

CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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August 12, 2014

Hon. Carmen Fariña
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Steven Walters
SCI Case #2013-5794

Dear Chancellor Fariña:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that 21-year-old Steven Walters, who was an After School Program Aide employed by Good Shepherd Services, sexually abused an eight-year-old female student ("Student A") at The School of Science and Applied Learning, also known as PS 300, in the Bronx.¹ The investigation also substantiated that Walters sexually abused another eight-year-old female student ("Student B") and inappropriately touched a seven-year-old female student ("Student D").²

On November 26, 2013, PS 300 Principal Venessa Singleton contacted the Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation ("SCI") and lodged a complaint against Walters. Student A's parents reported that, on or about November 13, 2013, Walters called Student A into the hallway of the school and sexually abused her. Principal Singleton also notified the New York City Police Department ("NYPD") which referred the matter to the Bronx Special Victims Squad to conduct the NYPD investigation. SCI monitored the NYPD investigation.³ In June 2014, the assigned SCI investigator conferred with the assigned NYPD detective who had closed the case as "all leads exhausted," after conferring with the Child Abuse/Sex Crimes Bureau of the Bronx District Attorney's Office. SCI then opened an investigation.

¹ When his misconduct was discovered, on November 25, 2013, Walters was removed from the classroom, was suspended, and did not return to the program even though he was paid. Good Shepherd Services terminated Walters's employment effective February 24, 2014. Student A has turned nine.

² Student B has turned nine.

³ SCI monitors police investigations involving misconduct which may impact the Department of Education. If a criminal investigation fails, SCI may open an investigation of possible administrative violations.

SCI investigators met with Principal Singleton who said that, late on Monday, November 25, 2013, she received a call from Student A's father who explained that Student A had told him something which he needed to report to Singleton.

The next morning, Student A's father and mother were present in Principal Singleton's office, along with Good Shepherd Services Program Director Otis Bellamy and Assistant Director Sheena Young. The father reported that, on Friday, November 22, 2013, Student A told him and her mother that, on November 13, 2013, Walters removed her from the classroom, took her to a stairwell, and sexually abused her. Principal Singleton informed the father that there was no after school program on November 13th and he responded that the incident may have occurred on another date. Principal Singleton added that Student A gave the same account.

Principal Singleton explained that, when an NYPD detective was present at the school, they accompanied Student A to the stairwell where she said the incident occurred. Student A first took them to the 3rd floor landing, but on the way back down the stairs, Student A reported that she was wrong and the correct location was the 2nd floor landing.

Principal Singleton added that an eight-year-old female student ("Student C") said that she heard Walters tell Student B that he wanted to take Student B into the bathroom – located in the classroom – so he could do nasty things to her. According to Student C, Student B went into the bathroom with Walters, but Student C did not know whether anything happened in there.

SCI investigators spoke with Student A who did not recall the date but, during the after school program around Thanksgiving 2013, Walters told her to come with him. They left the classroom, walked to the staircase, and went up one flight of stairs to the landing where Walters sexually abused her. Student A provided specific details about Walters's misconduct, but we do not report that information here. Student A went home that day and told her mother about the incident with Walters.

SCI investigators met with Student B who said that she was suspicious of Walters from the beginning of the year, but did not elaborate. According to Student B, Walters never asked to take her into the bathroom to do nasty things. Student B asserted that she never was alone with Walters in the bathroom. Student B maintained that Walters never touched her private areas.

SCI investigators spoke with Student D who confirmed that she attended the Good Shepherd Services after school program and Walters was assigned to her class. Student D said that Walters would sit next to her when she asked him to help her with work. One day, Walters sat next to Student D, put his hand on the inside of her upper thigh, and told Student D that her leg felt warm.⁴ When asked whether Walters touched her buttocks, Student D's eyes welled up, but she did not respond. Asked whether

⁴ Student D did not provide the date of occurrence.

Walters touched her anywhere else, Student D simply put her head down and shook her head no.

At the conclusion of the interview, Principal Singleton placed a call to Student D's mother who confirmed that Student D had told the mother that Walters touched her leg and buttocks.

SCI investigators spoke with Student C who attended the Good Shepherd after school program in the class where Walters was assigned. Student A told Student C what Walters did to Student A in the hallway. We do not provide that information here.

Student C said that she was in the classroom with Student B at the end of the day when Walters asked which of them wanted to go to the bathroom with him. According to Student C, she did not want to go, so Walters forced Student B into the bathroom after saying that he was going to do nasty things with Student B. Student C added that, after Walters and Student B went into the bathroom, "Mr. Otis" walked in and instructed her to go downstairs because her brother was there to pick her up. Student C informed Mr. Otis that Student B was in the bathroom and walked out of the room.

SCI investigators met with Otis Bellamy, the Good Shepherd Services program director at PS 300, who said that, sometime around November 2013, his assistant, Sheena Young, told him about an allegation which Student A had made against Walters. Principal Singleton advised Young that Student A said Walters took her out of the classroom and sexually abused her.⁵ Young believed that it occurred somewhere on the 4th floor of the school. Young told Bellamy that Student A's mother said the incident happened on a certain date, but after checking the calendar, Young discovered there was no after school program that day. According to Bellamy, there was no way that a student told him Walters was alone in a bathroom with Student B or any other student.

In an interview with SCI investigators, Steven Walters confirmed that he had worked for Good Shepherd Services as an aide in the after school program at PS 300. Walters said that he began working in "Ms. Tracy's" classroom in September 2013, and was there to help out in whatever way he could.⁶

Walters provided a detailed account of his sexual misconduct. Sometime between September 2013 and November 2013, during class, Walters took Student A to a staircase landing on the 2nd floor. Once there, Walters positioned himself and Student A in a place to avoid being seen right away by someone walking up or down. Walters then gave specific, graphic details about his abuse of Student A, which we do not report here. Walters instructed Student A not to tell anyone what happened.

About a week or two later, Walters took Student A to the same staircase. Student A was wearing a hoodie and Walters told Student A to pull the hood over her head to

⁵ We do not report the specific words used by Student A.

⁶ Walters was referring to Teacher Tracy Plaskett who worked for Good Shepherd Services.

cover her eyes. Walters then sexually abused Student A again – although Walters gave specific details, we do not report them here. Walters repeated his instruction not to say anything to anyone and he took Student A back to class.

Sometime between September 2013 and November 2013, when the after school class ended, Walters saw that Student B and Student C were alone in the classroom. Walters took Student B into the bathroom, located within the classroom, and told Student C to wait for her. Walters then described his abuse of Student B in graphic detail – we do not report that information here.

Walters heard his supervisor, Bellamy, calling out to Student B. Walters directed Student B to tell Bellamy that she was going to the bathroom, and not to tell Bellamy that Walters was in there with her. Student B complied with Walters's instructions and said out loud that she was going to the bathroom. Walters heard Bellamy walk toward the bathroom and turn on the bathroom light, which was located outside of the bathroom. Walters stood off to the side as Student B exited the bathroom and left the classroom with Bellamy and Student C. Walters left the bathroom a short time later, once he felt it was safe to do so.

According to Walters, on a date before the incidents with Student A, he took Student B to the same staircase where he took Student A. Walters took Student B to the 2nd floor staircase landing a total of three times. Once there, Walters positioned himself and Student B so that no one walking up or down would see them right away. Walters instructed Student B to cover her eyes with her hoodie and Walters maintained that, as a result, Student B never saw his penis. Walters provided details of his abuse, which we do not report here. Walters said that each of the three incidents lasted about five minutes.

Walters added that, on one occasion, he took Student A and Student B to the staircase together. At that time, Walters had yet to take Student A to the staircase alone. Walters told Student A to wait up on the 3rd floor while he was on the 2nd floor landing with Student B. Walters informed Student A that, when he was finished with Student B, he would do the same thing to her if she did not look. According to Walters, Student A kept peeking around the staircase, but he was able to abuse Student B in between Student A's peeks. Walters did not do anything with Student A that time, but knew that Student A and Student B talked about what happened. Walters took Student A to the staircase for the first time about a week later.

According to Walters, he took Student B to the staircase more than Student A because Student B was more his type. Walters described Student B's appearance, but we do not provide that information here.

Walters said that, at different times, as part of his aide duties, he took male and female students to the bathroom in the empty classroom next door when the bathroom in his classroom was either out of order or being used. Walters maintained that he never went into the bathroom with any of those students and always waited for those students

near the front door of the classroom. Walters asserted that he never touched or masturbated near any other student.

Walters told the SCI investigators that he realized what he did with Student A and Student B was wrong. Walters added that he would like to get some help to stop, but could not do it alone.

On a subsequent occasion, NYPD detectives from the Bronx Special Victims Child Abuse Squad and investigators from SCI re-interviewed Walters who repeated what he previously told the SCI investigators.

On July 15, 2014, a detective from the NYPD Bronx Special Victims Child Abuse Squad arrested Steven Walters on charges related to his sexual abuse of Student A.

It is the recommendation of this office that Steven Walters be made ineligible for employment with the Department of Education and that this matter be considered should he apply for a position in the City school system, with one of its vendors, or in one of its facilities, in the future.

We are forwarding a copy of this letter to the Office of Legal Services. 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 Steven Walters. 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:ss

c: Courtenaye Jackson-Chase, Esq.
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