

CITY OF NEW YORK  
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION  
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
25 Broadway, 8th floor, New York, New York 10004  
Telephone: (212) 510-1400  
Fax: (212) 510-1550

**Edward F. Stancik**  
Special Commissioner

**NEWS RELEASE**  
April 27, 1998

**MIDWOOD HIGH SCHOOL MISHANDLES INVESTIGATION  
INTO DEATH OF A SCHOOL AIDE**

Today Special Commissioner of Investigation Edward F. Stancik released a report, *The Death of John Morale: An Investigation Into Midwood High School's Handling Of An Assault On A School Aide*, that criticizes the school's response to the sudden death of 66-year-old John Morale, an aide assigned to the locker room at the Brooklyn school. On November 24, 1997, Morale suffered a heart attack following an assault by a 16-year-old student, Jose Hiraldo, and died the next morning. Midwood personnel failed to report the incident to the NYPD for over 24 hours although they had information about the altercation. The report details ways that Midwood's handling of Morale's death interfered with the police investigation:

- ?? Midwood personnel took no action for 24 hours following Morale's collapse, even after witnesses came forward to say a student had punched Morale minutes before his collapse.
- ?? Midwood personnel launched an internal investigation before they notified the NYPD that Morale's death was more than an unprovoked heart attack.
- ?? Even after the police instructed Midwood to abandon its internal investigation, Midwood officials took written statements from witnesses, and endangered student witnesses by supplying Hiraldo with their names and their descriptions of the altercation.
- ?? Because the police were not told that criminal activity may have caused Morale's death, his body was released to a funeral home where it was embalmed before an autopsy could be conducted.
- ?? Midwood personnel were not candid with and even lied to SCI investigators, complicating the investigation.

The report recommends disciplinary action against certain members of the Midwood staff, and reiterates that school personnel are mandated to report immediately to the appropriate agency if they have information about criminal activity in their schools, while failure to do so may result in disciplinary action taken against them.

A Brooklyn Grand Jury indicted Jose Hiraldo for Manslaughter and related crimes. His case is pending.

The Special Commissioner is grateful for the assistance and cooperation provided by the Detective Squad of the 70th Police Precinct of the NYPD, the Office of Charles J. Hynes, the Kings County District Attorney, and the Office of the New York City Medical Examiner.