

Remarks to Board of Education, Community Unit School District 200, January 9, 2008

Public Hearing – Driver’s Education Fee

My name is Mark Stern and I am a Wheaton resident and taxpayer.

This Board is seeking a waiver to make parents pay five times the driver education fee provided by state law. The District claims that “This increase would allow the District to meet the driver education mandate in a more cost efficient manner.”¹ But cost efficiency means looking carefully at your costs to see where you can economize, not raising taxes and fees to cover excessive spending. The District spends over \$800 per student for driver’s education, yet no effort seems to have been made to determine if that is cost efficient. In fact, driver’s ed teachers at our two high schools receive \$98,177 and \$88,310 per year.² Driver’s education is needed, but using a \$98,000 a year teacher with a master’s degree as a driving instructor is unnecessary for students, and an insult to taxpayers.

The Board is asking for the wrong waiver. Private driver’s education is available in Wheaton for only \$495,³ and you could probably negotiate an even lower price to subcontract the instruction for all district students. Rather than a waiver to charge parents more, you should be seeking a waiver to subcontract and enroll students in a licensed private course. The District would save over \$150,000 a year,⁴ so it could cut parent fees in half and still save taxpayers nearly \$100,000 a year. All the facts and figures are right here.

Even if the Board doesn’t want to privatize this function, using teachers at a more reasonable salary level would still allow a major fee reduction for parents. We don’t need excessive fees on parents to pay for Mercedes-Benz driver’s education when a solid Chevrolet will do.

¹ State authorized fee is \$50; Board is seeking \$250 fee. Question 4, Narrative Description of Request to Increase Drivers Education Fees, District 200 Board materials, January 9, 2008, available at www.cusd200.org.

² 2006 salaries for M. Marzullo and M. Oleszek, driver education teachers at WWSHS and WNHS; both have master’s degrees. Sources: District 200 Personnel Report to Board from Dr. Lori Belha, January 9, 2008; Tiger PAWS minutes 10/17/07 (www.tigerpaws.org); and www.thechampion.org (Ill. State Board of Education records).

³ Excel Driving School, Wheaton, Option A, see www.exceldrivingschool.com. Note: I have no relationship with Excel Driving School. There may be other driving schools in the area, but this is the first one I found.

⁴ Driver education total costs, per student costs, and savings based on spreadsheet, “Net Cost Per Student Dependent on Driver Education Registration Fee,” prepared by District staff and included in January 9, 2008 Board materials available at www.cusd200.org. Savings comparisons shown in chart on reverse.

District 200 Driver’s Education Costs to Parents and Taxpayers under District Operation versus Potential Private Operation

CUT PARENT FEES IN HALF AND SAVE TAXPAYERS ALMOST \$100,000 A YEAR

This chart uses original District data from “Community Unit School District #200 Net Cost Per Student Dependent on Driver Education Fee Based on 487 Students,” chart prepared by District staff and included with January 9, 2008 Board Materials available at www.cusd200.org.

	District \$50 Parent Fee	District \$250 Parent Fee (Current)	Private \$50 Parent Fee	Private \$125 Parent Fee	Private \$250 Parent Fee
Gross Cost Per Student ⁵	\$806.68	\$806.68	\$495.00	\$495.00	\$495.00
Total Gross Costs ⁶	392,853.09	392,853.09	241,065.00	241,065.00	241,065.00
– Parent Fees ⁷	24,350.00	110,499.69	24,350.00	55,249.84	110,499.69
– State Reimbursement ⁸	88,925.88	88,925.88	88,925.88	88,925.88	88,925.88
= Total Net Cost to Taxpayers	\$279,577.21	\$193,427.52 (Current)	\$127,789.12	\$96,889.28	\$41,639.43
TAXPAYER SAVINGS	N/A	0	65,638.40 34%	96,538.24 50%	151,788.09 78%
+ PARENT SAVINGS	N/A	0	86,149.69 78%	55,249.85 50%	0 0%
= TOTAL SAVINGS	N/A	0	\$151,788.09 50%	\$151,788.09 50%	\$151,788.09 50%

⁵ District’s gross cost per student equals total District spending (\$392,853.09) divided by 487 students; private cost per student obtained from www.excelldrivingschool.com.

⁶ District total gross cost as reported by District 200; private cost equals \$495 per student multiplied by 487 students.

⁷ All figures as reported by District 200, except revenue from \$125 fee was calculated by dividing District-reported \$250 fee revenue by 2.

⁸ As reported by District 200.