

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

ETHICS REVIEW PANEL

ADVISORY OPINION 15-02

This Advisory Opinion 15-02 is in response to a request made by petitioner, an employee of the Baltimore County Public Schools (“BCPS”), who requested advice from the Panel regarding whether the following situation, involving the individual who was named the Baltimore County Teacher of the Year, would be prohibited by the Ethics Code. A not-for-profit organization, that provides free on-line resources for teaching professionals, including videos on various topics relating to teaching, has proposed funding twenty-five percent (25%) of the teacher’s salary, in exchange for the teacher providing services to the organization, by posting videos of successful teaching strategies. The organization is not a current or previous BCPS vendor. The organization would provide BCPS with an amount of money equivalent to 25% of the teacher’s salary. The teacher will be paid his entire salary and would not receive any additional money as a result of this arrangement. The videos will either be made during the teacher’s teaching (with appropriate consents from the students) or the teacher will be released during his working hours to make them. The agreement is between the organization and the School System; it is not with the teacher.

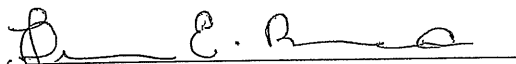
The Panel was advised that the mission and philosophy of the organization “is fully aligned to the Office of Organizational Department’s goal of creating high quality teachers that use instructional best practices, are reflective about their teaching and engage in a community of learners.” The Panel was also advised that this is “a great opportunity to showcase [the teacher’s] talents” and is a “great opportunity to showcase and share the unique work BCPS is doing to provide personalized and customized instruction for students through digital content and resources in a student-centered learning environment.”


The Panel has reviewed the Ethics Code and its previous relevant Advisory Opinions and has concluded that the arrangement described would not be prohibited by the Ethics Code. Based on the information received by the Panel, the organization is not a current or previous vendor of the School System, the teacher would not be paid directly by the organization, and the organization would not have any control, direction, or influence over the work conducted by the teacher for the School System. Furthermore, the teacher would not be receiving any “gifts” from the organization.


The Panel notes that in Policy 8362, section II.A., the Board of Education “encourages the formation of partnerships between schools and businesses... .” (See, also, Advisory Opinion 05-02 (June 16, 2005)). It would appear that the arrangement described above is the type of partnership that would be a benefit to the Baltimore County Public Schools.

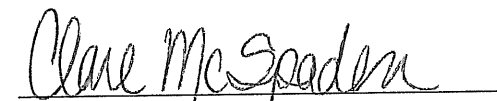
For all of the above reasons, the Panel has concluded that the arrangement described in the Request for Advisory Opinion would not be prohibited by the Ethics Code.

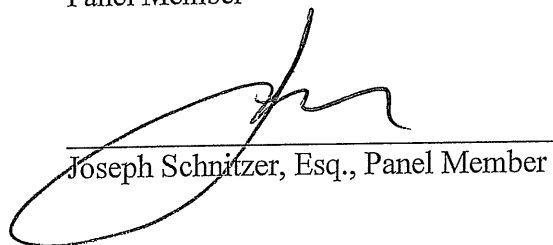
This opinion has been signed by the Ethics Review Panel members and adopted on July 16, 2015.


Theresa E. Barrett, Chair


Michael Hofmann, Sr., Vice Chair


Mary C. Burke, LCSW-C, BCD,
Panel Member


Clare McSpaden, Esq., Panel Member


Joseph Schnitzer, Esq., Panel Member