

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

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NEWS RELEASE

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PRESS CONFERENCE: 11 A.M., 25 BROADWAY, 8TH FLOOR

Edward F. Stancik, Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District, today released the results of his investigation into the failure of school officials at two middle schools to report serious allegations of sexual abuse of at least eight female students. In both cases, parents ultimately reported the abuse to the police, who arrested a total of thirteen male students, charging them with Sexual Abuse in the First Degree.

IS 278, Brooklyn, June 9, 2000

On a hot and humid Friday, hundreds of students at IS 278, located at 1925 Stuart Street in Brooklyn's District 22, spent the entire day in "extended recess" in the schoolyard, because a religious holiday and the opportunity for a four-day weekend following "Brooklyn-Queens Day" had resulted in 35 teachers taking the day off. Principal Michael Quigley failed to find substitutes, forcing the cancellation of numerous classes. The sultry weather inevitably drew students to a sprinkler system in adjacent Marine Park, where mayhem ensued.

Groups of boys sexually assaulted at least seven girls, most of them 12 years old, in a series of attacks by the sprinkler. Boys threw girls into the sprinklers and tried to undress them; they yanked off blouses, bras, and skirts, groping the girls' breasts and vaginal areas. Many of the girls reported the attacks to Dean Daniel Landberg, and other teachers also learned of the assaults. The seriousness of the crimes was obvious: girls were soaked and terrified, their clothes ripped, and one girl's glasses were broken. Yet neither Quigley, nor Landberg, nor the other teachers reported the crimes to the police. They simply directed the girls to the auditorium to write statements.

On Monday, June 12, parents who had learned of the attacks went to the school and confronted Quigley, Landberg, and teacher Frank DiFranco, demanding to know why the police were not called. Explaining that they were conducting their own investigation, the school officials still refused to call police. When the parents continued to insist that the police be notified, they were told that they could not use school phones or even remain in the school building. The parents left the school and called the police. Officers responded and ultimately arrested and charged six boys with First Degree Sexual Abuse.

MS 180, Queens, June 20, 2000

Less than two weeks later, another 12-year old girl was sexually assaulted by a group of boys in the schoolyard at MS 180, located at 3-20 Beach 104th Street in Queens' District 27. The boys held the

girl upside down with her hands held together while they groped her breasts and buttocks and tried to get her clothes off. The victim and other witnesses tried to tell Dean Carey Wittman what happened. Wittman, who was busy “preparing for graduation,” told the girls to write out statements, but did not bother to even read the statements until the next day. Fortunately, the girl’s mother called the police on the night of the 20th, and seven male students were arrested and charged with First Degree Sexual Abuse.

Stancik said that the cases showed why allegations of serious crimes by students must be reported to the police immediately: “I am pleased that Chancellor Levy has made this a clear priority. It will take sustained effort to ensure that schools call the police immediately when an allegation comes in, so that a thorough and professional law enforcement investigation can be done.”

Special Commissioner Stancik recommended that strong disciplinary action be taken against IS 278 Principal Michael Quigley and Dean Daniel Landberg, which should include removal from their positions. He also recommended disciplinary action against two teachers who failed to handle the sexual assault allegations properly. With respect to MS 180, the Special Commissioner recommended that appropriate disciplinary action be taken against Dean Carey Wittman.