

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

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**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

March 17, 2023

Hon. David C. Banks  
Chancellor  
New York City Public Schools  
Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street, Room 314  
New York, NY 10007

Re: John Castaldo  
SCI Case #: 2020-2863

Dear Chancellor Banks:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that 36-year-old New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) Teacher John Castaldo (“Castaldo”), formerly assigned to High School for Public Service (“HSPS”) in Brooklyn, had an inappropriate sexual relationship with a female former student (“Student A”) which began when that student was 15 years old, and engaged in inappropriate communications with several other female former students, while Castaldo was a teacher at Saint Agnes Academic High School (“St. Agnes”), a non-DOE, all-female, Catholic school in Queens.<sup>1,2</sup>

**I. Investigation & Findings:**

The investigation began in June 2020, when the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) received a complaint from [REDACTED], who forwarded an email from a 19-year-old female former student (“Student B”), who reported that Castaldo engaged in sexual misconduct with students while he was a teacher at St. Agnes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Castaldo was reassigned to the Brooklyn South Borough Citywide Office during this investigation, and there is a problem code associated with his personnel file.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all ages indicated herein are at the time of the initial complaint. No DOE students were involved in this investigation.

<sup>3</sup> The Kings County District Attorney’s Office investigated the allegations, but their investigation was closed on September 3, 2021, due to lack of cooperation from Student A, who has since moved to Texas.

SCI investigators spoke with [REDACTED], who said that Castaldo worked at St. Agnes for approximately six years, and taught social studies and government. [REDACTED] was friendly with Castaldo, and often carpooled to work with him. [REDACTED] and Castaldo never discussed relationships with students, nor did they ever give students rides home. The last time [REDACTED] had contact with Castaldo was in 2019, when he contacted her about a possible position with the DOE. Castaldo never mentioned having any disciplinary issues at St. Agnes, and [REDACTED] assumed he left to make more money working for the DOE. [REDACTED] noted that Castaldo appeared to be close with former Student A, particularly by encouraging her artwork.

Investigators spoke to [REDACTED], who said that Castaldo began teaching at HSPS in September 2017. Castaldo served as the head of the Social Studies department, and taught the subject at the eighth and ninth grade levels. Castaldo also served as an Acting Assistant Principal prior to his reassignment. [REDACTED] said Castaldo had no disciplinary history, and was on track to become a permanent Assistant Principal before this investigation.

SCI investigators spoke with former Student A, who said that she attended St. Agnes from 2013 to 2017. Castaldo was her World History teacher in her sophomore year. At the end of her freshman year, she began hanging around with other students who congregated around Castaldo because he was the “cool” teacher. Eventually, Castaldo singled her out and she began accepting car rides to and from school from Castaldo. In the fall of her sophomore year, when she was 15 years old, Castaldo took her to Roosevelt State Park and began kissing and fondling her. Shortly thereafter, Castaldo took her to his home and they engaged in sexual intercourse. This sexual relationship continued until March 2020. Former Student A told investigators that she even lived with Castaldo after graduating from St. Agnes. Former Student A said that Castaldo was clearly aware that she was a minor when their sexual relationship began because they discussed the issue of the age of consent in New York.

A 20-year-old female former student (“Student B”) told investigators that she attended St. Agnes from 2016 to 2018. Castaldo had been her homeroom teacher for two years. He left St. Agnes during her senior year to teach at HSPS. Castaldo asked former Student B on several occasions to meet him in his car, and on one occasion to meet him in a museum. On several other occasions, Castaldo asked her to take pictures of her hands, feet, and face, and to forward those pictures to him for a project that he was working on which he said was not related to school. Former Student B never took Castaldo up on any of his offers. Former Student B was aware of an allegation that Castaldo had send a picture of his penis to another female former student, but refused to identify that student because that student wished to remain anonymous. Former Student A had also admitted to former Student B that she was in an intimate relationship with Castaldo.

A 21-year-old female former student (“Student C”) told investigators that she attended St. Agnes from 2013 to 2017, when she graduated. Castaldo was her Global Science teacher during her freshman year and her homeroom teacher during her sophomore year. Castaldo was the “cool” teacher, and students would hang around his classroom. Castaldo supplied her and her friends with tickets to various events and activities. Castaldo helped former Student A get into an art program during their junior year. Former Student C said that Castaldo acted appropriately towards her and her friends, but learned after graduation

from former Student A that Castaldo had been in an intimate relationship with former Student A since former Student A was in her junior year and that she had moved in with him. Former Student C recalled that former Student A once invited her to Castaldo's home during their senior year. When she got to Castaldo's home, there was an inflatable pool in the backyard, and former Student A and Castaldo entered the pool in their bathing suits.

A 19-year-old female former student ("Student D") told investigators that she attended St. Agnes from 2014 to 2018. Castaldo was her Global Science teacher during her freshman year and her homeroom teacher during her sophomore year. He seemed appropriate at first, and then began to ask Former Student D to hang out with him outside of school on several occasions during her junior and senior years, which she always declined. Castaldo began to discuss his sexual exploits with former Student D, and at one point asked her to send him pictures of her feet. He also bought her a book about feminism. During her senior year, Castaldo asked former Student D if she would be the secretary for a business that he ran that was unrelated to any school functions. Castaldo said she could work from his home, and that he would pay her \$100 an hour. Former Student D declined, but said that another female former student (20-year-old "Student J") accepted the position.

Former Student D further told investigators that on one occasion during the summer before her junior year, she was having issues at home and called Castaldo to pick her up. Castaldo drove former Student D around in his car, told her she was "cool," and caressed her hand with his. During the ride, Castaldo confessed his love for former Student A. On another occasion, Castaldo bought cookie dough from former Student D for a school fundraiser, and arrived at her house to pick it up with former Student A. Former Student D said that everyone at school seemed to know that something was going on between Castaldo and former Student A, though she never saw them touch each other. Former Student D also told investigators that Castaldo sent her a text message containing a picture of his penis when she was a sophomore. After sending the picture, Castaldo requested a picture of her breasts, which she sent. After sending the picture of her breasts, Castaldo gave former Student D a compliment, then asked her to delete the text messages, later making her show him her phone to confirm that the text messages had been deleted.

Former Student D said that she and former Student B confronted former Student A about Castaldo's behavior when former Student A was a senior at St. Agnes. Former Student A responded that Castaldo only sent inappropriate text messages because he had a drinking problem. After former Student A graduated, she told former Student D that she and Castaldo were living together, and that he brought former Student A to Florida as a graduation present. Former Student A told former Student D that Castaldo would get her drunk to coerce her to have anal sex with him, and that Castaldo would invite other men to watch them have sex.

SCI investigators spoke with a 20-year-old female former student ("Student F"), who said that she attended St. Agnes from 2013 to 2017, when she graduated. Castaldo was her Global Science teacher for four years. Former Student F said that Castaldo was originally the "cool teacher," and had always acted appropriately while she attended St. Agnes. On one occasion after graduation, she met Castaldo at a cafe in Brooklyn. After they left the cafe, they talked in Castaldo's car. Castaldo asked former Student F if

she wanted to give him a “blow job.” Former Student F immediately left Castaldo’s car. Former Student F also had a conversation with former Student A during which former Student A said she had a sexual relationship with Castaldo while she was a student at St. Agnes, and that the relationship continued after former Student A graduated. Former Student F and former Student A then deduced that the incident with former Student F in Castaldo’s car outside of the cafe in Brooklyn occurred while former Student A was living with him.

A 21-year-old female former student (“Student H”) told investigators that she attended St. Agnes from 2013 to 2017, when she graduated. Castaldo was her Global Science teacher. Castaldo left St. Agnes during her junior year. She kept in touch with Castaldo, and worked for his family’s real estate business on a part time basis. After former Student H graduated, Castaldo asked her if she was interested in working as a naked housecleaner, or performing in softcore pornography videos. Former Student H said that she was best friends with former Student A while they attended St. Agnes. She was aware that former Student A was involved in a sexual relationship with Castaldo during that time. Castaldo told former Student H not to tell anyone about the relationship. Former Student H believed that former Student A was living with Castaldo when she was around 15 or 16 years old. She accompanied former Student A to Castaldo’s home on several occasions.

SCI investigators spoke with former Student J, who said that she was a student at St. Agnes from 2014 to 2018. Castaldo was her teacher for Global Science during her freshman year. Castaldo helped former Student J get into an honors program after her freshman year. After her junior year, when she was 17 years old, Castaldo contacted her on Instagram after viewing some of her paintings and offered to pay her \$300 to paint something for him. They began to converse over Instagram, and Castaldo eventually asked her if she would be interested in filling in when the secretary for his family’s real estate business was out. Former Student J went to the business on three occasions, and learned that his residence was above the office. Castaldo agreed to tutor her in exchange for clerical work. On the third occasion that former Student J worked for Castaldo, Castaldo said there was no clerical work to be done, so he asked that she perform oral sex on him instead. Castaldo informed her that the age of consent in New York was 17 years old. He then took out his penis, placed his hand on the back of her head, forced his penis in her mouth, and ejaculated. Former Student J told investigators that she felt intimidated by Castaldo, but could not leave his apartment because she had no way to get home. Before she left, Castaldo told former Student J that no one would believe her if she told anyone what had transpired because he was well respected in the community. Castaldo then blocked her phone number and blocked her on all social media.

A 22-year-old female former student (“Student K”) told investigators that she graduated from St. Agnes in 2016, and that former Student A was her best friend. Castaldo was her teacher during her freshman year. Castaldo’s inappropriate behavior with students was an “open secret” at the school. Former Student K said that she and Castaldo would text occasionally when she was a student. In one text conversation, Castaldo said that he would pay former Student K for photos of her feet. Former Student K said that Castaldo had “groomed” former Student A for four years. Former Student A even attended Castaldo’s 30th birthday party when she was a student, which was also attended by several other St. Agnes teachers, including Dean Forde. Former Student A admitted to former Student K that she was in a sexual relationship with Castaldo. Former Student K also witnessed former Student A in Castaldo’s apartment

on several occasions. Former Student K told investigators that former Student A had become uncooperative in the SCI investigation, and would no longer speak with investigators about her relationship with Castaldo. Former Student K said she was also aware of Castaldo's assault of former Student J at Castaldo's apartment.

## **II. Conclusion and Recommendation:**

Upon review of the above facts, SCI substantiated that DOE Teacher John Castaldo engaged in multiple acts of predatory sexual conduct while previously employed as a teacher at a non-DOE, Catholic high school, including an inappropriate sexual relationship with a former female student, which began when that student was 15 years old, and inappropriate contact and communications with several other former female students. It is the recommendation of this office that John Castaldo's employment with the DOE be immediately terminated, and that the problem code attached to his personnel file continue as a permanent bar to future employment with the DOE, within any of its facilities, or with any of its vendors. While it is unfortunate that criminal charges against John Castaldo ultimately were not pursued due to the lack of cooperation from one of his victims, the DOE should do everything in its power to ensure that John Castaldo never sets foot in any DOE facility in the future, and never has the opportunity to have contact with any students in any DOE setting.

Please respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to any action taken regarding John Castaldo. 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. We are also sending a copy of this letter to the Sisters of Saint Dominic of Amityville, the religious order in charge of Saint Agnes Academic High School.

Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact David Casanova, the assigned attorney for this matter, at (212) 510-1419 or [dcasanova@nycsci.org](mailto:dcasanova@nycsci.org).

Sincerely,

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

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

AC:DS:DC:lr

cc: Elizabeth Vladeck, Esq.  
Karen Antoine, Esq.  
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