

EDITORIALS

Schools open books, online

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BOARD MEMBERS AND administrators in the Bullock Creek School District have done their taxpayers a big favor. The Midland County district has joined a small but growing number of school operations to put their check registers online.

Bullock Creek, which is posting the data on its Web site — www.bcreek.k12.mi.us — every three months so anyone can see where its money is going, joins Montrose Community Schools as part of the

It takes trust, courage and confidence to put ledgers online.

transparency pair in mid-Michigan. Elsewhere in the state, Bloomfield Hills, Chassell, Clawson, Farmington, Oakland Intermediate, Waterford and St. Clair County Regional Education Service Agency are letting the sun shine on their books.

By making public information public, Bullock Creek Superintendent John Hill explains just how specific the data can become.

"It is listed as the vendor and amount," he says. "Viewers can see we wrote checks to a Midland golf course for the golf team to play. We wrote a check to Blue Lake Charter and were reimbursed by the PTO for a student trip."

When added up, though, the totals are anything but penny ante. Hill says the district spends \$300,000 to \$400,000 a month.

Putting government check registers online so taxpayers can see them is the brainchild of the Midland-based Mackinac Center's "Show Michigan the Money" transparency project. You can find it at www.showmichiganthemoney.org.

It takes courage and trust to do what these school districts are doing. Trust because open financial books might show a district is relying on incompetent or corrupt number crunchers, and courage because forthright financial reporting may reveal some politically embarrassing spending.

The idea is a good one for all the obvious reasons, and that's why The Saginaw News strongly urges other districts to show the trust and courage — and confidence — that Bullock Creek and Montrose have. It's a no-lose proposition.

