

## **Burke County Board of Education Statement on Media Access and Professional Standards**

### **For Immediate Public Reading and Distribution**

The Burke County Board of Education is committed to serving our students, families, and community with honesty, transparency, and accountability. We value the role of the press and recognize that strong journalism contributes to an informed public. However, we also have a duty to ensure that information concerning our schools is conveyed accurately and responsibly.

In recent months, The Paper has repeatedly published stories about Burke County Public Schools that contain misleading, inaccurate, or distorted information. These issues are not matters of interpretation or opinion. They represent a documented pattern of reporting that undermines public understanding and misrepresents the facts surrounding our decisions and operations.

The Board welcomes scrutiny and does not shy away from criticism. But there is a clear and important distinction between fair reporting and the intentional circulation of misinformation. When a media outlet repeatedly publishes inaccuracies, it harms not only this Board but the entire community who rely on truthful reporting to form opinions and make decisions.

Because of this pattern, the Burke County Board of Education has determined that The Paper has not met the basic expectations of accuracy, integrity, and professionalism required for enhanced media access. As public officials, we cannot allow any outlet to use special access to further distribute information that is knowingly misleading or harmful to the public trust.

Effective immediately, The Paper's special media access privileges are revoked. This includes advance briefings, priority interview scheduling, behind the scenes accommodations, and entry into nonpublic areas or school sites outside of regular public events. These steps ensure that special access is reserved for media partners who meet reasonable professional standards.

This action does not limit The Paper's legal rights. They may still attend all public Board meetings, obtain information available to any member of the public, and submit public records requests as provided by state and federal law. Our commitment to transparency remains unwavering, and we fully uphold all legal protections afforded to the press.

The Board of Education will always work with media organizations that prioritize accuracy, fairness, and ethical reporting. Our responsibility is to the students and citizens of Burke County, and they deserve information they can trust. We remain steadfast in our mission to provide honest communication and to safeguard the integrity of our school system against misinformation.