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Our View »

Calling Them Out: Bay City Public Schools opts to show taxpayers exactly where their money went

By Bay City Times staff
November 12, 2009, 6:01AM

“Show Michigan the Money,” public officials.

We like saying that — demanding more transparency in government.

The Mackinac Center’s slogan to demand that the state’s schools and governments post their check registers online is a good way of saying it.

The think tank Mackinac Center for Public Policy jumped on the transparency bandwagon early on, in 2008, after the Montrose School District began posting its check registers online at the start of the 2007-2008 school year.

Lately, Bay City Public Schools has joined the nearly five dozen Michigan districts that list, check by check, the record of every financial transaction.

The district joined Pinconning and Gladwin school districts in our part of Michigan, which had already put their registers online.

Congratulations, and thanks to all of them.

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We admit that poring over these long lists of numbers and check descriptions can be as dull as watching paint dry. But when you've got a question about where the money went, there's no better place to find out than a register of all checks written.

It's a movement toward more transparency that all schools districts — all governments — should embrace.

Down in Lansing, The secretary of State's Office now posts online reports of its spending. Those general information items are fantastic, but let's see actual listing of who's getting our money.

The Michigan Legislature in a school budget deal this fall required all public school districts to post financial information online.

That is so yesterday, compared to what Bay City Schools and others have started with their online check registers

Why not require it of all agencies and governments that receive taxpayer money?

It's the public's money they are pending, and taxpayers have the right to see where it is going.

Transparency in government can breed trust in government.

Now, wouldn't that be a switch?

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