

February 7, 2007

Hon. Joel I. Klein
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Cheryl Edwards
SCI Case #2006-3670

Dear Chancellor Klein:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that Cheryl Edwards, a teacher assigned to PS 288 in Brooklyn, who also held a per session position with the Home Instruction Schools, submitted fraudulent documents requesting payment for services she did not provide to a student.¹ Edwards also submitted additional false documents and was paid for claimed instruction to a second student who had passed away.

This investigation began on October 27, 2006, when Home Instruction Schools Principal Richard Cooperman contacted the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation (“SCI”) and reported that the mother of an 11-year-old male 5th grade student (“Student A”) had complained that Edwards had not appeared at her home to teach her son since the beginning of the school year. Cooperman added that Edwards had denied the mother’s allegation and had submitted time reports which indicated that she met with Student A on September 28 and 29, as well as, October 3, 4, 10, and 11, 2006.

Arlene Aron, the Per Session Coordinator for Home Instruction, provided relevant information to investigators. Aron explained that, on October 26, 2006, she received a telephone call from the mother of Student A who asked when Edwards was going to start coming to her residence to teach her son. The mother added that Edwards had never been to her home and had not provided any instruction to Student A. Aron advised the mother

¹ Edwards was not reassigned during this investigation. She no longer holds a per session position with the Home Instruction Schools.

to place her complaint in writing and fax it to the Home instruction office. Aron continued that, the next day, after receiving a letter from the mother, she conferred with Payroll Secretary Abigail Melendez and learned that Edwards had already submitted her per session time reports for September and the first half of October. At the direction of Principal Cooperman, Aron advised Edwards that she no longer was assigned to Student A.

Student A's mother informed investigators that Edwards was supposed to start teaching her son on September 28, 2006, but never appeared. She confirmed that, on October 26th, she notified Arlene Aron at Home Instruction about the situation and then faxed a written version of her complaint.

In an interview with SCI investigators, Student A confirmed that he had never met Edwards, that she had not given him any assignments, and that she had not provided any instruction to him.

Investigators spoke with the family of another student ("Student B") who was supposed to be receiving Home Instruction from Edwards beginning in October 2005. With her son-in-law as an interpreter, Student B's mother reported that the female teacher who was assigned to Student B came to the residence only twice. The mother described the second visit by the female teacher as occurring sometime in January 2006. The mother said that, on that occasion, through Student B who spoke English, she informed the teacher that she was taking her son back to Vietnam to die. According to the mother, she and Student B left for Vietnam around January 17 or 18, 2006. She added that Student B, who had just turned 15-years-old, died on January 29, 2006.

Investigators obtained a copy of a certified translation of Student B's death certificate which confirmed that he passed away on January 29, 2006, in Vietnam. The document also indicated that Student B's death occurred in the Cho Ray Hospital where he had been admitted on January 23, 2006.

Investigators obtained and examined the Home Instruction time reports relating to Student B which Edwards had submitted for payment. The review revealed that Edwards claimed to have taught Student B a total of 154 hours and 30 minutes between January 23, 2006 and June 12, 2006.²

Through her attorney, Cheryl Edwards declined to be interviewed by investigators from this office.

² At the rate of \$37.96 per hour, Edwards received \$5,864.82 in gross pay for her claimed services to Student B during this period. The Home Instruction Schools had not been notified about Student B's death.

It is the recommendation of this office that Cheryl Edwards's employment be terminated, that she be made ineligible for work with the Department of Education, and that this matter be considered should she apply for any position in the New York City school system in the future.

We are referring our findings to Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes for whatever action he deems appropriate.³

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 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 thirty days of receipt of this letter of what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated regarding Cheryl Edwards. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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

By:

Regina A. Loughran
First Deputy Commissioner

RJC:RAL:gm

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

³ Student A and Student B should have received services from Edwards at their residences located in Brooklyn. The main office of the Home Instruction Schools is in the Bronx.