MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the School Board
   Michael J. Burke, Superintendent
   Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

FROM: Teresa Michael, Inspector General

DATE: April 17, 2023

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Final Investigative Report:
23-0012-I Theft of Funds

Attached please find a copy of the Palm Beach County School District Office of Inspector General (OIG) Final Report of OIG Case 23-0012-I related to theft of funds. The complaint was received in the OIG office on January 12, 2023. In that, softball coaches Ashton Hinds and Bianca Salvulak did not deposit softball player fees into the school’s internal account.

The OIG investigation concluded the allegation was substantiated.

In accordance with School Board Policy 1.092.9.b.iv., on March 15, 2023, the draft of this investigation was provided to Hinds and Salvulak for a response. Hinds and Salvulak did not respond.

The findings of this report were referred to the Office of Professional Standards for action deemed appropriate.
OIG CASE NUMBER 23-0012-I
WEST BOCA COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

TYPE OF REPORT: FINAL
DATE OF REPORT: April 17, 2023

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 #23-0012-I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From January 12, 2023, to February 24, 2023, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigated an anonymous complaint that former West Boca Community High School (WBCHS) softball coaches Ashton Hinds and Bianca Salvulak collected softball player fees. Parents collected $3,900 in funds based on coaches’ fees of $300 per player and when provided to coaches, the coaches never deposited the funds into the school's internal softball account.

Six parents said they paid player fees by personal check, and their bank accounts showed no record of a canceled check payable to WBCHS. One parent indicated they paid through a money order, and another parent indicated they paid $300 in cash.

Parent Lisa Carros collected the player fees. Carros said she placed the personal checks and a cash payment inside an envelope and gave the envelope to Coach Hinds in February 2022.

Coaches Hinds and Salvulak admitted that they received the player fees from Carros during a game in late February or early March but never deposited those funds into the school’s internal softball account. The investigation revealed Hinds placed the collected player fees inside Salvulak’s backpack, that later Hinds and Salvulak could not locate.

School treasurer Diane Esola said there was no record of coach Hinds or Salvulak depositing player fees into the school’s softball internal account. Hinds training records indicate that on January 11, 2022, and on February 8, 2022, she completed the District’s internal accounts training. Salvulak’s training records show she did not complete the District’s internal accounts training. Hinds and Salvulak both received financial supplements for coaching softball on May 9, 2022.

Per the District’s Athletic Director, Valerie Miyares, if the District pays a coach, the coach is required to complete the District’s Internal Accounts Training. Palm Beach County School District Internal Accounts Manual Chapters 1 & 7 state that activity sponsors are responsible for collecting and promptly depositing collected funds into the school’s internal account.

The allegation that Hinds and Salvulak did not deposit softball player fees into the school’s internal account was Substantiated.
On March 15, 2023, OIG staff forwarded a copy of the draft report to Ashton Hinds and Bianca Salvulak to respond by April 12, 2023. Ashton Hinds and Bianca Salvulak did not respond.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the OIG recommends that the Office of Professional Standards Director review this report for action deemed appropriate.
INVESTIGATIVE PREDICATE

On January 12, 2023, the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an anonymous complaint alleging that softball coaches Hinds and Salvulak collected softball player fees and never deposited those funds into the school’s internal softball account (Allegation).

On January 12, 2023, OIG Senior Investigator Robert Sheppard was assigned this complaint for investigation.

The investigative findings of the allegation will be discussed in detail later in this report.

BACKGROUND

WBCHS is a District school located at 12811 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33498. The total school enrollment is 2,282, with a 20:1 Student-Teacher Ratio. The school serves students in grades 9-12.

Softball is a Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) approved sport in which the season begins in February and ends in May.

The WBCHS player fees (Fair Share\(^1\)) represent a contribution due from each player to assist with covering the seasonal-related expenses of whatever sport the student plays. Player fees cover uniform apparel, pre-game meals, transportation, and an end-of-year banquet. Player fees are not an eligibility requirement for sports participation.

ALLEGATION

It is alleged that former WBCHS girls’ softball coaches Hinds and Salvulak collected team softball fees but never deposited those funds into the school’s internal softball account.

Florida Administrative Code\(^2\) defines “cash” for purposes of school internal funds as currency, checks, postal and express money orders, and bank deposits, including certificates of deposit. Red Book, Chapter 8, section V.

Further, Florida’s Administrative Code requires cash collections made outside of the school office must be turned in to the school office no later than the next business day. Red Book, Chapter 8, section III 1.4.b.

\(^1\) The Fair Share is designed to meet the financial needs a team incurs every year to run the program and the need for parents to help cover those expenses.

\(^2\) The Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools, 2021 (“Red Book”) is incorporated by reference in Rule 6A-1.001, Florida Administrative Code, pursuant to the requirements of sections 1010.01, 1010.20, and 1011.07, Fla. Stat.
Per Chapter 1 of the District's Internal Accounts Manual

The financial transactions of school-based organizations are accounted for in the school internal funds. All funds collected by students or school staff during normal school hours and all funds collected at extracurricular events shall be deposited in internal funds. (Emphasis added.)

Regarding Cash Receipts and Deposits and Activity Sponsors, the District’s Internal Accounts Manual states, in relevant part,

“Collections from students must be properly documented with the name of the student, the purpose of the collection, the internal account name/number assigned to the activity, and the amounts collected from students. All forms must be completed in ink and signed by the sponsor.

Activity Sponsor – responsible for collection of funds, completion of district forms to document those collections, making prompt deposits of funds, confirming that funds were recorded in the student activity account correctly and timely, and monitoring account balances and online payments on a regular basis.” (Emphasis added.)

COMPLAINT

On January 12, 2023, the OIG received an anonymous complaint that former WBCHS softball coaches collected softball player fees but never deposited those funds into the school’s internal softball account.

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

On January 27, 2023, individual interviews of nine\(^3\) students were conducted at WBCHS in Boca Raton, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by the “Students” as they relate to the Allegation:

The OIG individually interviewed nine players. The nine players stated that the coaches were Ashton Hinds and Bianca Salvulak. All nine players indicated that in 2021-22, coach Hinds and Salvulak requested a $300.00 per player fee to cover the softball expenses. The players said their parents paid the player fees with a check given to coach Hinds or Salvulak.

Investigators Note: The 2021-22 girls' softball program internal account #1-5110.00 showed no records of player fees deposited by the softball coaches.

\(^3\) Four of the thirteen players on the 2021-22 WBCHS girls' softball team graduated from WBCHS in 2022. The OIG did not interview those four players.
On January 27, 2023, an interview of Principal Edmund Capitano was conducted at WBCHS in Boca Raton, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Capitano” as it relates to the Allegation:

Former Athletic Director Andre Rowe hired former softball coaches Ashton Hinds and Bianca Salvulak. The former coaches were approved through the District’s Human Resources to coach but were not a part of the WBCHS full-time faculty.

**Investigators Note:** District personnel records show that Ashton Hinds was initially hired by the District on May 31, 2021, as a part-time coach. On August 21, 2021, she became a certified tutor long term, and on July 1, 2022, an elementary teacher at S. D. Spady Elementary. District personnel records show Bianca Salvulak was hired as a part-time coach on March 28, 2022.

Principal Capitano explained when collecting money (Fair Share) from parents, the coach should send parents a newsletter explaining how to make payments, utilize the District’s online services, or collect personal checks. Once the coach collects the parents’ funds the coach must deposit those funds into the school’s drop safe. Accepting cash payment is frowned upon; however, if the parents pay in cash, the coach must provide the parents with a payment receipt. Capitano said he disapproved of coaches keeping funds received from parents/students in their possession or inside their offices.

Capitano said that when he first heard about the complaint (from a parent), he approached the bookkeeper to ask if the softball coaches collected money from the students and where the coaches deposited the money. The bookkeeper advised there was no record of softball deposits. Capitano asked the bookkeeper whether she inadvertently deposited the player fees into another program’s internal account. The bookkeeper replied “No.”

On January 27, 2023, an interview of Athletic Director (AD) Jerry Albert was conducted at WBCHS in Boca Raton, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Albert” as it relates to the Allegation:

Hinds and Salvulak were coaches whose season ended in May 2022. The coaches were not a part of the WBCHS full time staff.

Player fees cover the expenses incurred to run the softball program for a season and are collected through checks payable to WBCHS, or parents can utilize the District’s online services. Last year the softball team had both options for making payments. Albert opined that most softball players chose the personal check option to pay the player fees.

AD Albert explained after the coach receives the payment from the student, they are required to turn the funds over to the treasurer immediately. Albert added that the $300.00 team fee is used to cover the end-of-year dinner, transportation, team uniforms, and apparel the players may be allowed to keep.
Albert said he received a complaint from a parent (Lisa Carros) whose daughter graduated in 2021-22. The mother visited Albert early in the school year to discuss minor things, such as receiving letters, pins, and bars at the end of the year for senior recognition and reimbursement for the four seniors’ dinners. The parent believed that the students gave checks to the coaches, but the coaches never deposited the checks into the school’s internal softball account.

Albert approached the bookkeeper to review the internal softball account. His review revealed there were neither team deposits nor other evidence to show the softball coaches deposited checks. Albert said he made multiple attempts to contact the softball coaches. Albert indicated Hinds works within the District, and Albert attempted to contact the coach by email and cell phone but did not receive a response.

Albert opined that the softball coaches did not deposit the checks. The checks may be inside a coaching bag, or the envelope containing the checks was lost. Albert added that he believed the parent’s checks were not cashed. He believed this scenario drove Ms. Carros to complain that some parents paid, and others did not.

On February 6, 2023, an interview of Treasurer Diane Esola was conducted at WBCHS in Boca Raton, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Esola” as it relates to the Allegation:

Esola said no deposits were made by the softball coaches besides the “Go-Fan,” softball game ticket sales. Esola said no financial record showed students paying softball player fees ($300.00) for the 2021-22 school year (Exhibit 1). Esola said if the parents paid the player fees by personal check, the school could trace the payment from the parent’s canceled check. She has heard no complaints from parents or players about the player fees.

**Investigators Note:** Six parents indicated that they paid with checks and that their bank records showed no records of a canceled check payable to WBCHS softball player fees.

Funds were not diverted from the internal softball account and deposited into other sports’ internal accounts. Esola speculated that the coaches collected checks, threw them away, and did not follow the District’s policy and procedures to deposit the checks into the school’s drop safe on the day of receipt.

On February 9, 2023, telephonic interviews of Parents were conducted. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Parents” as they relate to the Allegation:

The OIG reached out to 12 of 13 parents via phone. Four parents said they did not pay the softball team fee. Parent Elizabeth Landry said she paid $300.00 in cash to parent Lisa Carros who collected player fees from participating parents. Parent Talena Dubinsky said they paid the team fee with a money order made out to West Boca High School.
Six parents said they paid the player fees by a personal check, and their bank account did not show a record of a canceled check for the player fees payable to WBCHS. Parent Carros said she collected the player fees from parents. The fees were paid by personal checks, and one parent paid the fee with cash. Carros said she placed the personal checks and cash inside an envelope and gave it to coach Ashton Hinds to deposit into the school’s internal softball account.

One of the parents theorized that the player fees collected and given to coach Hinds were either lost or thrown away.

On February 24, 2023, District Athletic Director Valerie Miyares responded to OIG email regarding the allegation. The following contains portions of Miyares’ email statement.

OIG – At WBCHS softball coach Bianca Salvulak ONLY coached girls’ softball, no other District duties. Is she required to complete the internal accounts training regarding collection of player fees/fair share, or any other training?

Miyares – Per Wendy Martin, Internal Accounts Manager, any District employee who is collecting funds is required to take the Cash Receipts training. Bulletin 23-001 details this. Even though the coach only coach’s softball, if she is an employee of the District paid by the District and has an employee number then she is required to take the training. [sic]

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

On February 15, 2023, an interview of former Assistant Softball Coach Bianca Salvulak was conducted via phone. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Salvulak” as it relates to the Allegation:

Salvulak said she received an envelope from a parent with the player fees before a home game in late February or early March 2022. The player fees inside the envelope were personal checks. Salvulak was unsure of how many personal checks were inside the envelope. Salvulak recalled a parent paying the team fee in cash that was also inside the envelope.

Head coach Ashton Hinds placed the envelope inside Salvulak’s backpack during the game. Salvulak was unaware of the backpack’s current whereabouts. Salvulak said she did not take the cash. Salvulak followed-up her phone interview with an email wherein she said the checks were never cashed or deposited into the school’s drop safe (Exhibit 2).

Salvulak said that if the $300.00 must be repaid, she and Head Softball Coach Ashton Hinds will split the cost.

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4 Salvulak said she was only available to meet via telephone.
On February 16, 2023, an interview of former Head Softball Coach Ashton Hinds was conducted at S.D. Spady Elementary School in Delray Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Hinds” as it relates to the Allegation:

Hinds said the player fees were collected and given to her in a manila envelope in late February or early March 2022. Hinds said she did not open the envelope to review the contents. She was told it contained checks and one cash payment. Hinds indicated she received the manila envelope from Lisa Carros and Susan Ford. Hinds said that after receiving the manila envelope, she immediately placed it inside Salvulak’s backpack, and Salvulak said she would handle it. Hinds said she was unaware of how to deposit funds into the school’s drop safe because math teacher/assistant softball coach Scott Breslow handled the softball financials the year prior (2020-21). Hinds was unaware of how to log in to the school’s internal softball account because she was not a WBCHS faculty, and Hinds was further unaware of when or how to deposit funds into the school’s drop safe. Hinds said she never dealt with player fees.

Hinds said parents asked several times about depositing the checks. Hinds asked Salvulak if she deposited the checks. Salvulak told Hinds she was going to deposit the money. Hinds did not know what happened to the player fees placed inside the backpack. Hinds denied that she or Salvulak spent the $300.00 cash payment. Hinds believed that the checks were not deposited.

Hinds said she did attend the District fundraising and code of ethics training. Her understanding of the code of ethics training was to maintain integrity, treat students fairly, and maintain professional interpersonal relationships.

**RECORDS ANALYSIS**

**Exhibit 1**: WBCHS Detailed Category Summary, Girls’ softball account #1-5110.00.
**Exhibit 2**: Bianca Salvulak 02-15-23 email statement.
**Exhibit 3**: Bianca Salvulak’s 2022 PeopleSoft training records.
**Exhibit 4**: Ashton Hinds 2022 PeopleSoft training records.

On January 17, 2023, OIG staff reviewed the above-listed documents. The review disclosed the following:

- January 17, 2023, Treasurer Diane Esola provided the OIG a 2021-22 Detailed Category Summary for the girls’ internal softball account 1-5110.00. The softball account shows zero player fees deposited in 2021-22 (**Exhibit 1**).

- February 15, 2023, former softball coach Bianca Salvulak prepared an email statement indicating her involvement with collecting player fees for the WBCHS girls 2021-22 softball team (**Exhibit 2**).
Salvulak’s 2022 training record (Exhibit 3) District PeopleSoft records indicate Salvulak did not attend internal accounts training.


CONCLUSION

It is alleged that softball coaches Hinds and Salvulak violated Florida Administrative Code and the District’s Internal Accounts Manual Chapters 1 & 7 in that softball player fees were collected and not deposited into the school’s internal softball account.

Although the six parents who paid through personal checks were not financially affected, two parents were: the parent who paid cash and the parent who paid with a money order. Parent Lisa Carros, who collected the player fees from all the participating parents, confirmed that a parent paid with cash. In addition, Hinds and Salvulak said that a cash payment was inside the envelope that contained the player fees.

The OIG could not confirm the money order payment.

Salvulak and Hinds said they did not financially benefit from the team fee and did not spend the cash payment.

Per the school District’s Internal Accounts Manual, all funds collected at extracurricular events shall be deposited in internal funds. And, pursuant to requirements of the Red Book, cash collections made outside of the school office must be turned in to the school office no later than the next business day.

Based on the documentation reviewed and testimony obtained, OIG staff determined as there was sufficient evidence to prove the allegation that softball Coaches Hinds and Salvulak collected player fees from parents and never deposited those funds into the school’s internal softball account was Substantiated.
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-II

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF PALM BEACH
Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me this 17 day of April, 2023, by Robert Sheppard, Senior Investigator for the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General, who is personally known by me.

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

Notary Public State of Florida
Oscar D Restrepo
My Commission HH 315240
Expires 10/14/2026

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] Date: 4/17/23
Oscar Restrepo, Director of Investigations

Approved by: [Signature] Date: 4/17/23
Teresa Michael, Inspector General
EXHIBIT LIST

WBCHS Detailed Category Summary, softball acct #1-5110.00 ......... Exhibit 1
Bianca Salvulak 02-15-23 email statement................................... Exhibit 2
Bianca Salvulak’s 2022 PeopleSoft training record.......................... Exhibit 3
Ashton Hinds PeopleSoft training record...................................... Exhibit 4

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    OIG File
Exhibit 1

West Boca Community High School
Girls Softball Internal Account
#1-5110.00
**Summary for: SOFTBALL GIRL’S**  
Cat. #: 1-5110.00

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**Opening Balances:** $4,316.90  
**Category Balances:** $4,194.90  

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Grand Totals:

Opening Balances: $4,194.90  Category Balances: $1,992.90  $2,202.00
Exhibit 2

Former West Boca Community High School
Softball Coach Bianca Salvulak
February 15, 2023, Email Statement
Hi Mr. Sheppard,

My name is Bianca Savulak, former softball assistant coach at West Boca High and this is my statement.

Last high school softball season (2022), coach Ashton and I collected team dues despite the current remaining balance of $3,000+ in their softball team account. Just like every previous year, per several parents on the team, we had to collect some type of team dues for the current year. It was decided that $300 would the team fees and would be collected. We had a couple of parents in charge of collecting checks for these dues. They were to have been collected late February early March. They were handed to coach Ashton and I in a Manila envelope before one of the home games through the dugout fencing. Nothing was cashed and due to it being about a year ago, that envelope has been misplaced. One parent paid in cash which was also in the envelope. All of the checks naturally became void due to not being cashed.
West Boca High

2 messages

Bianca Savulak <biancasavulak@gmail.com>  
To: Robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org  
Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 4:02 PM

Mr. Sheppard,

In addition to my previous statement, I wanted to also state how the parents wanted to utilize the team's account with that current balance of over $3,000 from previous years vs. paying any amount of team dues. Coach Ashton and I stated how that would not be fair to previous players and future players as every single year there has been a set amount for each player to pay. We simply did not want to drain out the account and leave nothing for next season's team. Most of the parents agreed that a team dues amount should be required which is why we had team dues established. While some parents battled us on this, those dues were eventually collected. We also explained how we wanted all of the dues to be in check form simply for paper trail purposes.

--

Bianca Savulak
B&M Building Co.

[] 386-852-5416  [bianca@bmbuildingco.com]

801 SE 6th Ave Unit 207 Delray Beach, FL 33483

Robert Sheppard <robert.sheppard@palmbeachschools.org>  
To: Bianca Savulak <biancasavulak@gmail.com>  
Wed, Feb 15, 2023 at 5:24 PM

Thank you Bianca

[Quoted text hidden]

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Robert L. Sheppard, Jr.
Senior Investigator (SR-II)
Office of Inspector General
3138 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite C-306
West Palm Bch. FL 33406
Phone: (561) 649-6877
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Exhibit 3

Former West Boca Community High School
Softball Coach Bianca Salvulak
2022 PeopleSoft Training Record
Exhibit 4

Former West Boca Community High School
Softball Coach Ashton Hinds
2022 PeopleSoft Training Record