

July 24, 2007

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

Re: Michael Williams
SCI Case # 2007-0093

Dear Chancellor Klein:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that forty-nine-year-old Michael Williams, a substitute teacher at Long Island City High School in Queens, made inappropriate sexual comments to students.¹ We also found that there was a delay in reporting Williams's misconduct to this office.

This investigation began on January 9, 2007, when Assistant Principal Walter Zilinski contacted the Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District ("SCI") and reported allegations of inappropriate conduct by Williams. Zilinski reported to investigators that a thirteen-year-old female student ("Student A") and a fourteen-year-old female student ("Student E") claimed that when Williams was assigned as the substitute teacher for their classes, he only spoke to them about sex and his sexual preferences.² Specifically, in Student A's Global Studies class and in Student E's advisory class, Williams made the following statements: "I like oral sex;" "I got some from my wife in the morning;" "we are supposed to talk about sex in this class;" and "I like to eat pussy." Student E further maintained that Williams also made the following comment: "what I say in this class better stay in this class." Both

¹ As a result of SCI's pending investigation, Williams was not contacted to return to substitute teach at Long Island City High School. Moreover, he is currently on the ineligible list for employment with the New York City school system.

² Student A has turned fourteen-years-old.

Student A and Student E made written statements regarding Williams's improper conduct.³

SCI investigators spoke to Zilinski in January 2007. Zilinski told investigators that on January 9, 2007, he was advised of the inappropriate statements made by Williams. Zilinski stated that Principal William Bassell showed him a memo that described Williams's improper conduct. The memo was from Guidance Counselor Jessica Fish and was addressed to Assistant Principal of Organization Dan Korb.⁴ According to Zilinski, he took the memo, along with the written statements from Student A and Student E, and went to speak with Fish and Guidance Counselor Kristin Devlin.

Zilinski disclosed to investigators that Fish and Devlin confirmed the allegations against Williams lodged by Student A and Student E as well as the students' response to his improper comments. According to Zilinski, he informed both students that there would be an investigation and that they would be interviewed regarding the matter. Zilinski added that he asked the guidance counselors to contact their parents to advise them about the situation.

Investigators met with Fish who said that in the beginning of January 2007, Math Teacher Diana Li reported that Student A had informed her that Williams had made inappropriate remarks during class. Li explained to Fish that Student A felt uncomfortable about repeating Williams's comments. Fish continued that she told Li to bring Student A to the guidance office.

Fish recounted that Student A was upset and embarrassed about repeating the improper comments made by Williams. Fish stated that Student A told her that the incident occurred on December 15, 2006, and Student A did not know what to do so she told her older sister what had occurred. According to Fish, Student A's sister encouraged her to report the matter so Student A confided to Li about what had transpired in Williams's class. Fish reported to investigators that Student A told her that Williams stated that he liked "eating pussy."

Fish continued that after Student A left her office, she drafted a memo describing the incident between Student A and Williams.⁵ Fish stated that she sent the memo to Assistant Principal of Guidance Rosemary O'Mard, Assistant Principal of English Esther Davidson, and to Korb.

³ Zilinski provided the statements to investigators.

⁴ Investigators learned from Bassell that he was approached by Korb who was in possession of a memo from Fish that detailed Williams's improper conduct. Bassell stated that once he was aware of the allegation, he instructed Zilinski to contact SCI and report the incident.

⁵ Fish's memo, which was dated January 4, 2007, revealed that Student A met with Fish that day regarding a situation that occurred in December with substitute teacher Williams. At the conclusion of her memo, Fish noted that she was aware of a similar situation that occurred with one of Devlin's students and Williams.

Fish recalled a conversation that she had with Devlin prior to the winter recess, in December 2006. Fish revealed that Devlin had told her that Student E was upset after hearing inappropriate sexual remarks from a substitute teacher. Fish explained that Devlin told her that the substitute teacher stated that he enjoyed “eating pussy.” Fish said that during their conversation, the name of the substitute teacher was never mentioned.

Fish stated that in January 2007, when she went to apprise Devlin about Student A’s allegations, she questioned Devlin and learned that the name of the substitute teacher whom Student E reported was Williams. Fish informed investigators that when she realized that the same substitute teacher was involved in the incidents with Student A and Student E, she reported this information to O’Mard and Korb.⁶ Fish added that O’Mard told her to have Student A write out a statement regarding her incident with Williams.

In an interview with investigators, Devlin provided additional relevant information. Devlin reported that on December 13, 2006, Student E came to her office and told her about an embarrassing situation that had occurred in Student E’s advisory class. According to Devlin, Student E stated that on December 7, 2006, Williams talked about his personal sex life and sexual preferences during class. Student E explained that she became even more embarrassed when several students encouraged Williams to continue the conversation by asking him questions about sex. Student E stated that she walked out of Williams’s classroom to take a drink of water and when she returned the inappropriate conversation was still going on. According to Devlin, Student E told Williams that his remarks were inappropriate to which he responded: “anything that was said in the classroom, stays in the classroom.”

Devlin told investigators that after Student E exited her office she sent an e-mail to Assistant Principal Deborah Isom and apprised her of the situation. Devlin noted that Isom responded to her e-mail and indicated to Devlin that the appropriate people would be contacted to address the situation.⁷

According to Devlin, on January 5, 2007, Student E approached her again and informed her that she was nervous because she had seen Williams outside of the school grounds. Devlin reported that Student E asked Devlin whether anything was being done about the situation. Devlin responded to Student E that she would look into the matter. Devlin continued that several days later, Fish approached Devlin and they spoke about the conversation they had in December 2006 wherein Devlin mentioned that Student E was upset because of a substitute teacher’s remarks. Devlin recounted to investigators

⁶ Fish informed investigators that Korb was the person in charge of assigning substitute teachers and Fish wanted Korb to be aware of the incidents involving Williams.

⁷ Investigators discovered that Devlin’s e-mail was addressed to both Isom and O’Mard. O’Mard informed investigators that on December 14, 2006, she received an e-mail from Devlin that detailed an inappropriate situation involving Williams. O’Mard recalled that the e-mail was forwarded to Bassell and Zilinski. O’Mard added that Isom had responded to Devlin’s e-mail. O’Mard recalled that in January 2007, she discussed the two incidents involving Williams with both Korb and Fish.

that Fish then told her about the incident involving Student A and Williams. Devlin explained that when Fish told her the name of the substitute teacher, Devlin realized that it was the same teacher involved in the incident with Student E. Devlin stated that she called Isom and informed her that Williams was the teacher involved in the incidents concerning Student A and Student E. Devlin added that Isom asked her to have Student E write out a statement detailing her incident with Williams.⁸

In an interview with investigators, Isom acknowledged that on December 13, 2006, she received an e-mail from Devlin regarding Williams's inappropriate statements. Isom explained to investigators that she was informed that Williams talked about sex in the classroom and stated that "whatever was spoken in the classroom, stayed in the classroom." Isom told investigators that she commended Devlin for her handling of the "sensitive situation" and replied to Devlin that the appropriate people would be apprised of what had transpired.⁹

Investigators spoke with Korb who disclosed that on January 4, 2007, prior to leaving school, he retrieved a memo from his mailbox from Fish. According to Korb, the memo described an incident that occurred in Williams's class in December 2006, which had upset Student A. Korb continued that a copy of Student A's statement was attached to Fish's memo. Korb further stated that the memo indicated that a similar incident involving Williams had occurred with one of Devlin's students.

Korb explained to investigators that on January 5, 2007, a centralized walk-through the school commenced at 7:00 a.m. which lasted the entire day. As a result, the matter involving Williams was overlooked. Korb said that the following Monday, he approached Bassell and apprised him of the memo he received from Fish. Korb added that Williams's name was then removed from the eligible substitute teacher list.

Student A provided SCI investigators with details about Williams's conduct. She stated that on December 15, 2006, teacher Michael Rokofsky was absent during the fifth period Global Studies class so Williams was the substitute teacher. Student A recalled that she was sitting with a group of students and talking about boys when a female fourteen-year-old student ("Student F") expressed that she was having a bad day. According to Student A, Williams overheard the comment and asked Student F if she was having a bad day. Student A stated that she gave Williams a look that indicated he should mind his own business at which point he stated to Student F, "it's that time of the month." Student A explained that the group of students ignored Williams's comment and Student A proceeded to adjust her bra strap. Student A stated Williams then stated, "don't worry, they look just fine."¹⁰ Student A told investigators that she looked at Williams and was very "mad and surprised" that he made such a comment.

⁸ Student A had already provided Fish with a written statement documenting what had occurred.

⁹ Isom informed investigators that she followed proper protocol and notified Zilinski and Bassell. Isom stated that when she did not receive any reply, she assumed that the matter was being handled.

¹⁰ Student A told investigators that Williams was referring to her breasts.

Student A further stated that Williams stood around the group of students and asked, "what do you think about oral sex?" Student A recounted that the students looked at each other in surprise and then a fourteen-year-old male student ("Student C") replied, "okay." Student A noted that no one else answered Williams's question. Student A continued that Williams then stated, "do you guys think this is normal?" According to Student A, several students stood up from their seats and walked away. Student A added that shortly thereafter, the bell rang and the students left the class.

Approximately one week later, on December 21, 2006, as Student A was exiting her art class, Williams approached her and stated, "I remembered your birthday." Student A stated that Williams presented Student A with a gift bag containing three pieces of chocolate candy and a birthday card with a \$5.00 bill enclosed.¹¹ Student A informed investigators that a fourteen-year-old male student ("Student G") was present when Williams gave Student A the birthday bag.

Investigators met with Student G who confirmed that on December 21, 2006, he and Student A were walking in the hallway to their next class when Williams approached them and gave Student A a birthday present. Student G noted that Williams also hugged Student A. Student G explained that he thought Williams's behavior was "weird" and said to Student A, "why did he give you a present?" Student G recalled that Student A was just as surprised. Student G further disclosed that Student A confided to him that Williams talked about his personal sex life in class and stated that "he likes to eat a girl out."

Investigators spoke with a fourteen-year-old male student ("Student B") who stated that on December 15, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for the Global Studies class. Student B recounted that he was sitting with a group of students when Student F stated that she was not feeling very well because she was having her period. Student B continued that Williams approached Student F, asked "what's the matter," and she responded, "nothing, just a bad day." Student B told investigators that he did not hear Williams make any additional remarks to Student F.

Student B further stated that during the same class when Student A adjusted her bra strap, he heard Williams tell Student A, "don't worry, they look fine." Student B commented that Student A was surprised by Williams's remark. Student B further recalled that while he and the students were engaged in a "normal conversation," Williams stated: "I like to have oral sex" and "I like to eat pussy." Student B disclosed to investigators that he was surprised by Williams's statement and noted that there was no discussion about sex in the class.

Student C provided investigators with additional relevant information. Student C stated that on December 15, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for his Global

¹¹ Student A gave Fish the birthday card that Williams gave her. Fish provided the card to SCI investigators.

Studies class. Student C explained that he was seated with a group of students and Student F was “flipping out,” complaining that she had eaten a lot of food, and that she had her period. According to Student C, Williams approached the group and stated to Student F, “your time of month?” Student C continued that a few minutes later, as Student A fixed her bra strap, Williams stated, “oh it’s fine.” Student C further recalled that Williams then said something “weird that he did not quite understand” followed by the statement, “oh, I ate pussy before.” Student C told investigators that he and the other students did not respond to Williams’s comments, but instead walked away without saying anything because class was over.

Investigators spoke with a fifteen-year-old female student (“Student D”) who recounted that on December 15, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for her Global Studies class. Student D explained that she was seated with a group of other students engaging in conversation when Williams approached and began listening to the students’ conversation. Student D recalled that Student F had stated, “I’m not having a good day,” and then Williams remarked, “you’re in that time of the month.” Student D stated that Student F just looked at Williams who stared right back at Student F.

Student D continued that shortly thereafter, Student A was fixing her bra strap when Williams, said, “don’t worry, they look fine.” Student D noted that Student A looked surprised by Williams’s comment. Student D further informed investigators that Williams made a remark about oral sex and then said, “I like to eat pussy.” Student D recounted that Williams proceeded to ask the group of students what they thought about oral sex. Student D stated that she and Student C immediately walked away from Williams. Student D added that Student A told him that Williams gave Student A a birthday gift that contained chocolate and \$5.00 in cash.

Investigators spoke with Student F who recounted that on December 15, 2006, her fifth period Global Studies teacher, Michael Rokofsky, was absent so Williams was the substitute teacher. Student F explained that she was sitting with a group of students when Williams approached. Student F stated that she said, “what lottery did we win to have teacher Williams at our table?” Student F told investigators that she was not in a good mood because she was having her period which she disclosed to Student A. Student F recalled that Williams stated to Student F, “are you going through that time of the month?” Student F revealed that she was shocked by Williams’s comment and she looked at him but did not say anything.

Student F further stated that on the same date, Student A was adjusting her bra strap and Williams was staring at her. Williams then said, “they look nice.”¹² Student F continued that during the class Williams also spoke about oral sex and said, “I like to eat my wife out.” Student F stated that she did not want to hear about oral sex and tried to

¹² Investigators asked Student F if she knew what Williams was referring to and she responded that he was talking about Student A’s breasts.

ignore him. Student F added that she was surprised by Williams's comment and that everyone in the class just looked at one another and did not say anything to him.

In an interview with Student E, investigators learned about additional improper comments made by Williams. Student E stated that on December 7, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for her advisory class. Student E continued that while Williams handed out paperwork to the class, he made repeated comments about his personal sex life. According to Student E, Williams proclaimed: "I only like to eat pussy," and "I got some at 6:00 in the morning." Student E stated that Williams even reported to the class that he cheated on his wife. Student E explained to investigators that she was embarrassed by Williams's remarks, but that the other students in the class encouraged Williams to continue the conversation.

Student E further reported that she looked at Williams and stated to him that he must be proud that he cheated on his wife to which he responded: "No, I'm not proud of cheating on my wife. I just do it because I just do." Student E related to investigators that she asked Williams why he was talking about his personal sex life and Williams responded: "because this is an advisory class." Student E told Williams that the conversation had to stop because she was uncomfortable, but Williams continued with his questioning. According to Student E, Williams asked the students: "who are virgins?" and "who uses condoms for sexual acts?" Student E explained that she was upset and wanted to leave the classroom so she told Williams that she wanted to get some water.

Student E disclosed that she did not know what to do so she talked about the situation with her sister. Student E stated that her sister advised her to speak with a teacher whom she could trust. Student E added that upon confiding to Teacher Maria Handrinos she was advised to speak to a guidance counselor.¹³

A fourteen-year-old female student ("Student H") provided investigators with additional relevant information. Student H stated that on December 7, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for her advisory class. According to Student H, there had been discussions about sexual relations and HIV during the advisory class with her regular teacher. Student H recalled that someone in the class began speaking about ovaries and then Williams stated that he enjoyed "licking the butt holes of women." Student H further stated that Williams said that he went out with women who enjoyed "giving him head." Student H added that Williams was also speaking with several male students and Williams told them, "eating pussy is not bad." Student H recalled that Williams's comments made some of the female students upset, especially Student E. Student H related to investigators that Student E told Williams to stop talking about his personal sexual preferences, what he did with his wife, and the fact that he cheated on his wife.

In an interview with investigators, a thirteen-year-old male student ("Student I") disclosed that on December 7, 2006, Williams made sexual remarks in the classroom.

¹³ Devlin was the counselor in whom Student E confided.

Student I told investigators that Williams talked about his wife and revealed that he had oral sex with his wife. Specifically, Student I maintained that Williams said: "I eat her out" and "I'll be licking her up and down; we do it when my daughter is sleeping." Student I added that Williams also discussed the "kind of woman that he liked" and stated that he liked "White women." Student I further revealed that Student E was upset by Williams's discussion and she asked him why he was talking about his personal sex life. Student I stated that he just thought Williams was funny and did not care about his comments.

Investigators met with a fourteen-year-old male student ("Student J") who stated that on December 7, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for his advisory class. Student J explained to investigators that the class had been discussing HIV and sex education with their regular teacher, however, Williams talked about sex on a personal level. According to Student J, Williams commented on "nasty things." Student J stated that Williams informed the class that he "enjoyed eating pussy and butt holes;" "he eats his wife's pussy;" "before he has oral sex with a woman, he makes sure the woman doesn't have her period;" and "he fucks his wife everyday and eats her pussy."

Student J noted that Student E was upset with Williams's comments and she had asked him why he was talking about his personal sexual preferences. Student J remarked to investigators that the class laughed at Student E. Student J continued that Williams said that "there are all types of woman" and that his type of woman "has to have nice legs, nice butt, and large breasts." Student J further stated that Williams told the class that his favorite woman was a Black woman and that his second favorite woman was a Spanish woman. Student J confided to investigators that he did not think it was right that Williams discussed his personal sexual practices with the class.

In an interview with investigators, a fourteen-year-old female student ("Student K") reiterated what other students had told investigators regarding Williams's improper behavior. Student K revealed that on December 7, 2006, Williams talked about his wife and made the following inappropriate remarks: "I got some pussy this morning;" "I cheated on my wife with other women;" "my wife doesn't like to give me head;" "I don't cum in her mouth," and "I eat the box." Student K further stated that Student E complained to Williams that he should not talk about his personal sex life. Student K recalled that Student E left the classroom because of Williams's inappropriate remarks. Student K added that he did not think it was appropriate for a teacher to talk about his sex life.

Investigators met with a fourteen-year-old female student ("Student L") who provided additional relevant information. Student L stated that on December 7, 2006, Williams was the substitute teacher for her advisory class. Student L explained that she did not know how the discussion began, but the topic of conversation was sex. According to Student L, Williams talked about his personal sexual activity and how he cheated on his wife. Student L continued that Williams said, "I eat my wife out," and

that he “had sex with her this morning.” Student L further complained that Williams commented about performing oral sex on a woman and informed the class that “depending on what a woman eats will determine what a woman tastes like.” Student L added that Student E was upset by the topic of discussion.

Prior to the conclusion of the interview, Student L informed investigators that during the class she used her cellular phone to record Williams making sexual remarks. The following is the transcription of Student L’s recording of Williams’s inappropriate comments:

Williams: No, usually I don’t cum.... (inaudible). I usually don’t cum in her mouth.
Student: Stop talking about this!
Williams: I just said I usually don’t cum in her mouth.

In the presence of his attorney, SCI investigators met with Michael Williams to address the allegations against him. Williams informed investigators that he had been employed with the Department of Education (“DOE”) since January 2005 and that he had been a Teaching Fellow for one year. Williams explained that he had been a substitute teacher at Long Island City High School for the entire 2006 school year and during 2007, he was a substitute teacher for approximately forty-eight classes. According to Williams, he had covered a variety of classes and subjects at the school. Williams informed investigators that he did not prepare a lesson plan for the classes for which he was the substitute teacher because he did not know of his assignment in advance. Williams stated that he usually began class by asking the students what they wanted to talk about and often, the class discussions had been about the “Hip Hop” culture.

Williams told investigators that he was a substitute teacher on many occasions for both the Global Studies class and the advisory class at Long Island City High School. Williams explained that he was not aware of the class curriculum until the day he reported to the school to substitute teach. Williams denied making a comment to a female student who was adjusting her bra strap. When investigators informed Williams that several students heard him say, “don’t worry, they look fine,” Williams once again denied making the remark.

SCI investigators questioned Williams as to whether he gave a student a birthday present. Williams responded that he thought it would be a good idea to surprise Student A with a present. Williams continued that he thought it was a good idea to “lift the student’s spirit” by giving her a present. Williams insisted that he did not give any other student a present.

Investigators informed Williams that several students claimed that he made sexual remarks during their Global Studies class. Specifically, investigators questioned Williams as to whether he said, “I like to have oral sex and I like to eat pussy.” Williams

told investigators that if he did make any sexual remarks, he was associating the words with "Hip Hop" lyrics. Investigators then questioned Williams as to whether there was any sexual discussion during the time that he was a substitute teacher for the advisory class. Williams maintained that since it was an advisory class, sex was an appropriate topic of conversation. Williams admitted to investigators that he did not have any specialized training in sex education, however, he stated that he had a sixteen-year-old daughter and had discussed sexual education with her. According to Williams, since he had addressed sex education with his daughter, he felt that he was qualified to talk about it in an advisory classroom setting.

Williams insisted that he would never discuss his personal sexual preferences in class. Investigators asked Williams if he ever made the following remarks: "I only like to eat pussy;" "I got some this morning;" "I like licking the butt holes of women;" "eating pussy is not bad;" "I eat my wife everyday;" "eat her pussy;" "I don't cum in their mouths;" and "before you have oral sex with a woman, the woman should not be on her period." Williams denied making any of those statements.

Despite his denials, we credit the accounts provided by the students, which detailed numerous instances of misconduct by Michael Williams. His continual inappropriate and offensive conduct makes it clear that he has no place in New York City public school system. It is the recommendation of this office that Michael Williams continue to be barred from employment with the DOE and that this matter be considered should he apply for any position with the DOE in the future.

It is further the recommendation of this office that the staff at Long Island City High School be reminded of their obligation to promptly report any incidents involving inappropriate conduct committed by DOE employees. Moreover, such matters must be reported to the proper individuals to ensure that a situation is addressed in a timely manner. While various staff members at Long Island City High School were apprised of Williams's behavior and informed others about his improper conduct, there was clearly a breakdown of communication within the school. Consequently, this serious matter was not reported to SCI immediately and as a result, Williams was permitted to remain at the school and continue his unacceptable behavior.

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

We are forwarding a copy of this letter to the Office of Legal Services. We are also forwarding our findings to the State Education Department for whatever action it deems appropriate. Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact Special Counsel Valerie A. Batista, the attorney assigned to the case. She can be reached

Hon. J. I. Klein

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July 24, 2007

at (212) 510-1417. Please notify Ms. Batista within thirty days of the receipt of this letter as to what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated regarding Michael Williams. 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:VAB:ss

c: Michael Best, Esq.
Theresa Europe, Esq.