



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
3318 FOREST HILL BLVD., C-306
WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33406
(561) 434-7335 FAX: (561) 434-8652
www.palmbeachschools.org
Hotline: 855-561-1010

TERESA MICHAEL, CIG, CIGI, CFE
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the School Board
Michael J. Burke, Superintendent
Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

FROM: Teresa Michael, Inspector General *TM*

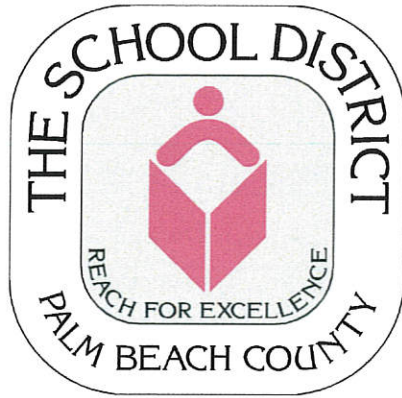
DATE: March 13, 2024

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Final Investigative Report:
24-0003-I William T. Dwyer High School

Attached please find a copy of the Palm Beach County School District Office of Inspector General (OIG) Whistle-Blower Final Report of OIG Case 24-0003-I related to an allegation of retaliation. The OIG reviewed and determined the allegation met the requirements for a Whistle-blower complaint in accordance with School Board Policy 3.28.

On June 6, 2023, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint regarding alleged misconduct on the part of William T. Dwyer High School Principal Corey Brooks. Specifically, it was alleged that Principal Brooks retaliated against the Whistle-blower (WB) because the WB made a legally mandated report involving a student to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) in accordance with Florida Statute section 39.201.

The OIG investigation concluded that Principal Brooks did not take adverse personnel action or retaliate against the WB in violation of Florida Statute section 39.203 or School District Policy 3.28.7 because they made a report to DCF. As such the allegation was **Unsubstantiated**.



OIG CASE NUMBER 24-0003-I

William T. Dwyer High School

TYPE OF REPORT: Final

REDACTED

DATE OF REPORT: December 21, 2023



Teresa Michael

**Teresa Michael, Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
School District of Palm Beach County**

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Office of Inspector General

Report of Investigation 24-0003-I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From August 15, 2023, through September 29, 2023, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted interviews and reviewed pertinent documentation and records related to an allegation against William T. Dwyer High School Principal Corey Brooks. Specifically, Brooks allegedly violated Florida Statutes 39.203(2)(a) and 39.203(2)(b), and School District Policies 5.82.5.b.ii and 5.82.9.d.¹ when he retaliated against ██████████ ██████████ “WB” for making a legally required abuse report to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Abuse Hotline in accordance with Florida Statute 39.201.²

The OIG reviewed and determined the allegation met the requirements for a Whistle-blower complaint in accordance with School Board Policy 3.28.

The WB alleged the retaliation occurred when Brooks directed the WB take three days paid leave after they made a legally required abuse report to DCF (Allegation 1). It was further alleged that Brooks retaliated against the WB by giving them bad references (Allegation 2) to potential employers within the District because they made the same legally required abuse report to the Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline.

The OIG investigation revealed Principal Brooks and Dwyer administrators investigated the facts underlying the WB’s DCF complaint during the WB’s three-day leave. This investigation revealed, among other things, an affected student (Female Student 2) did not feel safe and expressed concern about returning to school because the WB shared the student’s private information regarding the underlying DCF complaint with other students.

The evidence revealed that Brooks sending the WB home during the investigation was not a violation of policy, or rule nor was it outside of his authority or contradictory to District practice. Accordingly, Allegation 1 was **Unsubstantiated**.

Based on interviews with Santaluces Community High School Principal Tameka Robinson and Palm Beach Central High School Assistant Principal Dr. Samantha Butler who both testified Brooks did not provide poor references to them regarding the WB, the OIG determined Allegation 2 was **Unfounded**.

¹ This policy is incorrectly labeled in Board Docs. Sections 5.82.7 – 5.82.10 repeat twice. The correct numerical label for the alleged violation is section is 5.82.13.d. Per Board Docs it is misnumbered as Policy 5.82.9.d. (Reporting of Dating Violence and Abuse Incidents).

² Florida Statute section 39.201 mandates reporting child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, sexual abuse of a child, and juvenile sexual abuse.

INVESTIGATIVE PREDICATE

On August 15, 2023, the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a referral from the Florida Department of Education Office of Inspector General. The complaint alleged that Principal Brooks retaliated against the WB because the WB made a legally required abuse report to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) Abuse Hotline. An investigation into the matter was opened.

On August 22, 2023, OIG Director of Investigations (DOI) Oscar Restrepo was assigned the complaint for investigation.

The OIG investigation concluded that the allegations were Unsubstantiated. The investigation findings of the allegations will be discussed in detail later in this report.

BACKGROUND

William T. Dwyer High School (Dwyer) is a public high school for grades 9–12 located in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Named for William T. Dwyer, former vice president of Pratt & Whitney's Government Products Division and a community leader in Palm Beach County, Dwyer High School offers a wide variety of college-level, career preparatory and arts courses, as well as prestigious International Baccalaureate, Academy of Finance, and Early Childhood Teacher Academy Choice programs.

ALLEGATION 1

It was alleged that William T. Dwyer High School Principal Corey Brooks violated Florida Statutes 39.203(2)(a) and 39.203(2)(b), as well as School District Policies 5.82.5.b.ii, 5.82.9.d.³ and 3.28 (Whistle-blower Protection Policy) by retaliating against the WB for making a legally required abuse report to the Florida DCF Abuse Hotline.

The WB alleged they made the abuse report pursuant to Florida Statute section 39.201 and Brooks violated Florida law and the District's Whistle-blower Protection Policy (Policy 3.28) by suspending the WB with pay and placing them under investigation because the WB made a legally required abuse report to the Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Hotline.

Florida law requires a person report immediately to the central abuse hotline if he or she knows, or has a reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. §39.201(1)(a)1.a, Fla. Stat.

Florida Statute section 39.203 provides individuals legal protections when reporting in good faith suspected instances of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, stating in part,

³ Policy is currently misnumbered in Board Docs. The correct section label should be 5.82.13.d.

“No resident or employee of a facility serving children may be subjected to reprisal or discharge because of his or her actions in reporting abuse, abandonment, or neglect pursuant to the requirements of this section.

Any person making a report under this section shall have a civil cause of action for appropriate compensatory and punitive damages against any person who causes detrimental changes in the employment status of such reporting party by reason of his or her making such report. Any detrimental change made in the residency or employment status of such person, including, but not limited to, discharge, termination, demotion, transfer, or reduction in pay or benefits or work privileges, or negative evaluations within a prescribed period of time shall establish a rebuttable presumption that such action was retaliatory.” Quoting §39.203(2)(a) - .203(2)(b), Fla. Stat.

The Board’s Whistle-blower Protection Policy was created with the intent *“to protect an employee who engages in good faith reporting from reprisal by adverse employment action or other retaliation as a result of having disclosed wrongful conduct, and to provide employees who believe they have been subject to reprisal or false allegations a fair process to seek relief from such acts.”* Quoting Policy 3.28.1.

Additionally, Policy 3.28.7 protects against adverse personnel action or retaliation based on the reporting of a protected disclosure, stating,

“This policy protects employees and other persons who disclose information on their own volition in a written and signed complaint with the Inspector General; who initiate a complaint through the Inspector General’s Hotline; who are requested to participate in an investigation, hearing or other inquiry conducted by the Superintendent, School Board, state agency or federal government; who refuse to participate in any adverse action prohibited by this policy; or, who file a written complaint to their supervisors.”

Further, *“If the employee’s allegations of adverse personnel action or retaliation are substantiated, appropriate corrective measures shall be taken by the Superintendent, Board or Department Head.”* Quoting Policy 3.28.7.a.

An employee who takes adverse personnel action or retaliates against someone who reported, in good faith, the actions of employees or independent contractors, is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. Policy 3.28.7.b

School District Policy 5.82 Teen Dating Violence or Abuse, states,

“All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or designee. In addition to reporting the incident to the principal or designee, if a school employee has reason to suspect that an

alleged violation of this policy might constitute a crime, the employee shall also immediately report the complaint to law enforcement. Any uncertainty regarding whether an alleged violation might constitute a crime must be resolved in favor of reporting the incident to law enforcement. In the case of physical abuse and sexual assault that fall within mandated child abuse reporting requirements, a report shall be made to the Florida Abuse Hotline or local law enforcement pursuant to §39.201, Fla. Stat.” Quoting Policy 5.82.5.b.ii (Emphasis Added).

“The submission of a good faith complaint or report of teen dating violence or abuse will not affect the complainant or reporter’s future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work Assignments.” (Emphasis Added).

COMPLAINANT INTERVIEW

On August 18, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of the WB was conducted in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “WB” as they relate to Allegation 1.

The WB explained that on May 5, 2022, Female Student 1 approached them and said that Male Student had sexually assaulted Female Student 2. Female Student 1 reported to the WB that many students on campus had been talking about the assault for about a month. The WB asked Female Student 1 to point out Female Student 2 and once the WB identified Female Student 2, they spoke with her about the assault. Female Student 2 explained to the WB that she had reported the assault to Dwyer Athletic Director Thomas Amenita. Female Student 2 told The WB nothing had happened after she reported the incident to Amenita.

The WB stated that they immediately contacted Principal Corey Brooks via telephone and text message (**Exhibit 1**), but he did not answer. The WB then called the basketball coach (Nathaniel McNeal) as Male Student was on the team, McNeal told The WB he would try to contact Principal Brooks so that he could speak with The WB. The WB stated that Principal Brooks did not respond to their text messages or their phone calls at which point they made a report to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) as well as School Police. Because the alleged assault occurred off campus, School Police transferred the call to the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department and they took the report from the WB.

The WB said the next morning (May 6, 2022) Principal Brooks sent the WB a text message stating, “I’m on it now.” (**Exhibit 1**). The WB explained to Principal Brooks that they reported the assault to DCF and School Police. The WB added that the next day during their first period class, a School Police Officer approached them and took their statement regarding the reported assault. The WB continued that later in the day as they passed a School Police officer, he had said to them “I hope you’re not talking to anyone.” Near the end of that day, two teachers came to WB’s classroom and told them to bring

their belongings and go to the principal's conference room, at which point they were sent home until further notice. The WB stated that they were given a form stating they were being sent home until an investigation was completed. The WB stated they were not given a reason for being sent home or for the investigation.

The WB explained that after they were sent home, they called the Classroom Teachers Association (CTA). The WB returned to campus at a later date with their CTA representative to speak with Principal Brooks. Brooks told the WB they were sent home so they would not get involved in the investigation. The WB continued that Brooks said that they did not want the WB's name to be brought up during the investigation which was another reason for sending them home. The WB stated they were sent home for three days. The WB stated that the investigation was not conducted by the Office of Professional Standards, but internally at the school. The WB continued that they never received an investigative report regarding this matter and they were not interviewed. The WB continued that the next day they received phone calls from their students asking if they had been fired as their students were questioned regarding The WB's character and teaching style. The WB stated Coach MacKinley Rolle had pulled students out of class to question them about the WB. The WB stated that after the investigation was concluded they were given a written directive by Principal Brooks (**Exhibit 2**).

The WB stated they believe this was retaliation by Principal Brooks because Brooks had questioned the WB in the past as to why they had more knowledge regarding what was going on around the school especially when it concerns students. The WB stated that Dwyer is a "basketball school" and the players are "protected" as many of these types of incidents tend to "get pushed under the rug." The WB stated that this is the culture of William T. Dwyer High School. The WB continued that Brooks and others administrative staff told students to stop talking to the WB. The WB believes they were retaliated against due to reporting a student athlete to DCF and School Police regarding a sexual assault against another student. The WB alleged the retaliation occurred when they were sent home and investigated less than 24 hours later.

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

On September 28, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of Mackinley Rolle was conducted at Eagles Landings Middle School in Lantana, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Rolle" as they relate to the Allegation 1:

Rolle stated that he has worked for the School District since March 2019. He worked at Dwyer High School from 2019 until 2022, then spent one year at Royal Palm Beach High School before starting at Eagle Landings Middle School in August 2023.

During his time at Dwyer, he served as a Physical Education Teacher, Head Football Coach, and Dean of Students. As a Dean of Students, he was assigned to ninth grade students whose last names started with letters A through L. He oversaw lunch detentions, in school suspensions, and emergency drills.

Rolle said he was never assigned an investigation into the WB and has never been assigned to investigate any teachers as he only oversaw ninth grade students. Rolle recalled hearing about the alleged sexual assault against Female Student 2 by Male Student, but did not know if the allegation was ever validated or invalidated. Rolle did not recall pulling any students from class to question them regarding the WB's character.

Rolle recalled that the WB was sent home while an investigation was completed because it was discussed in a regularly scheduled meeting between school administration and deans. Rolle said the only thing he knew was that the WB was sent home and did not know why or any details surrounding the action.

On November 7, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of Assistant Principal Michael Smith was conducted at Dwyer High School Palm Beach Gardens, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by "Brooks" as they relate to Allegation 1:

Smith said the female student's father contacted Principal Corey Brooks, concerning The WB and according to Smith the father was upset that The WB was saying "derogatory things about his daughter." Smith said Brooks approached him to address the situation because Smith was the 10th grade Assistant Principal at that time. Smith said he sent an email to The WB requesting they not engage with the Female Student 2 and if they had any further issues with the student to contact administration.

Smith said that the investigation revealed that everything that occurred between the male and female student was consensual.

Smith said the female student's father emailed Brooks and afterwards Smith spoke to the mother and then later met with both parents of Female Student 2 to discuss the allegations concerning The WB. Smith said they discussed that The WB was spreading rumors about the situation. Smith said that he did not take notes during the conversations with the female student's parents.

Smith said he did not investigate The WB and he did not write a report regarding the situation. Smith continued that he only sent The WB an email requesting that they not engage with Female Student 2 and to contact administration if another situation occurred with the student. **INVESTIGATOR'S NOTE: This email (Exhibit 3) was sent to the WB on March 1, 2023 after the father of Female Student 2 contacted the school via email (Exhibit 4) with his concerns on February 27, 2023. February 27, 2023 was nine months after the incident in question.** Smith said an investigation was conducted. Smith said that The WB was sent home in order to conduct the teen dating violence investigation surrounding the alleged sexual assault.

Smith said he also spoke to the male student's mother concerning the allegations as well as the male student. Smith said the Female Student 2's parents were upset with the WB because the WB had made a derogatory statement about the female student. The female student's parents did not want the WB to interact with their daughter. Smith said

he does not think the Office of Professional Standards (OPS) were involved, but the administration did speak to School Police about the situation. Smith said the WB would speak with students that were not in their classes and would engage them in the hallways. Smith said that The WB was always concerned about what was going on with the students and would engage in rumors/gossip concerning the students.

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

On November 6, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of Corey Brooks was conducted at the Office of Inspector General in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Brooks” as they relate to Allegation 1:

Brooks has been employed by the school district for 25 years and has been the Principal at William T. Dwyer High School for six years.

Brooks said that the WB was an employee at Dwyer High School for at least four years. Brooks said he did not recall receiving a text message or any communication from the WB related to an alleged sexual assault between a student basketball player and a female student. Brooks said he recalled sending the WB home pending an administrative investigation related to the alleged sexual assault between the two students around May 6, 2022. Brooks said he remembered the allegations regarding the sexual assault. Brooks continued that the WB’s two daughters were students at Dwyer and would relay information to the WB concerning other students. Brooks said that the WB would bring female students into their classroom and would start asking students questions based on rumors/gossip without alerting the school administration and without parental permission.

Brooks said the father of Female Student 2 called Assistant Principal Michael Smith at the school and was upset because the WB was not her teacher and did not have any other connections with the student. Brooks said that he then decided to inform School Police or OPS for investigation because the father was upset and did not like how the situation was handled by the WB. Brooks said he has emails from the father in which the father said that the WB was out of line and that it was an issue (**Exhibit 4**). Brooks said the WB has a history of speaking with students that they do not have jurisdiction over based on “gossip and rumors.” Brooks said he decided to contact OPS to make sure the investigation was handled properly rather than conducting the investigation at the school. Brooks said he sent the WB home because he did not want the students to be afraid to speak up or for the WB to tamper with the investigation. Brooks said he believed OPS did conduct an investigation. Brooks said he either notified Dr. Kenyetta Haywood or Vericcia McCreary in OPS to investigate the WB. **INVESTIGATOR’S NOTE: OPS does not have any record of Brooks contacting them regarding this issue and the email sent by the father was not sent until February 27, 2023). The OIG found that Dr. Haywood left OPS prior to the May 5, 2022, incident and Ms. McCreary did not commence working at OPS until after the pertinent incident. The WB was sent home on May 6, 2022.**

Brooks was shown a written directive signed by him that was given to the WB. Brooks said that he does not write the written directives, instead they are provided to him by OPS. Brooks said that OPS writes the written directive and he will copy and paste the information onto the school letterhead. Brooks said the written directive would have been written by Dr. Haywood or McCreary. Brooks said he has an email that he received from OPS showing that they sent him the written directive (**Investigator's Note: Brooks said he would provide this to the OIG, but that email was never provided**).

Brooks said the WB conducted their own investigation involving students multiple times because they were privy to a lot of student information due to their daughters being students at the school, as well as being the [REDACTED]. Brooks said the parents of the Male Student were also upset that the WB was making accusations concerning their son. Brooks denied that he sent the WB home for investigation because the male student was a star basketball player at the school. Brooks continued that the WB has a lot of "persuasive power" with the students. Their daughters are friends with these students and would bring them information concerning students. Brooks said that in order to make sure the investigation of the alleged assault was handled properly he had to send the WB home.

Brooks said he did not send the WB home because they made a Department of Children and Families report regarding one of the star basketball players at Dwyer High School. Brooks indicated he explained to the WB why they were being sent home. He advised it was best practice to do so and he informed them it was not an opportunity for them to take time off or to go out of town. Brooks said he did not conduct the investigation himself, but that it was possible the female student's Assistant Principal, Michael Smith conducted the investigation because the initial complaint came from the female student's father.

RECORDS ANALYSIS

The WB provided a copy of the text message they sent to Brooks on May 5, 2022. The text message shows the WB informed Brooks about the alleged sexual assault of Female Student 2 by the Male Student. The following morning, Brooks responded "Ok. I'm on it now." The WB responded to Brooks by advising him that they reported the incident to DCF and School Police (**Exhibit 1**).

The WB provided a copy of the written directives Brooks provided to the WB on May 12, 2022. The document clearly states that written directive was not discipline. The WB did not dispute the contents of the directives other than to correct one date listed on the document regarding the date of the WBs conference with Brooks (**Exhibit 2**).

Assistant Principal Michael Smith provided an email he sent to the WB on March 1, 2023, approximately nine months after the initial directives asking the WB to not have any further interaction with Female Student 2 (**Exhibit 3**).

Assistant Principal Michael Smith also provided an email the father of Female Student 2 sent him and Brooks on February 27, 2023, complaining about the WB talking poorly about his daughter (**Exhibit 4**).

Confidential Secretary Kim Barker provided a Conference/Staffing Records ⁴regarding a meeting of the School Based Team that took place on May 6, 2022, with Female Student 2 and notes regarding communications with Female Student 2's father. The records indicate an investigation was conducted and a meeting was held with Female Student 2 to ensure she felt safe at school. Female Student 2 and her father both expressed concerns that the WB was sharing personal information with other students after the WB called her into their classroom and asked Female Student 2 about the incident (**Exhibit 5**).

Confidential Secretary Kim Barker provided a Conference/Staffing Record regarding a meeting that took place on May 9, 2022, with the Male Student. The record indicates an investigation was conducted and a meeting was held with the Male Student to ensure he received the necessary assistance to graduate while finishing the school year from his home (**Exhibit 6**).

CONCLUSION

The OIG did not find evidence that Principal Corey Brooks sent the WB home during a school investigation and subsequently issued the WB a written directive in retaliation for the WB making a legally mandated report to DCF on May 5, 2022.

The investigation revealed that the School Based Team met with Female Student 2 on May 6, 2022, to discuss the alleged sexual assault. According to the notes, "Teacher talking about the situation in class." Additionally, the notes state Female Student 2 "Feels like when she did shared w/ a teacher, teacher is sharing her info. She does not feel safe because of it [sic]."

And other notes regarding Female Student 2 indicated she does not feel safe "...when her info is told to other students. Two friends have classes with her [WB]. Friends called her [stating] "[Female Student 2] is in a situation where the police are involved with [Male Student]."

The same staffing records demonstrated that Female Student 2's father indicated the WB was "talking about the situation in class."

Based on the concerns of Female Student 2 not feeling safe with the teacher sharing her information, the OIG determined Brooks' action of sending the WB home with pay during

⁴ Policies 5.82.6 - .10, provide for a formal process school administrators must follow conducting an investigation of a complaint of teen dating violence or abuse. This includes, among other things, the use of Form 2509 to disclose the findings and outcome of the investigation to the principal. Because they are outside the scope of the instant investigation, the OIG will not address the administrator's adherence, or lack of, to this process.

the investigation was not a violation of policy or rule nor was it outside of his authority or contradictory to District practices.

Brooks' May 12, 2022, written directive was issued in response to information he and Dwyer administrators learned during their investigation. Specifically, Female Student 2 and her father's expressed concerns about the WB's interactions with Female Student 2, including her sharing of private information *with other students*, not DCF. The OIG found no evidence to support the contention that Brooks' written directive was due to the WB's protected disclosure to DCF. Accordingly, Allegation 1 was **Unsubstantiated**.

ALLEGATION 2

It was alleged that William T. Dwyer High School Principal Corey Brooks violated Florida Statutes 39.203(2)(a), 39.203(2)(b), and School District Policies 5.82.5.b.ii, 5.82.9.d. , and 3.28 when he retaliated against the WB for making a legally required abuse report to the Florida DCF Abuse Hotline in accordance with Florida Statute section 39.201 by giving the WB bad references to potential employers.

Florida law requires a person report immediately to the central abuse hotline if he or she knows, or has a reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. §39.201(1)(a)1.a, Fla. Stat.

Florida Statute section 39.203 provides individuals legal protections when reporting in good faith suspected instances of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, stating in part,

"No resident or employee of a facility serving children may be subjected to reprisal or discharge because of his or her actions in reporting abuse, abandonment, or neglect pursuant to the requirements of this section.

Any person making a report under this section shall have a civil cause of action for appropriate compensatory and punitive damages against any person who causes detrimental changes in the employment status of such reporting party by reason of his or her making such report. Any detrimental change made in the residency or employment status of such person, including, but not limited to, discharge, termination, demotion, transfer, or reduction in pay or benefits or work privileges, or negative evaluations within a prescribed period of time shall establish a rebuttable presumption that such action was retaliatory." Quoting §39.203(2)(a) - .203(2)(b), Fla. Stat.

The Board's Whistle-blower Protection Policy was created with the intent *"to protect an employee who engages in good faith reporting from reprisal by adverse employment action or other retaliation as a result of having disclosed wrongful conduct, and to provide employees who believe they have been subject to reprisal or false allegations a fair process to seek relief from such acts."* Quoting Policy 3.28.1.

Additionally, Policy 3.28.7 protects against adverse personnel action or retaliation based on the reporting of a protected disclosure, stating,

“This policy protects employees and other persons who disclose information on their own volition in a written and signed complaint with the Inspector General; who initiate a complaint through the Inspector General's Hotline; who are requested to participate in an investigation, hearing or other inquiry conducted by the Superintendent, School Board, state agency or federal government; who refuse to participate in any adverse action prohibited by this policy; or, who file a written complaint to their supervisors.”

Further, “If the employee's allegations of adverse personnel action or retaliation are substantiated, appropriate corrective measures shall be taken by the Superintendent, Board or Department Head.” Quoting 3.28.7.a.

An employee who takes adverse personnel action or retaliates against someone who reported, in good faith, the actions of employees or independent contractors, is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment. Policy 3.28.7.b

School District Policy 5.82 Teen Dating Violence or Abuse, states

“All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or designee. In addition to reporting the incident to the principal or designee, if a school employee has reason to suspect that an alleged violation of this policy might constitute a crime, the employee shall also immediately report the complaint to law enforcement. Any uncertainty regarding whether an alleged violation might constitute a crime must be resolved in favor of reporting the incident to law enforcement. In the case of physical abuse and sexual assault that fall within mandated child abuse reporting requirements, a report shall be made to the Florida Abuse Hotline or local law enforcement pursuant to §39.201, Fla. Stat.” Quoting Policy 5.82.b.ii (Emphasis Added).

Additionally, Policy 5.82.9.d. states the following regarding good faith reporting of dating violence,

“...The submission of a good faith complaint or report of teen dating violence or abuse will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work Assignments.” (Emphasis Added.)

COMPLAINANT INTERVIEW

On August 18, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of The WB was conducted in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “The WB” as they relate to Allegation 2.

The WB alleged further retaliation from Brooks. The WB reported that they interviewed for teaching positions at Santaluces Community High School and Palm Beach Central High School. The WB maintained that after both interviews, they were told that they had the job as long as Brooks gave them a good reference. The WB said they did not get either position so they believe Brooks gave them poor references to both schools. The WB said they interviewed with Principal Tameka Robinson at Santaluces Community High School and Assistant Principal Dr. Samantha Butler at Palm Beach Central High School.

WITNESS INTERVIEWS

On September 20, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of Santaluces Community High School (SCHS) Principal Tameka Robinson was conducted at SCHS in Lantana, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Robinson” as they relate to Allegation 2:

Robinson recalled interviewing The WB for the position of [REDACTED]. Robinson said the interview went “Ok”. Robinson denied that she told the WB they had the job as long as their current principal gave the WB a good recommendation. Robinson said she told the WB that she always checks references before extending an offer for employment.

Robinson said she interviewed two or three applicants and chose an applicant that was currently teaching the same course at John I. Leonard High School and the WB was not teaching the same course. Robinson said the WB could have taught the course, but she chose the teacher she felt was best for the position. Robinson stated that she did contact the supervisor for all the applicants to get a reference. Robinson added that Corey Brooks gave the WB a good reference.

On September 20, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of Palm Beach Central High School (PBCHS) Assistant Principal Dr. Samantha Butler was conducted at PBCHS in Wellington, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Butler” as they relate to Allegation 2:

Butler recalled interviewing the WB for the position of [REDACTED]. Butler said she did not recall telling the WB they had the job as long as their current principal gave the WB a good recommendation.

Butler said she interviewed “quite a few people” for the position. Butler said she was not in the habit of promising jobs to people. Butler usually thanks applicants for applying for the position and to please provide any references should she decide to move forward with a job offer. Butler added that she completed a reference check by contacting Dwyer High School Assistant Principal Tiffany Wilkes.

Butler explained that assistant principals contact assistant principals and principals contact principals so she never spoke to Principal Corey Brooks about the WB. Butler said Wilkes told her that the WB was a “go getter” who helps students with college applications. Regarding the WB’s class management, Wilkes said the WB was “average”. Butler said the reference did not “put up any red flags” when it came to her decision to hire another teacher. Butler said the candidate she ultimately selected “blew them (interviewers) away” during the interview so that applicant was chosen.

SUBJECT INTERVIEW

On November 6, 2023, a sworn recorded interview of Corey Brooks was conducted at the Office of Inspector General in West Palm Beach, FL. The following represents actual and paraphrased statements made by “Brooks” as they relate to Allegation 2:

Brooks said The WB is no longer employed at William T. Dwyer High School as they voluntarily transferred to Palm Beach Lakes High School. Brooks said that only one school reached out to him as a reference regarding the WB. Brooks said he did not give the WB any poor references, but rather gave her acceptable references.

CONCLUSION

Based on interviews with Santaluces Community High School Principal Tameka Robinson and Palm Beach Central High School Assistant Principal Dr. Samantha Butler, the OIG determined Allegation 2 was **Unfounded**.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During their interview with the OIG, the WB reported that Female Student 2 told the WB that she had reported the assault to Athletic Director Thomas Amenita. The WB alleged Female Student 2 told the WB that nothing happened after she reported the incident to Amenita. Based on this disclosure, on August 22, 2023, the OIG coordinated this portion of the report with School Police Lieutenant Cecil Wagner. The coordination led to the OIG referring this matter to School Police for review of possible criminal conduct based on Armenita failing to make legally a required report to DCF.

Lieutenant Wagner opened School Police Case #23-00002994 for investigation. On August 25, 2023, Lieutenant Wagner advised the OIG that he had completed his investigation and determined the allegation was unfounded.

The final report states: “She told me that Thomas Amenita, Athletic Director, was never informed of the incident which is mentioned in the OIG report by her.” (Student 2) stated she “did not feel comfortable” and never spoke to Amenita about a sexual assault.”

Additionally, “Thomas Amenita. He stated he does not remember (Student 2). He said he wasn’t aware of any sexual assault told to him.”

The evidentiary standard used by the School District of Palm Beach County OIG in determining whether the facts and claims asserted in the complaint were proven or disproven is based upon the preponderance of the evidence. Preponderance of the evidence is contrasted with “beyond a reasonable doubt,” which is the more severe test required to convict a criminal and “clear and convincing evidence,” a standard describing proof of a matter established to be substantially more likely than not to be true. OIG investigative findings classified as “substantiated” means there was sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions occurred and there was a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation. Investigative findings classified as “unfounded” means sufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did not occur and there was no violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to substantiate the allegation. Investigative findings classified as “unsubstantiated” means there was insufficient evidence to justify a reasonable conclusion that the actions did or did not occur and a violation of law, policy, rule, or contract to support the allegation could not be proven or disproven.

ATTESTATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under penalty of perjury, to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, the contents of this report are true and accurate; and I have not knowingly or willfully deprived or allowed another to deprive, the subject of the investigation of any rights contained in Sections 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes. This investigation was conducted pursuant to School District Policy 1.092, Inspector General, and in accordance with applicable Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspectors General as published by the Association of Inspectors General.

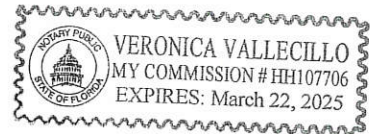


Oscar Restrepo, Director of Investigations

**STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF PALM BEACH**

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me this 21 day of December, 2023, by Oscar Restrepo, Director of Investigations for the School District of Palm Beach County, Office of Inspector General, who is personally known by me.

Signature of Notary Public
 Notary Public or Law Enforcement Officer



This investigation was conducted by Oscar Restrepo, supervised and approved by Inspector General Teresa Michael. The investigation was conducted in accordance with guidance from the Association of Inspectors General handbook and within standards as prescribed by Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

Approved by:  Date: 12/15/23
Teresa Michael, Inspector General

EXHIBIT LIST

Text Message from WB to Corey Brooks Exhibit 1
Written Directive from Corey Brooks to the WB Exhibit 2
Email from Michael Smith the WB.....Exhibit 3
Email from Female Student 2's father to Corey Brooks.....Exhibit 4
Conference/Staffing Record for Female Student 2.....Exhibit 5
Conference/Staffing Record for Male Student.....Exhibit 6

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