

Jerry Jongerius

From: Jerry Jongerius [jerryj@duckware.com]

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To: FCPS WATCHDOG GROUP (fcpswatchdog@stopterc.com)

Subject: FCPS WATCHDOG #6: Examining the FCPS spin machine: Analysis of a non-denial denial

FCPS spin-machine: With the elections just around the corner, now is a good time to revisit how the FCPS "PR" spin-machine works (aka: how to cover-up an illegal proposal).

The meeting: On January 20, 2010, Dr. Bonnie Borsa, during budget reduction discussions, brought up 'rather large' \$257,638 *per-year* charge for elementary math (see chart right). Note: Borsa is the *chair of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee*.

You can watch the video of this meeting at <http://apps.fcps.org/tv/boe.cfm> [1.20.10 BOE Part1 28:36-35:00].

Level	Content	FY11	FY12	FY13
Elementary	Math	\$257,638	\$257,638	\$257,638
	Science	\$300,000	\$0	\$0
	Social Studies	\$0	\$44,198	\$335,278
	Language Arts	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
	Music	\$43,786	\$18,973	\$12,279
	Total Elementary	\$607,424	\$326,609	\$611,195
Middle	Math	\$0	\$192,096	\$195,924
	Science	\$0	\$0	\$0
	Social Studies	\$113,400	\$218,036	\$0
	Language Arts	\$234,750	\$234,750	\$166,000
	Foreign Language	\$2,178	\$0	\$0
	CTE	\$33,147	\$0	\$0
Total Middle	\$383,475	\$644,882	\$351,924	
High	Math	\$547,516	\$0	\$0
	Science	\$134,500	\$47,750	\$203,000
	Social Studies	\$0	\$0	\$171,937
	Language Arts	\$175,800	\$132,000	\$237,000
	Foreign Language	\$77,786	\$16,054	\$7,575
	Physical Education	\$46,490	\$52,562	\$0
CTE	\$56,108	\$113,040	\$47,821	
Total High	\$1,048,200	\$361,406	\$667,333	
Total K-12		\$2,039,099	\$1,333,087	\$1,630,452

The illegal proposal: The \$257,638 charge was discussed in detail and determined to be a consumable student math workbook, and *not the teacher textbook*. Other consumables (that parents pay for) were discussed and then Dr. Bonnie Borsa proposed "*Have the parents buy the workbook*". Of course, other Board Members quickly shot this idea down, correctly pointing out that it was illegal. There was a [FNP story](#) about this, as well as a [FNP LTE](#).

Why illegal: Because it is Maryland State Law that textbooks and other materials of instruction must be provided for free. See the Maryland Education Article, section 7-106.

The cover-up: Clearly very upset that she had been caught proposing something illegal, Dr. Bonnie Borsa quickly wrote her own [FNP LTE](#) where she denied everything and issued this statement:

"I do not support parents paying for elementary math textbooks. No member of the school board does."

Issue a non-denial denial: What Dr. Borsa did was to use the oldest trick in the politician's handbook (or is it a textbook?). Issue a non-denial denial. Borsa denied that she supports parents paying for textbooks. Notice how Borsa changed "workbook" (what she actually proposed) to "textbook" (something she did not propose) and then denied she ever said that.

Non-denial denial: A "non-denial denial" is a statement that seems direct, clearcut and unambiguous at first hearing, but when carefully parsed is revealed not to be a denial at all, and is thus not untruthful. It is a case in which words that are literally true are used to convey a false impression; analysis of whether or when such behavior constitutes lying is a long-standing issue in ethics.

▶▶ **To all BoE candidates:** Is a non-denial denial appropriate ethical behavior for a FCPS Board of Education member? Do you have a pledge for ethical behavior if you get elected to the BoE?

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