

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

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**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

January 9, 2024

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

Re: Soshana Leffler  
SCI Case #: 2023-1416

Dear Chancellor Banks:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that New York City Department of Education Teacher Shoshana Leffler (“Leffler”), assigned to the High School for Health Careers and Sciences (“HSHCS”) in Manhattan, engaged in an inappropriate relationship with a then-17-year-old male, HSHCS student (“Student A”).<sup>1</sup>

**I. Investigation & Findings:**

██ contacted the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) to report Leffler, a then-36-year-old chemistry teacher at HSHCS, for employee misconduct. In his complaint, ██████████ explained that around 10:35 a.m. on February 7, 2023, security cameras recorded Leffler and Student A together, and they were “presumed to have been engaging in conversation.” ██████████ acknowledged that HSHCS administration does not have any evidence

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<sup>1</sup> On September 5, 2023, Leffler resigned from the DOE. There is a problem code assigned to her personnel file.

incriminating Leffler for inappropriate behavior, however, he explained that Leffler was observed lingering in the stairway with Student A for over 30 minutes while Student A was supposed to be in class. Per ██████ at the time, another AP and ██████ ██████ approached Leffler and instructed her to go to the guidance office to get support if it was needed for Student A. Leffler reportedly did not follow instructions. Instead, she continued her conversation with Student A on a different staircase.

The following day after ██████ reported Leffler to SCI, ██████ contacted SCI to report that on February 8, 2023, at 10:38 a.m. that day, Leffler again met with Student A in the back of a HSHCS stairwell. Shortly after, ██████ sent a follow-up email to SCI describing what he witnessed the previous day, February 7<sup>th</sup>. Per ██████ around 11:15 a.m., Leffler and Student A entered a foyer which led to only three other rooms – a padlocked closet, a uniquely keyed-locked office, and a bathroom.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, at 11:20 a.m., ██████ ██████ entered the foyer and observed an empty foyer. She knocked on the bathroom door and, after hearing no answer, tried to open the bathroom door, however, she found it to be locked from the inside. ██████ explained in his email that a few minutes after ██████ attempted to open the bathroom door, Student A left the foyer, followed by Leffler mere minutes later. ██████ impression was that Leffler and Student A had locked themselves in the bathroom together.

When ██████ was interviewed several days later, he provided the same account he detailed in his complaint. As an AP at HSHCS, ██████ was also ██████ ██████ which is why he noticed Leffler and Student A's interactions.

Investigators also spoke with ██████ regarding the complaint he filed with SCI, and he confirmed that on February 7, 2023, around 10:38 a.m., ██████ observed Leffler engaged in a conversation with Student A on the school's security cameras. ██████ explained that the administration had no proof that any inappropriate behavior occurred, but that Leffler spent 30 minutes on the stairway with Student A when he should have been in class. When ██████ approached Leffler and told her to seek support for Student A at the guidance office, Leffler instead went to a different staircase, on the second floor of HSHCS, and continued her conversation with Student A there.

To investigators, ██████ confirmed the facts that ██████ had provided in his complaint. She stated that on February 7<sup>th</sup>, she entered a foyer located on the fifth floor – which she found empty. ██████ recalled that she knocked on the bathroom door and, after not hearing a response, attempted to open the door, but discovered it was locked. She then left the foyer and used a bathroom elsewhere in the HSHCS building.

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<sup>2</sup> ██████ also sent investigators a picture of the foyer.

Together with ██████████, investigators viewed the fifth-floor foyer, and verified that only a closet with a padlock, a locked classroom (used by an afterschool program), and a bathroom were accessible from the foyer. Just one door led out of the foyer into other areas of the HSHCS building. Investigators then reviewed HSHCS security camera footage received from the DOE Division of Instructional and Informational Technology. In the footage from February 7, 2023, beginning at 10:35 a.m., Leffler stood in a stairway for over 20 minutes while she conversed with Student A. At 11:00 a.m., ██████████ approached Leffler and Student A. Shortly after, cameras recorded Leffler continuing her conversation with Student A in a different staircase on the second floor, then, at 11:15 a.m., cameras caught Leffler and Student A entering a foyer on the fifth floor, where the locked classroom, closet, and bathroom were located. Five minutes later, at 11:20 a.m., ██████████ entered the foyer, leaving just one minute later. Then, at 11:22 a.m., Student A left the foyer, followed by Leffler at 11:25 a.m. Video footage from February 8, 2023, showed Leffler and Student A meeting in a stairway at 10:38 a.m., Leffler handing Student A what appeared to be money, him pocketing this money, and them leaving the stairwell together.

Investigators attempted to interview Leffler regarding the allegations against her, however, Attorney Andrew Stoll informed investigators that Leffler had resigned from the DOE.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, investigators were also unable to speak with Student A, whose mother did not provide permission for an interview.

## **II. Conclusion & Recommendation:**

Based on the facts stated above, SCI substantiated that Teacher Soshana Leffler engaged in an inappropriate relationship with Student A. HSHCS's security cameras captured Leffler engaged in lengthy conversations with Student A in private corners of the HSHCS while other students and HSHCS staff were in class, or otherwise occupied. Leffler then flouted an order by her supervisor, ██████████, and continued to converse with Student A after being told to visit the school's guidance office. Furthermore, the account of ██████████ who observed an empty foyer – which cameras showed Leffler and Student A entering shortly before – and a bathroom door that was locked from the inside, provided evidence indicating that Leffler and Student A sought out a private room where security cameras could not record them. What occurred in the bathroom can only be speculated about since Leffler resigned from the DOE without providing an explanation as to what occurred on February 7, 2023, and February 8, 2023. As Leffler is no longer employed by the DOE, we recommend that the problem code assigned to her personnel file remain in place, and that this matter be considered should she seek future employment with the DOE, within any of its facilities, or with any of its vendors.

Please respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to any action taken regarding Soshana Leffler or the recommendations made herein. We are sending a copy of this letter to the DOE Office of Legal Services. We are also sending a copy of this letter to the New

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<sup>3</sup> A review of Leffler's phone records did not reveal any communications between her and Student A.

York State Department of Education. Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact me at (212) 510-1418 or [DSchlachet@nycsci.org](mailto:DSchlachet@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:cl

cc: Elizabeth Vladeck, Esq.  
Karen Antoine, Esq.  
Katherine Rodi, Esq.  
Monica Davis-Thorne, Director