CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
80 MAIDEN LANE, 20TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038

RICHARD J. CONDON
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (212) 510-1400
Fax: (212) 510-1550
WWW.NYCSCI.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **CONTACT: Laurel Wright-Hinckson**
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DOE Custodial Employees steal more than $60,000 in DOE funds Report Released Today

Today, Special Commissioner of Investigation Richard J. Condon released a report detailing an investigation which found that 37-year-old New York City Department of Education ("DOE") Custodial Secretary Karen Nowaski stole more than $60,000 in DOE funds from the custodial payroll of Grover Cleveland High School in Queens over a period of five years. Nowaski, aided by John Lotito, a 45-year-old custodial worker formerly assigned to the school, stole approximately $30,000 in funds by forging and cashing fraudulent payroll checks. Additionally, Nowaski garnered approximately $30,000 more by increasing her hourly wage without authorization. She then extorted a $9,000 payment from Lotito in exchange for her silence on his involvement in the forgery scheme. Despite substantial evidence to the contrary, Nowaski, during an interview at SCI, denied under oath that she received this payment from Lotito.

Nowaski and Lotito are no longer employed at the Grover Cleveland. Commissioner Condon has recommended that both be placed on the ineligible list and barred from future employment with the DOE or its affiliates. The Commissioner has also referred his findings to Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown and New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau for whatever action they may deem appropriate.

The Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation is part of the New York City Department of Investigation and Special Commissioner Condon reports to Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn.