

Good Afternoon Team BCPS Family,

This message is to ensure that you hear from me directly about the recent article published in the newspaper. The first thing I'd like to share is that I take great pride in being a person who strives to maintain high moral character every day. Any suggestion otherwise, by the media or anyone else, is simply wrong and a bridge too far. For those of you who know me, you know that I do not dwell in excuses. If I am wrong, I will admit my mistakes. No one is perfect, but I will not have my integrity questioned without directly addressing and disputing the accusations. Facts matter and I would like to take a few moments to outline the facts, as I believe you deserve the full story.

The fact of the matter is that the Education Research and Development Institute (ERDI) is not a technology company. It is an educational research and development company, meaning that ERDI coordinates efforts for companies and educators to collaborate on products and services that are in development. Sales are not involved in this process. This process is purely for feedback. The developers know their products, and the educators know how to best meet the needs of students. I have never been paid by a company doing business with our school system, and the school system has never paid for trips where I participated as a consultant. ERDI does not conduct any business with BCPS. I participated in these sessions on my own time, using vacation days, to do so. These are the facts.

Like many of you, throughout my career, I look for opportunities for professional development and to stay current on the ever-growing educational resources being introduced in classrooms in Baltimore County and across the country. Early in my career, these classroom tools were textbooks and other written materials. At that time, teachers and administrators engaged with textbook companies to provide insight on how they might best serve students' needs during instruction. Now, many times, these classroom resources come in the form of technology and digital curriculum, which can be used as supplements or alternatives to traditional paper resources. It should not come as a surprise that engaging with companies (some of which may be technology based) is now one way to learn about these products and to provide input on what works and what does not work with and for children.

In some instances, I was paid as a consultant to review and provide feedback on ideas for instructional products. The superintendent, my supervisor, recommended and approved my participation in these opportunities. The honest mistake I made was not writing these consultants fees on school system financial disclosure forms. When I completed these forms, I was under the impression that I was to only list companies with whom the school system had a contract or a pending contract. I was mistaken. I will amend them as allowed by policies.

I promise each of you that I will not make that mistake again, but more importantly, I will not allow an honest oversight to be misconstrued as something untoward or unethical. It is not who I am and it is not who you know me to be. My message to each of you in the Superintendent's Report during this week's Board of Education meeting was to rise up and to speak out for our profession. We deserve the same respect as anyone else. As I said during the report, I am you, and I will always stand up for who and what we are. We must accept no less.

Sincerely,

Verletta