

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
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LUNG CHIU, CIG, CPA
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Chair and Members of the School Board
Dr. Donald E. Fennoy II, Superintendent
Chair and Members of the Audit Committee

FROM: Lung Chiu, Inspector General ^{KLC}

DATE: October 29, 2018

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Final Investigative Report
Case # 18-800

In accordance with School Board Policy 1.092 we hereby transmit the above-referenced final report.

The report addresses allegation(s):

Jupiter High School teacher Dr. Kelly Easterling allegedly falsified the college transcripts of Dr. Douglas Ferreira to help him obtain a Florida Teaching Certificate as instructed by Jupiter High School Principal Dr. Colleen Iannitti. *Unsubstantiated.*

The report is finalized and will be posted on the Inspector General's website; www.palmbeachschools.org/inspectorgeneral.



Donald E. Fennoy II
Superintendent

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH
COUNTY
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**



K. Lung Chiu
Inspector General

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Case Number:

18-800

Date of Complaint:

6/6/2018

Complainant:

Andrew Gekoskie

Subject:

Dr. Kelly Easterling, Teacher, Jupiter High School
Dr. Colleen Iannitti, Principal, Jupiter High School

Witnesses:

Dr. Douglas Ferreira, Teacher, Jupiter High School

Type of Report:

FINAL

AUTHORITY

School Board Policy 1.092 provides for the Inspector General to receive and consider complaints, and conduct, supervise, or coordinate such inquiries, investigations, or reviews, as the Inspector General deems appropriate.

This preliminary review was conducted by Director of Investigations Oscar Restrepo, in compliance with the *Quality Standards for Investigations, Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*, promulgated by the Association of Inspectors General.

INTRODUCTION

On June 6, 2018, the OIG received a complaint alleging that Dr. Kelly Easterling falsified the college transcripts of Dr. Douglas Ferreira to help him obtain a Florida Teaching Certificate. The complaint also alleged that Jupiter High School Principal Dr. Colleen Iannitti instructed Dr. Easterling to falsify the transcripts.

BACKGROUND

Jupiter Community High School, also known as Jupiter High School and JHS, is a public high school in Jupiter Florida. There are over 3,300 students enrolled in the school.

ALLEGATION AND FINDINGS¹

Jupiter High School teacher Dr. Kelly Easterling allegedly falsified the college transcripts of Dr. Douglas Ferreira to help him obtain a Florida Teaching Certificate as instructed by Jupiter High School Principal Dr. Colleen Iannitti. *Unsubstantiated.*

GOVERNING DIRECTIVES

- **School Board Policy 3.02-Code of Ethics.**
- **Florida Statute 839.13 (1) F.S. - Falsifying Records.**

ALLEGATION: EVIDENCE & TESTIMONY

Information provided by the complainant

The complainant submitted an email complaint. The complaint is quoted in pertinent part:

"It was brought to my attention that the principal of Jupiter Community HS, Colleen Iannitti- - committed fraud by instructing a subordinate, Dr Kelly Easterling , to falsify the college transcripts of one Dr. Douglas Feirrera, in order to secure a teaching certificate for Dr. Feirrera so he could obtain a teaching license in the state of Florida and continue working in the palm beach county school system . This information was relayed to me by Dr. Feirrera orchestra director who was distraught. Dr. Feirrera was physically taken, by Dr. Easterling around Jupiter Hs campus to try to find a computer that had a program to change a pdf file of his college transcripts in order to falsify his transcripts to secure a Florida teaching license. Dr. Feirrera vehemently opposed doing such an illegal act, and stated so, but followed Dr Easterling for fear he would lose his job if he didn't comply with someone of administration. He refused to go along with this idea of changing his transcripts to which Dr Easterling and Dr Iannitti, in a meeting, became very agitated." [Sic]

The OIG attempted to meet with and interview the complainant. The complainant refused to meet with the OIG.

Testimony of Dr. Douglas Ferreira, Teacher, Jupiter High School

Dr. Ferreira explained that he volunteered to work with the Jupiter High School Orchestra in 2014. He was hired as a consultant to the Jupiter Middle School Orchestra in 2015. He was hired as a part time teacher to work with both Orchestras during the 2017/2018 school year at Jupiter High School and Jupiter Middle School. Dr. Ferreira stated that he earned his undergraduate degree from St. Paolo University in Brazil. He earned two Masters Degrees in music from Lynn University and a Doctoral Degree from Michigan State University. Dr. Ferreira said that he received a Florida

¹ The OIG findings were determined using the standards that appear on the signature page at the end of this report.

Temporary Teaching Certificate in July 2017. Dr. Ferreira said that he needed to pass the General Knowledge test to obtain a permanent teaching certificate. Dr. Ferreira did not pass the test. Dr. Ferreira said that Dr. Easterling told him he had three options to get his permanent teaching certificate. The first was to take the test again and pass it, the second was to get a college teaching job in Florida, and the third was to get a waiver from the State if he could prove that he taught college courses at Kalamazoo College while completing his Doctoral Studies. Dr. Ferreira said he contacted Kalamazoo College and asked for a letter documenting the courses he taught at the school. Dr. Ferreira received a letter from Kalamazoo College (**Exhibit 1**) stating he taught Chamber Music and was a Bass Instructor at the college.

Dr. Ferreira said that the letter did not contain all the credits he taught. Dr. Ferreira said that Dr. Easterling suggested they walk around campus to try to find a computer program that would allow them to edit the letter, which was in a PDF format. Dr. Ferreira said he did not feel comfortable walking around the campus looking for a computer to alter the letter and eventually told Dr. Easterling that he was not going to alter the letter. He told her he would take the test again and pass it. Dr. Ferreira said they did not alter the letter. Dr. Ferreira denied that Dr. Easterling attempted to alter or falsify his college transcripts. Dr. Ferreira also denied that Dr. Iannitti had any knowledge of Dr. Easterling taking him around campus trying to find a computer program to alter the letter. Dr. Ferreira said there were no witnesses that could corroborate the activity. Dr. Ferreira said he mentioned it to a friend named Jerri Goff. The OIG made numerous attempts and left messages for Ms. Goff, but the OIG never received a response from her. Dr. Ferreira said he never told anyone else about what happened.

Testimony of Jupiter High School Principal Dr. Colleen Iannitti

Dr. Iannitti stated that Dr. Ferreira was a part time music teacher at Jupiter High School and Jupiter Middle School. Dr. Iannitti denied any knowledge of Dr. Easterling taking Dr. Ferreira around campus trying to find a computer program to alter or falsify his college transcripts or any other document. Dr. Iannitti denied instructing Dr. Easterling to falsify any documents.

Testimony of Jupiter High School Teacher Dr. Kelly Easterling

Dr. Easterling said that she was assigned to Dr. Ferreira as a “mentor for a beginning teacher” during the 2017/2018 school year. Dr. Easterling met with Dr. Ferreira monthly to assist him with anything he needed, but she did not have any supervisory control or any say so on retention regarding Dr. Ferreira. Dr. Easterling said she was not involved with any part of Dr. Ferreira obtaining his Teacher Certification. She did not see what documents he sent in or any forms he may have completed. Dr. Easterling denied taking Dr. Ferreira around the school to try to find a computer to falsify or alter any documents. Dr. Easterling added that she has never seen Dr. Ferreira’s college transcripts or the letter he received from Kalamazoo College. Dr. Easterling said she sat with Dr. Ferreira and called the certification office with him when they explained the pathway to certification for college professors to him. He was told he had to get a letter from the college he taught at showing how many credits he taught. Dr. Easterling reiterated that she never saw the letter. Dr. Easterling denied that Dr. Iannitti directed her to falsify or alter Dr. Ferreira’s college transcripts or any documents and again denied doing so.

When asked why Dr. Ferreira would say that she did try to find a way to alter the letter, Dr. Easterling could not understand why he would say that. Dr. Easterling said that Dr. Ferreira would often ask her for help with paperwork because he had a bit of a language barrier when it came to speaking and reading English. Dr. Easterling said that Dr. Ferreira may have confused her attempt to help him with other paperwork, but she would never risk her integrity or position by falsifying documents for anyone.

Documentation Reviewed

The OIG reviewed the letter Dr. Ferreira received from Kalamazoo College (**Exhibit 1**). The review revealed that:

- Kalamazoo College Director of Human Resources Renee Boelcke wrote and signed the letter on August 1, 2017.
- The letter stated that Dr. Ferreira was an applied music teacher from September 2012 through July 2013. He taught Chamber Music and was a Bass Instructor.
- The letter did not mention how many credits Dr. Ferreira taught.

The OIG reviewed a letter received from the Florida Department of Education (**Exhibit 2**). The letter was processed on July 27, 2017. The letter states that Dr. Ferreira was eligible for a Temporary Teaching Certificate. The OIG obtained this letter from the District Certification Office.

The OIG reviewed Dr. Ferreira's college transcripts from Michigan State University and Lynn University. The transcripts from Michigan State University were true and correct as certified by the School District. The Transcripts from Lynn University were also true and correct as certified by the School District.

Based on testimony received, the documentation reviewed, and the lack of any independent corroborating witnesses, the OIG determined that the allegation that Jupiter High School teacher Dr. Kelly Easterling allegedly falsified the college transcripts of Dr. Douglas Ferreira to help him obtain a Florida Teaching Certificate as instructed by Jupiter High School Principal Dr. Colleen Iannitti was *Unsubstantiated*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No further action is recommended.

AFFECTED PARTY NOTICE

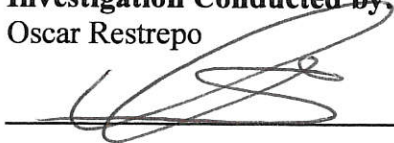
In accordance with School Board Policy 1.092 (8)(b)(iv), on September 24, 2018, Dr. Colleen Iannitti and Dr. Kelly Easterling were notified of the investigative findings and provided with an opportunity to submit a written response to these findings. The OIG did not receive a response from Dr. Iannitti or Dr. Easterling.

DISTRIBUTION

Donald E. Fennoy II, Superintendent
Palm Beach County School Board Members
Audit Committee Members
OIG file

Investigation Conducted by:

Oscar Restrepo



10-31-18

Date

Investigation Supervised by:

Oscar Restrepo, CIGI, Director of Investigations



10-31-18

Date

Investigation Approved by:

K. Lung Chiu, CIG, Inspector General



10-31-18

Date

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.



August 1, 2017

Dear Palm Beach County Schools:

This letter is in reference to Douglas Ferreira. Douglas was an applied music teacher from September 2012 through July 2013 at Kalamazoo College. During that time, he taught Chamber Music and was a Bass Instructor.

I am happy to assist with questions. I can be reached at 269-337-7248 or renee.boelcke@kzoo.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Renee Boelcke'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Renee Boelcke
Director of Human Resources



Official Statement of Status of Eligibility

DOUGLAS FERREIRA
332 SWEET BAY CIRCLE
JUPITER, FL 33458

Florida DOE Number: 1276268
Applicant ID Number: ###-##-6462
Processing Date: **July 27, 2017**
Expiration Date: July 27, 2020

DO NOT DESTROY. PLEASE RETAIN UNTIL ALL REQUIREMENTS ARE COMPLETE.

This Official Statement of Status of Eligibility outlines requirements for issuance of a Florida Educator's Certificate. Florida school district personnel will advise you of any additional requirements for employment in the school district and compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

For Florida educator certification purposes, college degrees and credits must be earned at institutions that are either accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or approved by the Florida Department of Education. College level credits recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE) are also acceptable.

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A FLORIDA EDUCATOR'S CERTIFICATE AS SHOWN BELOW.

TEMPORARY CERTIFICATE: For issuance of a three-year nonrenewable Temporary Certificate covering MUSIC (GRADES K - 12), the following requirements must be completed, and official documentation must be submitted to the Bureau of Educator Certification:

- verification of employment and request for issuance of certificate on the appropriate certification form from a Florida public, state supported, or nonpublic school which has an approved Professional Education Competence Program
- a photocopy of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 that has been signed by an official of the employing Florida public, state supported, or nonpublic school
- results of your fingerprint processing from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the FBI. Your employer will assist you in completing the fingerprint process. If your application or fingerprint report reflects a criminal offense or suspension/revocation record, your file will be referred to Professional Practices Services for further review. Issuance of your certificate will be contingent upon the results of this review.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE: For issuance of a Professional Educator's Certificate valid for five years covering MUSIC (GRADES K - 12), the above requirements for a Temporary Certificate must be completed, and a CG-10 Application Form, appropriate non-refundable application fee, and official documentation of the following requirements must be submitted to the Bureau of Educator Certification:

- A passing score on the General Knowledge Test earned no more than ten (10) years prior to the date of application. *Current Florida law requires that an individual satisfy this requirement within one year from the date of employment in a Florida public school to continue employment under the Temporary Certificate in any Florida public school. Contact your employer for important information concerning this deadline.*

- a passing score on the Professional Education Test earned no more than ten (10) years prior to the date of application
- a passing score on the MUSIC (GRADES K - 12) subject area examination earned no more than ten (10) years prior to the date of application
- completion of a Florida approved Professional Education Competence Program administered and documented by your employer
- a minimum of 15 semester hours in education courses with credit in each of the professional education areas listed below. Please note that it may require more than the minimum semester hours to satisfy all requirements.
 - classroom management with a focus on creating safe learning environments for students
 - child and adolescent development including theories and principles of learning
 - educational assessment practices that include analysis and application of data to improve instruction and learning
 - effective instructional techniques, strategies, and materials to meet the needs of diverse learners, including students with disabilities
 - applications of research-based instructional practices in reading
 - instructional strategies for teaching students of limited English proficiency including instruction in the English language (Teaching experience cannot be used to satisfy this requirement.)

Note: A passing grade of "C" or better must be earned for each course, and every course, except child and adolescent development, must be completed at an institution that awards bachelor's or higher degrees.

- practical experience in teaching by completing one year of full-time experience teaching in an elementary or secondary school

This evaluation outlines one educator preparation route and pathway to certification. For other options, please select "Alternative & Traditional Certification" from our home page (<http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification>).