

City of New York
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Special Commissioner

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

October 29, 2020

Hon. Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Amanda Fletcher
SCI Case #: 2020-3777

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) Teacher Amanda Fletcher (“Fletcher”), assigned to the Columbia Secondary School (“Columbia”) in Manhattan, acted inappropriately during a Zoom remote learning session.¹

I. Investigation & Findings:

The investigation began when the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) received a complaint from [REDACTED] who forwarded a complaint from a confidential complainant (“CC-1”). CC-1 reported that several students had copies of a video that captured Fletcher “sucking on what appears to be a man’s breast and gyrating during a Zoom session.” CC-1 alleged that Fletcher performed this act “live,” and that the video had since circulated on various social media platforms.

SCI investigators spoke with CC-1 via telephone, who stated that videos of Fletcher’s supposed actions were shared among students, and that [REDACTED] received a “snippet” of a longer video. SCI examined two digital files that contained documentation of a Zoom session that featured Fletcher. One of the video files was provided by CC-1; the other was given by a [REDACTED]-year-old female Columbia student (“Student A”).² One of the files contained a screen shot of a video being displayed using the application

¹ Fletcher has an active problem code and has been reassigned during the pendency of the investigation.

² Both videos were provided to SCI by [REDACTED]

Snapchat, by user [REDACTED] which appeared to be of a Zoom conference call. Participating in the call were three noted Snapchat usernames: [REDACTED] the name of a [REDACTED]-year-old female Columbia student (“Student B”), and a third name that was unidentifiable due to the name being blocked by the Snapchat user. In viewing the video, SCI observed an unidentified, shirtless male located behind Fletcher, and Fletcher placing her face on the man’s breast. The second video file appeared to be taken directly from a mobile device, showing a Zoom conference call, with three usernames: “[REDACTED] [REDACTED] and the usernames of Students A and B. This video file contained more detail, including that it ostensibly occurred on a Thursday at approximately 1:59 p.m. The second video showed Fletcher’s face on the unidentified man’s exposed breast, during which time she rocked her head back and forth, possibly indicating an act of suckling. Following this act, Fletcher’s face returned in view of the screen, and she gyrated her shoulders and smiled. Both video files were consistent and demonstrated the same behavior and same participants similarly dressed.

SCI investigators interviewed Student A and her mother (“Mother A”) via telephone. Mother A stated that Student A had taken “snippets” of videos over time of Fletcher during a Zoom call, and that the video file sent to [REDACTED] was the “most explicit.” Student A stated that the incident occurred on Thursday, September 30, 2020, and occurred toward the end of class, when other students were present on the call. Student A said that during the Zoom call, she observed Fletcher “eating spaghetti,” and an unidentified, shirtless male in her Zoom window’s background for “about three minutes,” at which point Fletcher then put her mouth on the male’s chest. Student A continued that Fletcher then resumed teaching and discussing a worksheet. Per Student A, the class started at approximately 1:30 p.m. and ended at approximately 2:10 p.m. Mother A later sent SCI an email with an additional video file. This video file, also taken during the Zoom remote learning session, showed four user titles: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Students A and B, and another [REDACTED]-year-old female Columbia student (“Student C”). This video showed that at approximately 1:58 p.m., Fletcher was eating with a shirtless male located behind her.

Student B, in the presence of her mother, also spoke with SCI investigators. Student B confirmed that, during the September 30, 2020 class, she saw Fletcher’s “husband” and that he was “walking around.” However, Student B said she did not observe “anything strange.” SCI investigators interviewed Student C, too, in the presence of her father. Student C said she observed nothing “improper” and that class was normal.

Fletcher, through her attorney and citing her status as a tenured pedagogue, declined to be interviewed by SCI.

II. Conclusion and Recommendation:

Upon review of the above facts, SCI substantiated that Teacher Amanda Fletcher engaged in an inappropriate sexual act during a Zoom remote learning session in front of students. Specifically, Fletcher appeared to suck the nipple of an unidentified and topless male. Although Students B and C either did not observe this behavior or did not find it out of the ordinary, SCI reviewed three separate videos of the incident, all of which were consistent. These videos clearly show that, while she was supposed to be teaching a class, Fletcher was in the presence of a shirtless male, and engaged in a clearly inappropriate and unprofessional act. The video, combined with the interview of Student A, painted a credible account

of Fletcher's actions during the Zoom session. Therefore, we recommend that appropriate disciplinary action be taken regarding Fletcher.

In addition, SCI makes the following Policy and Procedure Recommendation ("PPR"):

- 1) The DOE should take steps to ensure that all teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and other DOE employees who interact with students via remote learning platforms (such as Zoom) are properly trained not merely on the technical aspects of remote learning, but are also advised on appropriate and acceptable behavior while interacting remotely with students. Proper training must include that, as practicable as possible, educators should exclude non-classroom participants from appearing during educational sessions. Further, educators should not be participating in any activities beyond regular classroom functions, *i.e.* should not be eating or snacking; smoking, vaping or in any other way using tobacco; or engaging in other non-educational activities that might prevent an educator from maintaining total focus on the classroom.

Please respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to any action taken or contemplated regarding this matter. We are sending a copy of this letter to the DOE Office of Legal Services. In addition, we are sending a copy of this letter to the New York State Education Department for whatever action they deem appropriate.

Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact Jonathan Jacobs, the assigned attorney for this matter, at (212) 510-1423 or jjacobs@nycsci.org.

Sincerely,

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
Special Commissioner of Investigation
for the New York City School District

By: /s/ Daniel I. Schlachet
First Deputy Commissioner

AC:DS:JJ:lr

cc: Howard Friedman, Esq.
Karen Antoine, Esq.
Katherine Rodi, Esq.