

Archives

THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

About your archives purchase: Your purchase of **25** articles expires on **06/09/2011 3:29 PM**. You have viewed **18** articles and have **7** articles remaining.

The article you requested is displayed below.

Compensation for Mackiel OPS wrong to hide facts

Author(s): 14 **Date:** March 23, 2011 **Section:** Editorial

The World-Herald on Sunday reported the total compensation for area **school** superintendents, specifically revealing the differences between stated base salaries and actual total compensation. This information came to light only after extensive study of contracts by staff writers John Ferak and Matt Wynn. John Mackiel, superintendent of **Omaha Public Schools**, has the widest difference between his base pay of \$258,107 and his total compensation of just over \$426,000, including a car allowance.

So the first question for any taxpayer should be, "What else are they hiding from me?"

Millard Superintendent Keith Lutz made a good point in Sunday's article. He points out that he is responsible for 3,000 employees and 38 buildings, making his responsibilities similar to those of a large corporation. He's right - large **public school** districts are sizable, complex entities that require expertise, leadership and hard work to manage.

The issue at hand is not whether \$426,000 is the right amount of compensation for Dr. Mackiel. That debate is sure to take place in the coming weeks and months. The **Omaha Public Schools** budget is \$474 million, and the district employs 7,400 people, which does indeed make it similar in size to one of the larger corporations in **Omaha**.

But what the OPS administration and **school** board needs to deal with is the egregious lack of transparency in the way Dr. Mackiel's compensation has been handled.

Consider the statement from **Omaha school** board President Sandy Jensen, who said, "You will note that there has been no raise. It was at

his (Mackiel's) insistence. He recognizes the economy and the times being the way they are." She went on to say: "He (Mackiel) was sending a message to the community: 'I recognize the times are tough.'"

So while Jensen suggests that Mackiel has recognized that times are tough and has kept his salary frozen, the truth is that his total compensation grew by \$18,900 during the past two years.

Particularly shocking is the recent increase in Mackiel's paid vacation, from six weeks to nine weeks. And remember, he is permitted to cash in any unused vacation each year. In fact, last year, he cashed in \$25,000, or about five of the six weeks he already had.

The additional three weeks, which would appear highly likely to go unused and therefore get cashed in, is worth just under \$15,000. So what this really amounts to is a 5.8 percent raise to Dr. Mackiel's "base pay."

So back to the question, "What else are they hiding?" These actions by the **Omaha school** board cast a seed of doubt on whatever data OPS might be reporting to the **public**, including overall resource needs, test scores and other critical data such as truancy, graduation rates, etc.

The **Omaha school** board and its superintendent got caught hiding the facts. To overcome this serious hit to the district's credibility will require leadership from its board to make sure that it does not forget that it is a **public** body, and therefore accountable to the taxpayers at all times.

Technical problems: If you have a technical problem with your account please e-mail newslibrary@newsbank.com.

Copyright (c) 2011 Omaha World Herald