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[Making Progress in K-12 Financial Transparency, But Still a Long Way to Go](#)

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A few weeks ago [I pointed out to you](#) the weak effort of Kansas' largest school district (Wichita) to implement online financial transparency — an effort I learned about through the great work and analysis of Matthew Tabor of Education Debate at Online Schools. Afterward, I received a phone call telling me about [KansasOpenGov.org](#), a project of the Kansas Policy Institute (KPI).

Well, sometime in the past few weeks KPI [has posted a searchable version of the Wichita school district's checkbook on its site](#) with some obvious improvements in accessibility and user-friendliness. Matthew previously gave the school district's own efforts at financial transparency a *D* grade for execution. I wonder what grade he would give KansasOpenGov.org?

Why am I focusing on Wichita again? It's an easy example to highlight of the gradual move toward financial transparency in K-12 education — with its share of uneven progress, false starts and struggles. It may be a preview of what's coming here in Colorado, as [last year's House Bill 1036 \(PDF\)](#) has a July 1 deadline (this year!) that requires all school districts and charter schools to “post accounts payable check registers and credit, debit, and purchase card statements on-line, in a downloadable format, for free public access.”

Yet ironically, it may be less of a challenge to post the line-by-line details of public school spending than to get a simple answer about total spending figures — at least in some places. This recorded phone conversation of the Cato Institute's Adam Schaeffer [trying to obtain a comprehensive K-12 spending figure for the state of Indiana](#) just about makes you want to pull your hair out:

The public education system may be moving toward transparency, but if this recorded encounter is any indication, we have a long way to go, baby.