-8</td>
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<td>12-3</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>10/29</td>
<td><strong>Jupiter</strong></td>
<td>10-8</td>
<td><strong>29-23</strong></td>
<td>1-10</td>
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November 16 - County Championship

November 30 - Tri-County Championship
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<th>Team #</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wellington - Boys</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Wellington - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pahokee - Boys</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Pahokee - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Royal Palm Beach - Boys</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Royal Palm Beach - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Palm Beach Central - Boys</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Palm Beach Central - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lake Worth - Boys</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Lake Worth - Girls</td>
</tr>
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<td>*</td>
<td>Riveria Bch Prep - Boys</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Riveria Beach Prep - Girls *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>John I. Leonard - Boys</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>John I. Leonard - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Somerset Canyons - Boys</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Somerset Canyons - Girls *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Forest Hill - Boys</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Forest Hill - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Glades Central - Boys</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Glades Central - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>King's Academy - Boys</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>King's Academy - Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Greenacres Christian - Boys</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Greenacres Christian - Girls *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

District Tournaments- NONE THIS YEAR    STATE FINALS - NOV 3RD AND 4TH

Each school should have their own awards presentation!

* Teams not eligible for Division Championship
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**League Information**

- **League Code**: 
- **League**: 

**Weekly Scores**

- **Week No.**:  
- **AM**: 
- **PM**: 

**Team Information**

- **Team**: 
- **Opposing Team**: 

**Handicaps**

- **Total Handicap**: 
- **Handicap by Lane**: 
- **Opposing Team Handicap**: 
- **Total Opposing Team Handicap**: 

**Signatures**

- Opposing Team Captain's Signature: 
- Opposing Team Captain's Signature: 

**Score Sheet Notes**

- Complete all totals.
- Check handicaps - complete.
------ Forwarded message ------
From: Lauren Cook <lauren.cook@palmbeachschools.org>
Date: Sat, Nov 14, 2020 at 7:00 AM
Subject: Bowling Pics
To: <lauren.cook@palmbeachschools.org>

13 attachments

IMG-5208.jpg
2065K

IMG-5210.jpg
2038K

IMG-5211.jpg
1832K

IMG-5215.jpg
1848K
Fwd: Bowling Pics

1 message

Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>  Thu, Aug 5, 2021 at 1:36 PM
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Here are some pics of our bowling team.

Esther M. Rivera
Principal
Forest Hill Community High School
A Title One, IB World School
6801 Parker Avenue, WPB, Fl. 33406
P: 561-540-2400

Follow me on Twitter: Follow our School:
Home of the Mighty Falcons! #ThisIsTheHill

-------- Forwarded message ---------
From: Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>
Date: Thu, Aug 5, 2021 at 1:21 PM
Subject: Fwd: Bowling Pics
To: Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

Bowling pics!
I'm not sure if I have any of Wells or I bowling though lol
Lauren Burk
Single School Culture Coordinator
561-540-3069
Follow me on twitter! @LoCook

-------- Forwarded message ---------
From: Lauren Cook <lauren.cook@palmbeachschools.org>
Date: Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 2:21 PM
Subject: Fwd: Bowling Pics
To: Sergio-Manuel Martinez <s28417170@stu.palmbeachschools.org>

Lauren Cook
Single School Culture Coordinator
AVID Coordinator

Follow me on twitter!
Exhibit 16
Ryan Wells August 30, 2021,
Email Response
Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  
To: Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org>  

Thu, Aug 19, 2021 at 7:38 AM

Thank you Sir....

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.  
Senior Investigator (SRI)  
Office of Inspector General  
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306  
West Palm Bch. Fl. 33406  
Phone: (561) 649-6877  
PX# 46877  
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

[Quoted text hidden]

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  
To: Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org>  

Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 2:50 PM

Hi Ryan,

Afternoon sir,

I'm wrapping up this investigation, and I have a few uncertainties which require your attention....... **Question** - Did Burk actively participate (2019-20 & 2020-21) as the assistant coach for Soccer & Bowling? ......

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.  
Senior Investigator (SRI)  
Office of Inspector General  
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306  
West Palm Bch. FL 33406  
Phone: (561) 649-6877  
PX# 46877  
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org
On Wed, Aug 18, 2021 at 11:03 AM Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <r.robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Aug 30, 2021 at 3:41 PM

Mr. Sheppard,

Nice to hear from you.

She did indeed participate in both sports for both years.

FY20: Her and I took over bowling as the past coaches did not want to do it. This is when we assumed there were 2 stipends as there were two coaches before us (Williams and Myles). There was only 1; so we shared it.
FY20: She did all the paperwork, fundraising, senior night etc. and attended a majority of the home games.
FY21: We both did bowling expecting to split the one stipend again.
FY21: She did soccer for me (same as listed above) after Ms. Hayden stated she was unable to do it for me.

If you need documents please let me know and I can definitely find them. Most likely they are at school so I would need to send them to you tomorrow as I have left for the day.

Sincerely,
Mr. Wells

[Quoted text hidden]

Robert Sheppard <r.robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org>

Tue, Aug 31, 2021 at 6:48 AM

Good morning and thank you.....

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-8877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

[Quoted text hidden]
January 11, 2022

Response to case 21-0014-I

Please include this statement in the final report of the above mentioned investigation.

After reviewing this report in its entirety, I would like to state my involvement as it is not clearly stated in the report by the inspector general. I was the bowling coach in 2020 of which there is only one stipend. Ms. Blum received this stipend and then transferred it to me as I was the correct recipient of this stipend. In retrospect, we should have handled this situation differently by having Ms. Blum return the stipend to the district and then it being sent to me. I understand the way we did this was incorrect but the money did end up with the person who was the coach. Ms. Burk kindly volunteered with bowling. I decided that I would give her part of my deserved stipend (not a second stipend) as she helped at all the bowling matches. As the report states, this stipend was given to Ms. Blum by mistake so I am not sure how the findings can state this is a kickback scheme or that I enlisted others to receive an undeserved stipend.

In regard to the soccer stipend, the report correctly states that I told the athletic director that Ms. Hayden was going to be the assistant coach. When she was unable to fulfill this duty I told the athletic director that Ms. Burk would be taking Ms. Hayden’s role as assistant coach. This is also stated in the report. As both of these statements are in the report, again, I am not sure how the inspector general is able to make the claim that there is evidence of a kickback scheme or that I enlisted others as I was not involved with stipend disbursment, did not receive any of this stipend, nor did I claim people were coaching that were not actually coaching.

Sincerely,

Ryan Wells
FH Case
2 messages

Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <Robert.sheddon@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Oscar Restrepo <oscar.restrepo@palmbeachschools.org>

Wed, Jan 12, 2022 at 5:02 PM

Mr. Sheppard,

Please attach my official statement to the case 21-0014-I

Respectfully,
Ryan Wells

---

Mr. Ryan Wells
Single School Culture Coordinator: North Region
Secondary Mathematics
Twitter: @ThisIsRyanWells

RW-Response to case 21-0014-I.pdf
48k

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Ryan Wells <r.wells@palmbeachschools.org>

Wed, Jan 12, 2022 at 5:29 PM

Thank you Ryan,

I will attach your response to the FHCHS investigative report (IG#21-0014-I)...

Respectfully,
Robert Sheppard
[Quote text hidden]

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
3136 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite G-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 848-6877
PM# 48877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org
Exhibit 18

Laura Hayden January 14, 2022, email reply from 20-day letter
Response to Draft Report for Office of Inspector General
Case No. 21-0014.1
Forest Hill Community High School Misappropriation/Athletic Supplements

After reviewing the draft report, I would like to address the following concerns, as I believe some findings by the Inspector General are inaccurate. There are discrepancies from the figures and exhibits, and the follow-up notes by the Inspector General.

I never approached the wrestling coach (Toulouse), Athletic Director (Kotouch), or Principal (Rivera) to enlist myself as the wrestling coach. As the report states, when the stipend list was given to the principal, my name was not on the document. The report also states that Ms. Rivera gave the stipend by mistake. If I was not listed on this document and the principal admits to her error, this cannot be evidence of a kickback scheme or enlisting others.

At the start of soccer season I did agree with the head boys’ soccer coach, Ryan Wells, to be his assistant coach. During this time, I was still in season as the girls’ cross country coach. The season was extended to make up for the late start of the school year due to COVID-19. Therefore, the two sports (cross country, a fall sport, and soccer, a winter sport) overlapped and I could no longer commit to helping Ryan Wells. In turn, Lauren Burk stepped in and took over as the boys’ assistant soccer coach.

I am not an employee with access to payroll or inputting stipends. If a closer look is taken at the exhibits that the Inspector General included in the draft report, the stipend I received was in my paycheck on March 12, 2021 while all other winter sport stipends were batched and received on March 1st, 2021. If the stipend I received was entered weeks later, it must have been done purposely by an administrator with access as all other winter stipends had already been dispersed.

When I received the stipend in my paycheck and its description read WRESTLING JV COACH (WINTER) HS, I mistakenly presumed athletic stipends could be allocated as needed by the principal based on her coaching needs. This has occurred multiple times in the past with coaches.
21-0014-I Forest Hill Community High School
3 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Laura Hayden <laura.hayden@palmbeachschools.org>

Tue, Dec 7, 2021 at 2:55 PM

Ms. Hayden,

Attached below is a copy of investigative report 21-0014-I/IFHCHS...Please review the report in its entirety and note that you have 20-work days to respond. The 20th workday ends January 14, 2022.

If further information is needed you may contact me at (561) 549-6877 or PX#48877

Thank You...

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SRI)
Office of Inspector General
5138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 549-6877
PX# 48877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

Laura Hayden <laura.hayden@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Thu, Jan 13, 2022 at 8:51 PM

Good evening,

Please see attached for my response to the report.

Ms. Laura Hayden, M.Ed.
Forest Hill Community High School
11th & 12th Grade AVID elective Teacher
World Language Teacher

[Attached text hidden]

IQG Draft Report Response.pdf
57K
Exhibit 19

Principal Esther Rivera
January 14, 2022,
email reply
from
20-day letter
Fwd: Scanned image from Forest Hill High

1 message

Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Jose Fred <jose.fred@palmbeachschools.org>, Karen Whetsell <karen.whetsell@palmbeachschools.org>

Fri, Jan 14, 2022 at 3:17 PM

Please see attached response regarding OIG Case No. 21-0014-I. Thank you.

Esther M. Rivera
Principal
Forest Hill Community High School
A Title One, IB World School
8001 Parker Avenue, WPB, FL 33405
P: 561-540-2430
Follow me on Twitter:

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: scanner@palmbeachschools.org <scanner@palmbeachschools.org>
Date: Fri, Jan 14, 2022 at 3:09 PM
Subject: Scanned image from Forest Hill High
To: <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>

Reply to: Esther Rivera <esther.rivera@palmbeachschools.org>
Device Name: Forest Hill High
Device Model: MX-M565N
Location: Rm1-112A

File Format: PDF (Medium)
Resolution: 200dpi x 200dpi

Attached file is scanned image in PDF format.
Use Acrobat(R)Reader(R) or Adobe(R)Reader(R) of Adobe Systems Incorporated to view the document.
Adobe(R)Reader(R) can be downloaded from the following URL:
Adobe, the Adobe logo, Acrobat, the Adobe PDF logo, and Reader are registered trademarks or trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated in the United States and other countries.

http://www.adobe.com/

scanner@palmbeachschools.org_20220114_134546.pdf

380K
January 14, 2022

Re: 21-0014-I

To Whom It May Concern:

In Response to Investigative Report #21-0014-I from the Office of Inspector General in the School District of Palm Beach County regarding Allegation #2:

Forest Hill Community High School (FHCHS) Principal Esther Rivera violated Florida Statute 1012.28(1) and 3 Public School Personnel, Duties of School Principals, and School Board Policy, 1.014.1.2. Responsibilities of Principals, by erroneously approving athletic assistant coach's supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sports, thus enabling staff to ultimately misappropriate monies.

I agree that I "erroneously" approved athletic supplements for employees that did not coach the pertinent sport. I do not agree that this action resulted in "enabling staff to misappropriate funds" through the use of cash-apps and other methods in exchanging monies not merited between other staff members. Additionally, it is imperative that this investigation provides a foundation for a universal systems-based approach to be created by the School District of Palm Beach County when School Principals are approving athletic stipends as currently there is none existing district-wide. Since I learned of my error, prior to this investigation commencing, I contacted the Department of Professional Standards and my instructional superintendent to make them aware of the mistake I made. Lastly, I created a school-based system in which coaches must acknowledge the responsibilities of their coaching positions, provide evidence of practices and games and maintain records of students/staff involved in order to receive a stipend.

Sincerely,

Esther M. Rivera
Principal
Exhibit 20

Single School Culture Coordinator
Lauren Burk
email reply
from
20-day letter
20-0014-I Forest Hill Community High School

4 messages

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>

Good afternoon Ms. Burk

Attached is a copy of investigative report 21-0014-I/FHCHS....Please review the report in its entirety and note that you have 20-workdays to respond. The 20th workday ends January 14, 2022.

If further information is needed please do not hesitate to contact me at (561) 649-6877 or PX# 46877.

Thank you.

Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
3139 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Beach, FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
PX# 46877
Email: Robert.Sheppard@palmbeachschools.org

L.Burk 20-day Memo-ROI.pdf

17686K

Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>

Good evening,

I have had the opportunity to read the report and have several questions, as well as, items I would like to discuss.

Please let me know a good time to contact you.

With appreciation,

Lauren

[Quote text hidden]

Lauren Burk
Single School Culture Coordinator

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>

I'm available at the office until 7:10 PM today or you may contact me tomorrow after 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

[Quote text hidden]

Lauren Burk <lauren.burk@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>, Oscar Restrepo <oscar.restrepo@palmbeachschools.org>

Good evening,

Please include the below response in the 21-0014-I/FHCHS Report.

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=5307f2028e&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a%3Ar7335355462100397982?siamp=mg-a%3Ar733039801...
Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft of report 21-0014-I/HCHS. Though I respect the findings of the Investigator, I would like to state a few items in this report that are incorrect and written in a negative connotation by the Investigator.

In multiple places within the report, the Investigator states that the stipend list my former Principal, Ms. Esther Rivera, submitted "disapproved" of me receiving any stipends as I was the Single School Culture Coordinator (SSCC) at the school at the time of this investigation. This stipend list is a list of coaches' names and what sport they are coaching. It is not a document of notes stating who is approved or not approved for stipends. This list does not state that I requested and was denied a stipend as the Investigator eluded. Also, at no point did I ask Ms. Rivera or anyone to provide me with a stipend for any sport while I was the Single School Culture Coordinator. It is also important to note that the IG states I was paid stipends in 2020 after becoming SSCC for work I had completed as a coach and sponsor prior to becoming SSCC within the same school year. Per Human Resources, it was appropriate for me to receive these stipends; however, the Investigator contacted the Manager of Athletics rather than Human Resources to confirm if the payments were acceptable.

In regard to the money that was sent to me for coaching both bowling and soccer: I told Mr. Ryan Wells that I would assist him with the Fall bowling team, as I had the previous year, and soccer when Ms. Laura Hayden found she could no longer do so. There is only one bowling stipend per school. Mr. Wells was kind enough to send me some of his stipend though I did not request or expect this money. Also, as stated above, I did not receive an additional stipend, but rather I was given some of Mr. Wells' as he saw fit. In regard to soccer, Ms. Hayden stated to me that she received a stipend that she believed was for soccer as she was initially the Assistant Coach for soccer before telling Mr. Wells she could not assist. Ms. Hayden knew that I had supported Mr. Wells with the soccer team throughout the entire season and she sent me her stipend though I did not request it from her. The Investigator states that I enlisted people to receive stipends. At no point did I ask for or expect any stipends for helping these two teams.

Additionally, in the ten years I worked at Forest Hill Community High School, I coached and sponsored various activities each year. Never have I received money for work that I did not complete or enlist others to provide me money.

With appreciation,
Lauren Burk

Lauren Burk
Single School Culture Coordinator

On Tue, Dec 7, 2021 at 2:51 PM Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:
[Quoted text hidden]