

CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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August 31, 2011

Hon. Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Mona Lisa Tello
SCI Case #2011-2867

Dear Chancellor Walcott:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that Mona Lisa Tello, a teacher assigned to The High School of Graphic Communication Arts in Manhattan, submitted a false document, purportedly issued by a court, to excuse absences from her Department of Education (“DOE”) position.¹

This investigation began in June 2011, when Principal Jerod Resnick contacted the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation (“SCI”) and lodged a complaint against Tello. Resnick forwarded a letter, dated May 11, 2011, purporting to emanate from the Superior Court of New Jersey, Hudson Vicinage, relating to dates Tello was to appear from September 14, 2010 through May 31, 2011. Principal Resnick had a discussion with Raquel Sanchez of the Hudson County Superior Court and shared the letter with her. Sanchez noted the numerous errors in the document – such as the use of “trail” for trial, “sited” for cited, and “manger” for manager – which was submitted to the school by Tello on June 1, 2011.² Sanchez also informed Resnick that the address on the letter was wrong, the telephone and fax numbers were fake, and the bar code was fake.

SCI investigators met with Principal Resnick who provided a copy of the genuine letter, dated June 1, 2011, which the Superior Court of New Jersey, Hudson Vicinage, sent to Tello. Resnick had obtained that document from Sanchez. The letter advised Tello that her request to have jury service deferred had been approved and her new appearance date was September 14, 2011.

¹ Tello was not reassigned as a result of this investigation.

² Tello gave the letter to Payroll Secretary Bonnie Thomas. Tello also attempted to e-mail the document to the school: notably, the subject line refers to “trail” court dates.

Payroll Secretary Bonnie Thomas provided documentation which showed the days when Tello was absent and claimed to be on jury duty: September 16, 2010, October 19, 2010, November 30, 2010, December 7 and 8, 2010, January 21, 2011, February 10 and 11, 2011, May 4, 11, 17, 18, 26, 27 and 31, 2011.

The assigned SCI investigator spoke by telephone with Raquel Sanchez, the Supervisor/Jury Manager in Hudson County, New Jersey. Sanchez confirmed her conversation with Principal Resnick and that the letter submitted by Tello was a forgery.

Through her attorney, Mona Lisa Tello declined the opportunity to speak with investigators from this office.

It is the recommendation of this office that Mona Lisa Tello's employment be terminated, that she be made ineligible for work with the DOE, and that this matter be considered should she apply for any position in the New York City school system, with one of its vendors, or in one of its facilities, in the future.

We are referring our findings to New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. for whatever action he deems appropriate.

We are forwarding a copy of this letter and of our report concerning this investigation to the Office of Legal Services. We also are sending our findings to the New York State Education Department for whatever action it deems appropriate. Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact First Deputy Commissioner Regina Loughran, the attorney assigned to the case. She can be reached at (212) 510-1426. Please notify First Deputy Commissioner Loughran within 30 days of receipt of this letter of what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated regarding Mona Lisa Tello. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



RICHARD J. CONDON
Special Commissioner
of Investigation for the
New York City School District

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c: Michael Best, Esq.
Theresa Europe, Esq.