

January 6, 2010

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

Re: Quintin Ceden0
SCI Case #2008-4526

Dear Chancellor Klein:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture Principal Quintin Ceden0 solicited oral sex from at least four male students at that school, which is located in Queens.¹ Ceden0 also inappropriately touched and attempted to touch these four students, as well as several other male students, on the penis and buttocks. Ceden0 engaged in inappropriate electronic communications and inappropriate conversations with at least eight male students.²

This investigation began in November 2008, when Guidance Counselor Billieannette Lunsford contacted the Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation (“SCI”) and lodged a complaint of sexual harassment against Ceden0. Lunsford reported that, when they were alone on an elevator, Ceden0 asked a 15-year-old male student (“Student A”) whether he wanted Ceden0 to “suck” his “dick.”³ Lunsford further alleged that Ceden0 had engaged in other inappropriate behavior toward Student A.

¹ Ceden0 was also the assistant basketball coach at the school. On October 22, 2009, Ceden0 was reassigned to the Empowerment Support Organization located at 335 Adams Street, in Brooklyn.

² Some of the students who had electronic and other inappropriate contact with Ceden0 are not referred to in this report.

³ Student A has turned 16 years old.

SCI investigators interviewed Guidance Counselor Lunsford who said that, during a counseling session with a 16-year-old male student (“Student B”) she learned that Principal Cedeno was sending Student A text messages which Student B thought were inappropriate. Lunsford added that Student B also told her that Cedeno had sent another student a text message which indicated that he would have brought the Vaseline had he known there was a party.

Lunsford continued that she also spoke to Student A who told her that, while he was on an elevator with Cedeno, the principal asked whether he could suck Student A’s dick and Student A replied in the negative; Cedeno then started to laugh and said he was only joking. Student A further informed Lunsford that Cedeno had tried to grab his crotch and had sent him text messages.

SCI investigators met with Student A who said that, in September 2008, while he was walking in Brooklyn with Cedeno and four other students – two males and two females – Cedeno asked for his cell phone number and Student A complied with that request. According to Student A, that same evening, a 17-year-old male student (“Student D”) was staying over at Student A’s house, a fact which had been discussed earlier in the day in Cedeno’s presence.⁴ That night, Cedeno sent Student A a text message relating to a high school fair that was being held that weekend. Cedeno then asked what Student A and Student D were doing and, eventually, the principal sent a text message which read that he was “mad u guys didn’t invite me,” that he would be right over, and that he would bring the “Vaseline.”

Student A continued that, soon after the school year began, he started having breakfast every morning in Cedeno’s office with a 16-year-old male student (“Student G”) and Student D, both of whom were on the basketball team.⁵ According to Student A, almost every day as they were leaving the office, Cedeno would smack each of them on the buttocks. Student A added that, on several occasions, he told Cedeno to “chill” and Cedeno replied by asking Student A whether he was scared.

Student A denied that Cedeno had asked to perform oral sex on him in an elevator, but asserted that, through AOL Instant Messaging (“AIM”), Cedeno inquired about performing oral sex on Student A. Specifically, Cedeno asked whether he could “suck your dick.” Student A told Cedeno he was not gay, to which Cedeno replied that Student A should “stop fronting,” and then tried to convince Student A to let him perform oral sex on him. Student A explained that Cedeno recounted how much he had done for Student A and specifically mentioned having bought a T-Mobile Sidekick cell phone for him and having gotten a teacher to stop penalizing Student A.

⁴ Student D has turned 18 years old.

⁵ Student G has turned 17 years old.

According to Student A, a few weeks earlier, Cedenó told him that, since he would not let Cedenó perform oral sex on him, they simply had a “principal-student” relationship; however, if Student A allowed Cedenó to “suck his dick,” then they would have a “principal-friend” relationship.⁶ Student A added that Cedenó recently had questioned whether Student A had told anyone about their personal conversations and Student A denied that he had.

SCI investigators spoke with Student G who confirmed that, for about two months starting in September 2008, he went to Cedenó’s office for breakfast with Student A and Student D. Student G acknowledged that Cedenó used to smack him and other basketball players on the buttocks during basketball games and that Cedenó also smacked Student G on the buttocks approximately five times as he was leaving the principal’s office after breakfast. Student G added that he witnessed Cedenó smack Student A and Student D on the buttocks on more than five occasions.

Student G continued that, during the three years he had known the principal, Cedenó told him “suck my dick” on about 15 occasions. Student G explained that he and other members of the basketball team would be talking to Cedenó in a joking manner and Cedenó would reply “suck my dick.” Student G asserted that Cedenó did not mean it in a literal sense, but rather to “dis” him and the other players. Student G said that Cedenó tried to grab his crotch on three different occasions and he also observed Cedenó try to grab the crotches of Student A and another male student (“Student M”).

SCI investigators interviewed 17-year-old Student M who said that, on about 10 different occasions, Cedenó motioned with his hand like he was going to hit Student M in the penis, which caused Student M to flinch. Student M added that, on approximately 10 occasions, Cedenó yelled “suck my dick” in response to the players razzing him.

Student M informed investigators that, on five different occasions, Cedenó asked whether he could suck Student M’s penis. Student M explained that, while they were on the bus or at locations in the school, Cedenó would say: “Can you let me suck your dick?” Student M did not believe that anyone overheard Cedenó. Student M added that, in discussions with Student D and Student G, he learned that Cedenó also had asked whether he could perform fellatio on them.

SCI investigators met with a 16-year-old male student (“Student O”) who said that Cedenó used the back of his hand to hit him in the penis on six or seven occasions. Student O added that Cedenó always did this in the principal’s office. According to Student O, he did not like Cedenó’s conduct, he told Cedenó that he looked at him as his father in school, and he questioned why Cedenó hit him and whether he was gay. Cedenó would respond that he was only joking.

⁶ The interview took place on December 10, 2008.

SCI investigators interviewed a 16-year-old male student ("Student C") who said that he had conversations with Cedeno on AIM.⁷ In one conversation, Student C told Cedeno that he wanted to purchase Jordan sneakers made by Nike, but did not have the money. Student C added that Cedeno told Student C to come by Cedeno's house and he would give him the money. According to Student C, he thought it was very strange that Cedeno was willing to pay for sneakers that cost over \$100 and he resisted the gift, but Cedeno insisted that he would finance the purchase, adding: "But you know what you gotta do." Student C reported that he quickly ended the conversation. Student C explained that he knew Cedeno was "talking about something gay" and whenever Cedeno started talking about something that Student C considered "gay" he would end the conversation. Student C also said that Cedeno offered to purchase a T-Mobile Sidekick cell phone for him, but Student C declined the offer.

SCI investigators spoke with Student D twice. On the first occasion, Student D did not report any inappropriate behavior on the part of Cedeno. During the second interview, when asked whether he had ever heard Cedeno say anything inappropriate, Student D replied: "I guess." Student D then explained that, on six or seven different occasions Cedeno said "suck my dick" to players on the basketball team, in response to their jokes.

Student D informed investigators that, on four occasions, Cedeno asked whether he could "suck" Student D's penis. Student D explained that Cedeno would ask Student D in a serious manner "Can I suck your dick?" and Student D would reply in the negative. Student D added that, on two of these occasions, Cedeno told Student D he would purchase anything Student D wanted in exchange for letting him suck his penis. Student D reported that he would say no and Cedeno would reply "you sure?"

Student D continued that Cedeno hit him in the penis with the back of his hand on one occasion and, numerous other times, Cedeno tried to hit him in the penis, but Student D would block his hand. Student D also said that Cedeno had slapped him on the buttocks on five or six different occasions. Student D confirmed that, when he spent the night at Student A's house, Cedeno corresponded through AIM, asking why he was not invited and saying he was coming over with the "Vaseline."

SCI investigators interviewed Quintin Cedeno, in the presence of his union representative, on two occasions. During the first, on September 10, 2009, Cedeno said that he was both the principal of the High School for Construction Trades, Engineering and Architecture and the assistant coach of the school's basketball team.⁸ Cedeno confirmed that, for a period of time, Student A, Student D, and Student G often came to

⁷ Student C has turned 17 years old.

⁸ Cedeno was the head basketball coach from September 2006 through June 2008.

his office for breakfast in the morning. Cedenó acknowledged “it’s a possibility” that he hit Student D and Student G on the buttocks, but he did not believe that he hit Student A on the buttocks.

Cedenó recalled that, on at least one occasion, he told some of his basketball players they could “suck” his “dick.” Cedenó conceded that it was possible he had made the remark on other occasions as well. Cedenó readily admitted that he had told players “fuck you” or “kiss my ass.” Cedenó was asked whether he ever whispered in the ear of any of his players “suck my dick, huh” or “suck my dick, what,” and he admitted it was a possibility because he joked around with the players a lot.⁹

When asked whether he had ever feigned hitting players or students in the genital area, Cedenó responded that he feigned hitting Student D in the crotch two or three times, but he did not recall doing so to Student O.

Cedenó confirmed that he offered to buy Student D an Xbox gaming system, but denied that he asked Student D – either jokingly or seriously – to perform fellatio on him in return. Cedenó also denied that he ever asked, in a serious manner, to perform fellatio on Student M or Student A.

Cedenó acknowledged having a conversation with Student C about buying a pair of Nike Jordan sneakers for the boy, but added that Student C never followed up on the conversation. Cedenó denied telling Student C that he knew what he would have to do in order to get the sneakers. Cedenó asserted that he never implied that he wanted sexual favors in return for getting Student C sneakers.

Cedenó denied that he purchased a T-Mobile Sidekick cell phone for Student A. Cedenó maintained that he had an extra Sidekick phone that he was not using and he gave it to Student A. Cedenó acknowledged that he and Student A had about 10 different conversations through AIM relating to school and other matters. Asked whether he had an AIM conversation with Student A or Student D about being upset that he was not invited to Student A’s house when Student D was staying over and that he would bring the Vaseline, Cedenó recalled jokingly asking Student A why he was not invited, but did not recall saying he would bring the Vaseline.

SCI investigators met with a 16-year-old male Student B, who described himself as a very close friend of Student A. Student B said that, in September 2008, he and Student A were at a “Sweet 16” party when Student A showed him a text message from Cedenó which indicated that the principal was bored and wanted to come and “chill.” Student B told investigators that, on another evening, he was at Student A’s home when

⁹ The student who reported this comment explained that Cedenó was trying to make it seem like the student had remarked about “sucking dick” when the student had not said anything like that.

he examined Student A's cell phone which had a text message from Cedeno who wrote that he wanted to come over and would bring the Vaseline. Student B continued that, on the same evening, Student A showed him over 100 text messages from Cedeno. Student B reported that most of Student A's responses were short answers of one or two words. Student B recalled seeing a text message from Cedeno telling Student A that he was going to buy him a T-Mobile Sidekick cell phone. Student B added that he saw text messages from Cedeno about "sucking dick," but Student B was not sure if Cedeno was asking Student A to perform fellatio on Cedeno or vice versa. Student B also said that, sometime in the fall of 2008, Student A told him that he was in the school basement with Cedeno – near an elevator – when Cedeno asked Student A to perform fellatio on Cedeno or vice versa.

SCI investigators interviewed Student B's mother who reported that Student B had told her that his friend, Student A, was having AIM exchanges with Principal Cedeno. The mother said that she learned from Student B that Cedeno was paying for minutes on Student A's pre-paid cell phone, because he wanted to be able to reach Student A whenever he needed to do so. The mother added that Student B told her that Cedeno was sending Student A communications, through AIM, that were inappropriate.

The mother continued that she spoke to Student A who confirmed that he and Cedeno were exchanging messages and that some of Cedeno's messages were sexual in nature. According to the mother, Student A forwarded the electronic conversations he had with Cedeno to her and there were over 100 messages. The mother recalled seeing the following messages sent by Cedeno to Student A:

- You're a selfish bastard and a greedy prick. All I did for you and you don't want to do for me. You've had a very easy ride so far. If everything stops then it all stops.
- I ask for one thing. Look at all I've done.

The mother also described messages from Student A to Cedeno which indicated that Student A did not want to have a sexual relationship with Cedeno and did not want to continue to have any kind of a personal relationship with Cedeno. The mother informed investigators that Student A did not want to speak with anyone at the school about this matter, but advised Student B that he could tell Guidance Counselor Lunsford.

SCI investigators interviewed Quintin Cedeno a second time in October 2009. Cedeno said that he had two cell phones: one was an AT&T Department of Education ("DOE") issued cell phone which he had for about four years; the other was his personal cell phone, which also had AT&T as the carrier, and which he had for about a year.

Cedeno added that his previous personal cell was a T-Mobile phone. Cedeno reported that neither his sister nor his mother used either of his cell phones and that he did not lend them to anyone.¹⁰

Cedeno did not recall ever speaking to a student after 9:00 p.m. In response to an investigator's question, Cedeno said that he "might have" spoken to Student A on the telephone on one occasion and he recalled receiving one text message from Student A about Student A's mother wanting to talk to the principal about a teacher with whom Student A was having a problem. According to Cedeno, he replied that Student A's mother should come to the principal's office.

Cedeno acknowledged having Student A's cell phone number on his DOE issued phone, but not on his personal phone. Cedeno maintained that he never had Student A's cell phone number on his personal phone. Cedeno was informed that T-Mobile records relating to his previous personal cell phone showed 37 calls to Student A from September 26, 2008 through November 20, 2008, and that several of the calls were after 9:00 p.m., including one call at 9:41 p.m. which lasted for 82 minutes. Cedeno also sent Student A 126 text messages from this phone. Cedeno also was advised that, from September 20, 2008 through November 11, 2008, there were 30 calls made from Cedeno's DOE assigned cell phone to Student A's cell phone. Several of those calls occurred after 9:00 p.m. and one took place at 11:33 p.m. There were 12 text messages from Cedeno's DOE issued cell phone to Student A's cell phone, although Cedeno maintained that he could not send or receive text messages from his DOE cell phone.¹¹

Cedeno told investigators that, if he did make the calls, he did not remember the nature of the calls. Cedeno consistently informed investigators that he did not recall anything pertaining to the calls between him and Student A. Cedeno was unable to explain the 126 text messages sent from his cell phone to Student A. Cedeno asserted that he never sent any text messages to Student A.

It is the recommendation of this office that Quintin Cedeno's employment be terminated, that he be made ineligible for work with the DOE, and that this matter be considered should he apply for any position in a New York City public school in the future.

We are referring our findings to Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown for whatever action he deems appropriate.

¹⁰ Cedeno said that he lived with his mother and his sister.

¹¹ Cedeno's supervisor, Superintendent Isabel DiMola, informed the assigned SCI investigator that Cedeno's DOE issued cell phone had text messaging capability.

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 30 days of receipt of this letter of what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated regarding Quintin Cedeno. 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.