

SCI FINDS SCHOOL BUS DRIVER AND MATRON FAILED TO TRANSPORT SIX NONVERBAL SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS TO SCHOOL FOR APPROXIMATELY FOUR HOURS

Six Nonverbal Students Arrived at Brooklyn School More Than Four Hours Late; One Child Found Lying on Bus Seat, Soaking Wet with Her Diaper Off

Bus Driver Traveled to Multiple Incorrect Schools While Bus Matron Failed to Contact School, Dispatcher, or Anyone Else for Assistance



P.S. 289 The Brower School (Credit: PS 289 website)

New York, NY – Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (SCI) Anastasia Coleman announced that an SCI investigation substantiated that Bus Driver Eric Chery and Bus Matron Germina Thomas, both employed by Consolidated Bus Transit, Inc., a New York City Department of Education (DOE) vendor, failed to transport six nonverbal special education students, ages six to eight, to their assigned Brooklyn school until approximately four hours after their scheduled arrival time.

“It is highly disturbing that six nonverbal children were left on a school bus for hours while their whereabouts remained unknown to school officials,” **said Special Commissioner Anastasia Coleman.** “These particularly vulnerable students rely on the adults entrusted with their care to ensure their safety. Every child, including those with special needs, deserves safe, reliable, and timely transportation to school, and SCI will continue investigating failures that put student safety at risk.”

"As a father to a child with autism, words cannot convey my anger that these six Brooklyn students were failed and neglected for four hours by their bus driver and bus matron," said

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Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso. "Every morning, families of students with special needs trust that bus staff will provide the best level of care possible when sending their children to school. This incident completely betrays that trust, and the only way to begin to make amends is by ensuring that these two individuals are never allowed to care for DOE students again. I am keeping these students and their families in my thoughts, and I thank SCI for bringing these facts to light."

"I thank SCI for highlighting the ongoing problem of school buses arriving late to school, especially for students attending District 75 schools. As the former Chair of the Committee on Oversight and Investigations, I held hearings on this issue in November 2022, issued reports, and requested audits. At the time, 350 school buses experienced delays daily, and the problem continues. SCI has highlighted one important case affecting several students, their families, and their schools, but this is not an isolated situation. The failure to get students to school on time is unacceptable and must be addressed," **said Council Member Gale A. Brewer.**

"It's disturbing and unacceptable that students with special needs were delivered to school 4 hours late by a bus system that too often doesn't deserve their parents' trust. We need to hold school bus operators accountable and provide safe, timely, and reliable service to the 150,000 New York City public school students who rely on them, particularly our most vulnerable students," **said Council Member Lincoln Restler.**

On December 16, 2025, six nonverbal special education students, ages six to eight, were expected to arrive at P.S. 289 in Brooklyn between 8:20 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. However, the bus transporting the children did not arrive until approximately 1:25 p.m., nearly four and a half hours after the end of the scheduled arrival window. For several hours, school officials were unable to determine the whereabouts of the students, prompting concerns for their safety and a report to the New York City Police Department (NYPD).

SCI's investigation began in December 2025 after the office received a complaint concerning the missing school bus. According to the investigation, a mother of two students used tracking devices placed inside their backpacks to determine that her children were traveling throughout Brooklyn rather than arriving at their assigned school.

As school officials attempted to locate the students, repeated calls were made to Consolidated Bus Transit, Inc. At approximately 10:00 a.m., school personnel contacted the bus company but received no answer. At 11:45 a.m., a dispatcher informed school officials that the driver was lost and would arrive within 15 minutes. However, the bus did not arrive for another hour and 40 minutes. School officials also contacted the DOE Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT), and the situation was reported to the NYPD.

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When the bus finally arrived at P.S. 289 at approximately 1:25 p.m., school personnel discovered that one of the six children had urinated on herself and removed her diaper and leggings. The student was observed lying flat on a bus seat, soaking wet. Investigators subsequently learned that the child had removed her own urine-soaked diaper and left it on the floor of the bus.

Thomas, who had worked as a bus matron for nearly 20 years, told SCI investigators that some of the nonverbal students became agitated during the prolonged bus ride, while others slept through the incident. Despite the driver becoming lost and the students remaining on the bus for several hours, Thomas acknowledged that she did not speak to the bus driver, Chery, during the incident or attempt to contact the school, bus depot, or anyone else for assistance.

SCI also obtained GPS tracking data from the DOE Office of Pupil Transportation to examine the bus's movements on December 16, 2025. The records indicated that the bus was still at one student's residential address as late as 10:59 a.m., despite the driver's statement that all students had been picked up by 10:00 a.m.

Following its investigation, SCI substantiated that Chery and Thomas failed to transport six nonverbal special education students to their assigned school until approximately four hours after their scheduled arrival time.

Although not DOE employees, SCI recommended that problem codes be associated with both individuals' names and that the DOE make every effort to ensure that neither Chery nor Thomas is permitted to supervise or oversee DOE students in the future. SCI further recommended that its findings be considered should either individual seek future employment with the DOE or any of its vendors.

About SCI

Established in 1990, SCI is the independent watchdog that investigates fraud, corruption, misconduct, and other illegal, unethical or improper activities by officials, employees, contractors, and vendors doing business with New York City's School District, the Department of Education, the Teachers' Retirement System, and the Board of Education Retirement System. For more information on SCI, visit: www.nycsci.org.

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