

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

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TERESA MICHAEL, CIG, CIGI, CFE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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MEMORANDUM

TO:

Honorable Chair and Members of the School Board

Michael J. Burke, Superintendent

Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

FROM:

Teresa Michael, Inspector General

DATE:

December 12, 2022

SUBJECT:

Transmittal of Final Investigative Report:

22-0016-I Missing Money \$200

Attached please find a copy of the Palm Beach County School District Office of Inspector General (OIG) Final Report of OIG Case 22-0016-I related to missing change fund money in the amount of \$200. On July 5, 2022, the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint from Sally Rozanski, Principal of BAK Middle School of the Arts alleging that Drama Teacher Erin Amico failed to secure the change fund in the school safe resulting in a loss of \$200. (Allegation 1).

The OIG investigation concluded the allegation was substantiated.

In accordance with School Board Policy 1.092.9.b.iv., on October 14, 2022, the draft of this investigation was provided to Erin Amico for a response. A written response from Erin Amico was received by the OIG and included in the final report.

The findings of this report were referred to the Office of Professional Standards for action deemed appropriate.



OIG CASE NUMBER 22-0016-I

BAK Middle School of the Arts

TYPE OF REPORT: FINAL

DATE OF REPORT: December 9, 2022





Teresa Michael

Teresa Michael, Inspector General Office of Inspector General School District of Palm Beach County

THIS REPORT MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION THAT IS CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT FROM DISCLOSURE UNDER APPLICABLE LAW. DO NOT RELEASE WITHOUT PRIOR COORDINATION WITH THE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.

Office of Inspector General Report of Investigation 22-0016-I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From July 5, 2022 to December 9, 2022, OIG staff conducted interviews and reviewed pertinent documentation and records as they related to the allegation. As a result of the investigation, OIG staff determined that the allegation that BAK Middle School of the Arts Drama teacher Erin Amico violated Palm Beach County School District Internal Accounts Manual Change Fund Procedure - Chapter 10 (When not in use at an event, all change funds must be secured in the school safe. At the conclusion of each event the sponsor must return the cashbox to the bookkeeper or change fund custodian so it can be logged back in and secured in the school safe) was **Substantiated**.

On October 14, 2022, the OIG forwarded a copy of the draft report to Erin Amico for a response by November 11, 2022. Her responses have been attached as Exhibits # 3.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The OIG recommends to Chief Financial Officer Heather Frederick and Accounting Services Director Annette Pinnock that a rule is implemented that requires change funds are listed on drop safe logs.

The OIG also recommends the findings of this report be referred to the Director of Professional Standards for review of the violation of School District policies and action deemed appropriate.

INVESTIGATIVE PREDICATE

On July 5, 2022, the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint from Sally Rozanski, Principal of BAK Middle School of the Arts regarding missing change fund money in the amount of \$200. The Drama teacher, Erin Amico checked out the Theatre Department change fund of \$200. Ms. Amico failed to secure the change fund in the school safe resulting in a loss of \$200. (Allegation 1).

On July 5, 2022, OIG Investigator Angela Feaman was assigned this complaint for investigation.

BACKGROUND

BAK Middle School of the Arts (BAK MSOA) is a public school located at 1725 Echo Lake Drive, in West Palm Beach, Florida. Student enrollment is 1,273 serving grades 6-8. Dr. Sally Rozanski has been the Principal at BAK MSOA for nine years. Treasurer Michelle Bauer has been at BAK MSOA for one year. Lilibette Valdes-Maietto was previously employed at BAK MSOA as a Bookkeeper for three years. Drama Teacher Erin Amico has been employed at BAK MSOA for eight years.

ALLEGATION 1

It is alleged that Erin Amico violated School Board Internal Accounts Manual Change Fund Procedure - Chapter 10 by not securing the change fund that she signed out for Theatre Productions that were sponsored by the Drama Department.

Chapter 10 - Change Funds

When not in use at an event, all change funds must be secured in the school safe. At the conclusion of each event the sponsor must return the cashbox to the bookkeeper or change fund custodian so it can be logged back in and secured in the school safe.

COMPLAINANT INTERVIEW

On May 27, 2022, a sworn recorded interview of BAK Middle School of The Arts Principal Sally Rozanski was conducted at BAK Middle School of the Arts in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Rozanski" as it relates to the Allegation:

Rozanski stated that Drama Teacher Erin Amico came to her in May of 2022 and stated that she thought she dropped the change fund into the safe that she signed out for theatre production. However, Michelle Bauer said she does not have it. Amico stated to Rozanski that she does not have the bag or the key for the bag. Rozanski stated that she asked

Amico when she thought she dropped the bag in the safe, to which Amico replied that she did not know. Amico stated that she was still looking for it. Rozanski said she requested that Amico continue to look for it because it is strange that the key is missing, as well as the bag. Rozanski explained even if the bag were dropped, one would keep the key.

Rozanski stated that Bookkeeper Michelle Bauer told her that Amico came to her and repeated the same that she did to Rozanski, but was certain that she could not find the change fund bag or key. Rozanski instructed Bauer to call Internal Accounts Manager, Wendy Martin for instructions on what to do. Wendy Martin responded on the May 25. 2022, and instructed Rozanski to contact the OIG.

Rozanski stated that Erin Amico is the Department Instructional Leader (DIL). She stated that Amico checked out the change fund on January 21, 2022 (Exhibit #1). Amico did not remember when she returned it, she just remembered dropping it into the safe. Rozanski stated that they are trying as much as possible to go cashless and there are only two change funds remaining at the school and Amico is one of the two.

Rozanski stated that there is no entry on the drop safe log because Bookkeeper Michelle Bauer and Data Processor Tammy King both stated that they were told that we are not supposed to write change fund transactions on the log. (Please note that this was a past practice of the school but has since changed as of this fiscal year.) Rozanski asked them to call Internal Accounts Technician Deborah Puig. Deborah stated to Rozanski that if you are going to turn the change fund in at the close of a fundraiser/performance it would require the sponsor to write it on the drop safe log. But if you are just securing the change it should have been placed into the safe immediately after the fundraiser/performance for safe keeping and it does not have to be written on the drop safe log. Rozanski stated the issue is tracking the change fund because it was not written on the drop safe log.

Rozanski stated that Amico has been employed at BAK for six years and she has had no problems with Amico and does not suspect Amico of taking the \$200. Rozanski stated that she has no concerns about Valdes-Maietto or Bauer.

Rozanski stated that BAK is different from other schools because their safes require both fingerprint and an access code. The safes cannot be opened by a singular person other than herself. Rozanski stated that others with access must also be accompanied by a secondary access user.

Per Rozanski, Amico said that she thought she dropped the change fund and she thought the key for the bag was in her desk drawer.

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

On July 13, 2022, a sworn recorded interview of BAK Middle School of The Arts former Treasurer Lilibette Valdes-Maietto was conducted at Office of Inspector General in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Valdes-Maietto" as it relates to the Allegation:

Valdes-Maietto stated the Erin Amico was the head of the Theatre department and at the beginning of the year they would check out a \$200 change fund for their performances. Prior to Covid they would have a concession stand inside of the theatre and the change fund would make the change for events. Valdes-Miaetto stated that in the past the change fund would be checked out against the fundraising account. Valdes-Miaetto stated that she noticed that Amico did not return the change fund in a timely manner and it was creating issues in the book. Valdes-Maeitto stated that she called the District Accounting Department Fast Team to ask if she could check it out to her main account because doing it this way would will not affect any of her fundraising accounts.

Valdes-Maietto stated that Amico came to her in January 2022, when Valdes-Maietto was preparing to leave BAK for her new position at the District. Amico came with the change fund money in sort of a panic to turn in the money knowing that Valdes-Maietto was leaving soon. Valdes-Maietto stated that she told Amico, she had spoken to Wendy Martin and was told that she did not have to collect the change fund back from Amico to put it back in the safe. Valdes-Maietto told Amico to keep it because in SchoolCash¹ it will show as checked out to Amico with any bookkeeper. Valdes-Maietto stated that Amico left with the change fund in hand.

Valdes-Maietto said when Bauer started working at BAK, the two of them went together to count the change fund because Valdes-Maietto wanted to verify that the change fund bag contained the \$200 that was checked out. Valdes-Maietto stated that she wanted to close out all year end fundraisers that she was responsible for because she did not want to leave Bauer responsible for any of her work.

Valdes-Maietto stated Amico was not going to be doing a lot of ticket sales at the door because of a new program called Seat Yourself, which is an approved vendor that does ticket sales online and forwards a check to the school for the total amount of sales. Valdes-Maietto stated when Amico did her first show the money was checked out against the fundraiser.

Valdes-Maietto stated that when she went to close out the fundraiser she told Amico that she could not close out the fundraiser because money was checked out against the fundraiser. Valdes-Maietto instructed Amico to complete the paperwork to show that the change fund had been turned in and Valdes-Maietto would then check out the change

¹ SchoolCash is a web-based solution designed to track every dollar flowing through schools. It fully integrates online payments, fee management, digital forms, and school-level accounting. The system ensures that schools and school districts have the most secure and efficient management of their School Activity Funds possible.

fund to the Theatre Department, even though no money was physically turned in at that time. Valdes-Maietto printed the form which Amico signed.

Valdes-Maietto stated that when Bauer attempted to close out the account the money was missing. Valdes-Maietto said the Theatre Department was assigned one locked money bag with "Theatre" written on it. Valdes-Maietto stated that she has never had the key to the money bag. Valdes-Maietto stated that the teacher keeps the key. Valdes-Maietto thinks that the money is misplaced somewhere. Valdes-Maietto stated that Amico hated having the money and she hated being in charge of the money, but it was something that was needed for fundraisers sponsored by the Theatre Department.

Valdes-Maietto stated that if you are securing the change fund, it should have been placed into the safe immediately after the fundraiser/performance for safe keeping and it does not have to be written on the drop safe log. The change fund transaction should only be written on the drop safe log when it is to be deposited back into the bank at the end of the year and that would not have been Amico's responsibility.

Valdes-Maietto again stated that she thinks the money is misplaced and she does not suspect anyone of taking the money. Valdes-Maietto stated that for the 3-4 years she was at BAK she has never had a problem with Amico and the change fund. She stated that Amico was always good about checking out and returning the change fund.

On August 24, 2022, a sworn recorded interview of BAK Middle School of the Arts Treasurer Michelle Bauer was conducted at BAK Middle School of The Arts in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Bauer" as it relates to the Allegation:

Bauer stated when it came towards the end of the school year and she needed to close things out, she was trying to close out the change fund so that it could be given to the money carrier and sent back to the bank. Everything was closed for the Theatre Department and the change fund was checked out to the Theatre Department main account prior to her arrival at the school on January 31, 2022. Bauer stated "per the FAST team, we were told to transfer funds from the Theatre acct to close the change fund. Debbie Puig assisted me in doing this." Bauer stated that she was replacing Lillibette Valdes-Maietto.

On May 13, 2022, Bauer stated that she reached out to Erin Amico who said that she had turned in the change fund. Bauer stated that she reached out to Valdes-Maietto who had begun employment in the Choice Department. Valdes-Maietto instructed her to look in the safe. Bauer did not immediately look in the safe but she contacted Amico who stated that she would look for it. A week or two later Amico stated to Bauer that she does not have the change fund and that she turned it in.

Bauer stated that she reached out to Valdes-Maietto, who instructed her to check everywhere. Bauer checked the safe in the student services area, the safe in her area and the cabinets in her office because Valdes-Maietto stated that maybe Amico gave it

to her and she just placed it somewhere. Bauer stated "We have two safes on campus. One safe is located in the student services mail room, where teachers/sponsors drop their deposits, and the other one is in a locked closet located in my office where blank checks, keys, and the change fund are kept, as well as the money bags for pick-up. We are involved in a beta program where it requires a fingerprint and pin to access. Mrs. Rozanski is the only one that can get in without a second party. The other staff that can access with a second party is Rosanna De La Roche, Maria Cabrera, and myself." Bauer stated that she looked everywhere once she knew that is was officially gone and she informed the Principal of the possible issue.

According to Bauer, Amico said that she would continue to look and see if there was a possibility that someone else had their hands on the money. Amico was checking with other employees in the Theatre Department. Bauer said many emails were going back and forth when Amico stated to Bauer that she does not have it and could not locate it.

Bauer stated that a locked bag was given to the Theatre Department and neither the bag or key can be found. Bauer stated that prior to this situation there was nothing in place that stated the change fund must be recorded on the safe log, this rule has since changed and the change fund must now be recorded on the safe log.

Bauer stated that Amico has sponsored fundraisers and has not had any problems in the past. Bauer stated that the Theatre Department does not currently have a change fund; however, she does have a change fund locked in the safe in her office should a Department need it for this school year. Both safes require a fingerprint and a pin.

Bauer stated that she believes the change fund bag was misplaced and that it will turn up eventually because the area is vast in the Theatre Department. Bauer also stated "as we did not know if this was a theft or not, we did not file a report with School Police. My Principal contacted someone, I believe, at the Inspector General's Office to advise that we needed to report funds that were missing."

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

On September 6, 2022, a sworn recorded interview of BAK Middle School of The Arts employee Erin Amico was conducted at BAK Middle School of The Arts in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Amico" as it relates to the Allegation:

Amico stated that the change fund is something that was used regularly for performance activities. Amico stated that she would sign the change fund out and keep it until year-end close out because it was common practice at BAK to hold on to the change fund, she did so. Amico stated that she would keep the bag in a separate location away from the key. Each were stored in her desk drawers, which does not have a lock. Amico stated that her office and desk are located in building 1 room 119 that has a locking door. Amico stated that her office door remained locked when she was not in her classroom and that

students did not go into her office. By placing the bag in an unlocked drawer in a locked classroom Amico felt the bag would be safe.

Amico stated that she has taken the required fundraising training which was verified by PeopleSoft Training Records (Exhibit 2). Amico stated that she checked the change fund out because they were about to do a performance. Amico stated that after the performance they realized that they did not use or need the change fund and she was not sure if she dropped money in the safe that evening. Amico stated that she was in the habit of keeping the change fund because they had multiple performances during the year so instead of putting the fund in the drop safe she would keep it until the next performance.

Amico stated that the Principal decided to go to a ticketing agency. Seat Yourself changed the parameters so that tickets paid for by credit cards can continue to be sold on the day of the performance. Amico stated prior to the change, cash would be required to pay for a ticket on the day of the performance or at the door. Amico stated that because of these changes, she no longer needed the change fund, but she also did not think about returning it to the bookkeeper because it was still in her desk.

Amico stated that months after spring break, many people were in her room. Amico stated that her floors were being waxed during spring break and every piece of furniture was moved in the room. Amico said many people were in there moving things around and the change fund was in the unlocked desk drawer. Amico stated that she was asked to return the change fund and she tried to remember if she had dropped it in the safe, but she could not locate the money or the key. Amico stated that at that time when you drop the bag, you were not supposed to record it on the drop safe log. Amico stated that it has since changed.

Amico stated that the bag and the key were nowhere to be found and the entire room was searched. Amico stated that her classroom is always locked when she is not physically present and only drama teachers have access to her office. Amico stated that only two other teachers knew where the money was and that she asked all drama teachers if they had seen the change fund and no other teacher had possession of it or had seen the change fund bag. Amico stated that she has never had any problems with any missing money from performances.

Amico stated that in her opinion someone riffled through her desk and took the bag and the key. Amico stated that the bag had #4 Theatre Department and the key was on a spiral wrist ring with the #4 on it.

RECORDS ANALYSIS

Exhibit 1: FY22 Change Fund Detail Report provided by Principal Sally Rozanski

Exhibit 2: Peoplesoft Training Records

Exhibit 3: Amico Response

On July 5, 2022 OIG staff reviewed the above listed documents provided by Principal Rozanski. The review disclosed the following:

The OIG obtained and reviewed the Cashbox Transaction Detail Report. (Exhibit 1) The document shows that Amico checked out the \$200 change fund on October 5, 2021, and again on November 4, 2021. (Exhibit 2) The document shows that Amico received fundraising training for fiscal year 2022 on August 5, 2021.

CONCLUSION

Based on the testimony obtained and the records reviewed, the OIG determined that Amico violated Palm Beach County School District Internal Accounts Manual - Change Fund Procedure by not returning the change fund after an event to be logged back in on the safe log when secured in the school safe.

The OIG determined that the allegation that BAK Middle School of the Arts drama teacher Amico did not follow the District's Internal Accounts Manual Chapter 10 – Change Fund procedure was *Substantiated*.

The evidentiary standard used by the School District of Palm Beach County OIG in determining whether the facts and claims asserted in the complaint were proven or disproven is based upon the preponderance of the evidence. Preponderance of the evidence is contrasted with "beyond a reasonable doubt," which is the more severe test required to convict a criminal and "clear and convincing evidence," a standard describing proof of a matter established to be substantially more likely than not to be true. OIG investigative findings classified as "substantiated" means there was sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions occurred and there was a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation. Investigative findings classified as "unfounded" means sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did not occur and there was no violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to substantiate the allegation. Investigative findings classified as "unsubstantiated" means there was insufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did or did not occur and a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation could not be proven or disproven.

ATTESTATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under penalty of perjury, to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, the contents of this report are true and accurate; and I have not knowingly or willfully deprived or allowed another to deprive, the subject of the investigation of any rights contained in Sections 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes. This investigation was conducted pursuant to School District Policy 1.092, Inspector General, and in accordance with applicable Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspectors General as published by the Association of Inspectors General.

Angela Feaman, Investigator

STATE OF FLORIDA **COUNTY OF PALM BEACH**

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me this 09 day of December, 2022. by Angela Feaman, Investigator for the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General, who is personally known by me.

Signature of Notary Public	
Notary Public or Law Enforcement Office	er



This investigation was conducted by Angela Feaman, supervised and approved by Inspector General Teresa Michael. The investigation was conducted in accordance with guidance from the Association of Inspectors General handbook and within standards as prescribed by Commission Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

Date: 12/12/22

Date: 12/12/22 Supervised by: Oscar Restrepo, Director of Investigations

Approved by: Teresa Michael, Inspector General

EXHIBIT LIST

FY22 Change Fund Report provided by Principal Sally Rozanski	Exhibit 1
PeopleSoft Training Records	Exhibit 2
Amico Response	Exhibit 3

DISTRIBUTION LIST

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Vicki Evans-Pare, Director, Employee and Labor Relations Sally Rozanski, Principal, BAK Middle School of the Arts Annette Pinnock, Director of Accounting Services Heather Frederick, Chief Financial Officer

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Bak Middle School of the Arts

Cashbox Transaction Detail Report

Activity Funds-Area 4

Wells Fargo

Change Fund

Given To Lillie Valdes Tammy King Shakendra Moorer Doug Battle Lillie Valdes Lillie Valdes Lillie Valdes Erin Amico Lillie Valdes Erin Amico Lillie Valdes Erin Amico Killie Valdes Erin Amico Killie Valdes Erin Amico Killie Valdes	Reason Set up Change Fund Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation Return change fund Return change fund Return change fund Theatre Play Return change fund Theatre Performance Return Change Fund Theatre FR's AFTER SCHOOL ADMISSIONS RETURN PETTY CASH	Category Change Fund Athletics- T-Shirt FR Safe School Registration & Special Fees General Act Account Safe School Registration & Special Fees General Act Account Athletics- T-Shirt FR Theatre- 7G Q1 Play FR Theatre- 7G Q1 Play FR Theatre- Fall 8G - 1 Act FR Theatre- Fall 8G - 1 Act FR Theatre Department Athletics - General	\$700.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$100.00 \$100.00	\$0.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$200.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$0.00 \$200.00 \$0.00 \$100.00	Running Total \$700.00 \$500.00 \$300.00 \$100.00 \$300.00 \$500.00 \$700.00 \$500.00 \$700.00 \$500.00 \$500.00 \$500.00 \$500.00
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Redactions: Yes No

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Exhibit #; A Nok



December 8, 2022

To whom it may concern,

My name is Erin Amico. This is my eighth year as a full time teacher at Bak Middle School of the Arts, having served as the Department instructional leader for the past 5 years. In fulfilling my responsibilities as the department head I have previously been required to check out the "change fund" for performances over the years. This \$200 fund was stored in a locked bag in my office per our school practices. I have a private office (it has a door that locks) that is part of my classroom. It is a secured area. When we no longer needed the change fund because the school went cashless, I believed that I had dropped the change fund in the drop safe. Per district policy, we are instructed to drop the change fund in the school safe without logging it on the drop safe log (without the key). It was not discovered that the change fund was missing until the end of the school year when the new bookkeeper asked me for the change fund.

It was not my intention to break any school or district protocols in dealing with this change fund. Please accept this as my formal response to the Inspector General's report.

Erin Amico

Erin Amico Department Instructional Leader Bak Middle School of the Arts 1725 Echo Lake Dr, West Palm Beach, FL 33407

Case #: 22-0016 Da	te Rcv'd: 12 9 122
Received From: E	ZIN Amico
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