

4/17/2017 Final Summary

To: Dr. Dude, Superintendent

CC: Debra Golymbieski, Wilson, Morton and Downs, LLC

RE: Employee Investigation Summary – Jon Reese matter

The following summary and recommendations resulted from the completion of due diligence and follow up on the part of HR, and others, in response to a parent concern regarding Jon Reese.

Background/Initial Complaint:

On March 16, 2017 Ms. Williams, principal at Decatur High School forwarded me an email from a parent of a Decatur High School Student. The parent, [REDACTED], explained their daughter's concerns regarding Jon Reese entering the doorway of the girls' sleeping quarters while on a field trip. Jon had a clear visual of female students in various stages of undress.

Simultaneous to Ms. Williams having forwarded the aforementioned e-mail, the HR office received a call from a parent, [REDACTED] requesting to view a teacher's personnel files. Upon contacting the parent it was confirmed that his inquiry wasn't related to the field trip, but it was related to Mr. Reese. The primary concern was the manner in which Mr. Reese interacted with students, sometimes inappropriate and not necessarily demonstrating the same concern or respect for all students. Ms. Williams conducted follow up with the parents on 3/27/2017.

On March 23, 2017, at her request, I met with [REDACTED] who communicated some concerns that two students (we will call [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) had shared with her regarding Mr. Reese. This matter was unrelated to the field trip, but it was related to Mr. Reese's interactions and communications with students. Follow up interviews were conducted with these students.

Investigation Structure - As of 4/14/2017 the following have been completed:

David Adams and Arlethea Williams have conducted an in person interview with Mr. Reese. Ms. Mary Mack and Ms. Williams have conducted interviews with six (6) female students who were on the field trip. David Adams met with [REDACTED] at her request. Ms. Black provided feedback around student concerns that have been shared with her over a two-week

period including Spring Break. David Adams interviewed [REDACTED] inquiring if there were any student concerns with Mr. Reese while [REDACTED] was principal 2015-16. Ms. Williams completed an interview with the students that previously reached out to [REDACTED]. Ms. Williams and Mr. Sprull interviewed a male student who was on the trip. Ms. Williams obtained summaries from [REDACTED] who was approached by two students. David Adams and Mary Mack completed an interview with the female chaperone (former DHS student).

David Adams reviewed Mr. Reese's file and found it to be void of any past disciplinary actions and complaints or allegations relative to Mr. Reese's interactions with students. Although the file was void if such documentation, documentation was obtained from general counsel regarding past allegations, subsequent investigations, and outcomes. The notes from [REDACTED] former principal, were also obtained.

Appropriate notes are available summarizing all interviews.

Findings:

The investigation confirmed that Mr. Reese clearly could see the girls in various stages of undress when he was stationed in the door opening of their sleeping quarters while on the field trip. Further to that point, claiming that his actions were accidental or unintended are not acceptable explanations as to why this occurred. For one, he had a female chaperone on the trip which he could have easily ask to look in on the girls and/or address any concerns that were occurring within the room. Secondly, he didn't immediately remove himself from the doorway, an action that a reasonable individual having realized the inappropriate dress of the opposite sex students would have done. Jon's own answers to the interview questions, as well as the diagram drawn by him, indicated that he stayed in the doorway long enough to have conversations with a student (we will call student [REDACTED]).

The investigation resulted in affirmation of inappropriate touching (massaging) of female students' shoulders during class as well as a fear of retaliation among students if they ever mentioned anything regarding Mr. Reese. One student that was on the field trip (we will call student [REDACTED]) was so taken back and aware of the inappropriateness of Mr. Reese's actions that she wrote a letter regarding her concerns. When interviewed for the investigation, she stated fear of retaliation regarding graduation, college applications, and letters of recommendation. Upon completion of her interview, this student immediately provided Ms. Williams with a copy of the letter. Ms. Williams and Ms. Mack received similar comments from other students regarding retaliation concerns. [REDACTED] substantiated a similar concern of retaliation from a former student ([REDACTED] and her parent) when he was principal in 2015-16.

Students stated that Mr. Reese's comments were inappropriate and often intimidating. One stated that he commented to the class "Your use of your computer in my class to do something else is a betrayal of my trust." Another interviewee stated that Mr. Reese speaks to her inappropriately, ask her questions like "What do you do when you are alone with your boyfriend?" and "How big is your boyfriend's bedroom?" The male student who attended the

field trip stated that Mr. Reese made what he and other students discerned as an inappropriate sexual joke regarding the male student spanking one of the female students who was also in attendance. The attending students look on in silence after the comment was made, according to the male student.

Ms. Williams and Mr. Adams met with Jon on 4/12/2017 to place him on administrative leave. During these discussions, Mr. Reese was informed of the serious nature of the complaints. He was informed that the complaints included inappropriate communications, communications with sexual undertones, inappropriate touching/rubbing, and student concerns of retaliation to come forward with complaints.

The female chaperone was a former student of Mr. Reese. In her interview on 4/12/2107 she stated that she was invited to be a chaperone by Mr. Reese. No records exist within HR to substantiate that background checks and clearances were completed for her to volunteer or chaperone for City Schools of Decatur. She confirmed that such did not occur. During her interview, she stated that she was "wierded out" by Mr. Reese's shoulder rubs when she was first in his class, but as she got older, those tended to not occur. She also stated that the expectations of her as a chaperone were to interact with the female students in the large meeting area, but she assumed she was not to enter their sleeping quarters unless there was an emergency.

The findings also indicate that the actions on the part of Mr. Reese are pervasive and ongoing. This is evidenced by the fact that he as previously be investigated on similar allegations, and was given instruction to specifically not touch female students, and to rethink his wording when talking with students, fully eliminating sexual overtones.

Recommendations:

This is a very serious matter that, when viewed in totality and given the history of Mr. Reese's propensity towards inappropriate behavior or comments, places students at risk and places the district at risk. The findings of this investigation require that City Schools (CSD) act in decisive and appropriate manner to resolve the issue and to resolve it in a manner in which there is no question as to what students, especially female students, may be subjected to in their interactions with Mr. Reese.

Accordingly, taking into account the seriousness of the allegations, the fact that this incident represents a reoccurrence of past behavior on the part of Mr. Reese, and the fact that CSD, having knowledge of past behavior but not being in a position to determine the number of students that may have been impacted by Mr. Reese's behavior over time, the recommendation is to relieve Mr. Reese of his teaching duties and to resend his contract offer of employment for the 2017-18 school year.

In addition, and as a precaution, an opinion should be obtained from a social worker to ascertain if a referral should be made to DFACS. The incident should be reported to the PSC citing Mr. Reese's actions unbecoming of his responsibility as an educator.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the chaperone policy for CSD be communicated to all leaders and that the stipulation be put in place that the first required male chaperone and first required female chaperone on all CSD sponsored trips and events be educators currently employed with CSD.

David Adams
Human Resources Director
404-371-3601 x1012
davadams@csdecatur.net

Anne P. Caiola
Chair

C. Garrett Goebel
Vice Chair

Bernadette J. Seals
Board Member

Lewis Jones
Board Member

Tasha White
Board Member

To: Jon Reese
 From: Karen Eldridge
 Date: 3/15/00
 Re: Write up of our 2/29/00 conference

The purpose of this communication with you is to summarize the conference that you, Mrs. McElroy and I had on February 29, 2000.

I began the conference by telling you that a phone call had been received from a parent who expressed some concerns that I needed to share with you. I stated that the parent is [REDACTED] and her child is [REDACTED].

Upon hearing the name of the parent and the child you relayed information to Mrs. McElroy and me about a telephone conversation that you had with [REDACTED] in November, 1999. You said that you called [REDACTED] to let her know that you did not think it would be a good idea for her to be a community coach for the girls' soccer team. You shared that [REDACTED] became upset and then went on to tell you about some concerns that she had. They are specifically related to allegations #1 and #2 listed below. You reminded me that you had left a message for me on my answering machine after the conversation with [REDACTED] because you wanted me to know that she was upset. We discussed the fact that you did not share details with me about the conversation and that I assumed that [REDACTED] was upset because you had told her that she could not be a community coach. Mrs. McElroy advised that it would have been helpful to share all of the details with me immediately after the conversation that you and [REDACTED] had in November, 1999.

I then shared the allegations that [REDACTED] stated to me and asked you to respond to each one.

Allegations made by [REDACTED] as stated to me:

1. Mr. Reese referred directly to one of the soccer players, [REDACTED], as "his favorite STD" (Sexually Transmitted Disease). [REDACTED] said that she confronted Mr. Reese on this and that he said that he had "a special relationship" with this student and that "it did not mean anything" and "it was fine with the student."

In response to this allegation (#1) you stated that [REDACTED] is in several of your classes and that you and [REDACTED] joke and banter around. You stated that you did refer to [REDACTED] as [REDACTED], a play on the word [REDACTED]. You stated that you would not have referred to your relationship with [REDACTED] as "a special relationship."

2. [REDACTED] observed Mr. Reese watching another soccer team member, [REDACTED], as she walked across the soccer field towards him. It is [REDACTED]'s opinion that Mr. Reese was staring at the student's breasts.

In response to this allegation (#2) you stated that you did not stare at [redacted] breasts

3. Shortly before Christmas, 1999, [redacted] met with Mr. Reese at his home, which is [redacted] [redacted] stated that as far as she knew [redacted] met alone with Mr. Reese to advise him that she did not intend to play soccer this spring.

In response to this allegation (#3) you stated that there were two occasions where [redacted] came into your home. On both occasions [redacted] initiated the interaction. One time was in the fall when [redacted] came over to ask about a homework assignment and to discuss playing on the soccer team. Another time was when [redacted] [redacted] did not have a key [redacted] waited in the front room of your house [redacted] You stated that on the second occasion a friend of yours was present in your home. You stated that [redacted] continued to initiate coming over to your house and that you started standing at the door to talk with her instead of allowing her to come in your house.

4. Ms. [redacted] was told by [redacted] that the things that happened last spring (1999) with Mr. Reese and the other girls that had made them uncomfortable also happened to her. She said Mr. Reese made her very uncomfortable with how he dealt with her in the weight room. [redacted] told her mother that Mr. Reese would stand over her when she was lifting weights while laying on the weight bench and that he would often touch her waist while helping her with the weights and on the field at practice

In response to this allegation (#4) you stated that you do not ever recall interacting with [redacted] in the weight room because she never showed up for training. You stated that you did not touch [redacted] waist.

5. [redacted] said that [redacted] told her that Mr. Reese had "tried to come on to her" but she did not specify when this occurred nor did she have details about what she meant by "coming on to her"

In response to this allegation (#5) you stated that you have never done anything with [redacted] that you would interpret as "coming on to her"

6. [redacted] said that [redacted] stated that Mr. Reese would often get very close to her on the soccer field when demonstrating some aspect of the game and on one occasion was so close that his chest was touching her back and that [redacted] could feel that Mr. Reese was sexually aroused with an erection

In response to this allegation (#6) you stated this is not true.

Mrs. McElroy, you, and I then discussed the serious nature of these allegations. I explained that I was required to inform our superintendent about the matter, and that in turn she informed the school board chair. I was asked to contact the police as well as the [redacted]

school system's attorney to inform them about the allegations. I let you know that the police stated that they could not do any further investigation unless the student was willing to talk with them. I also let you know that the school board attorney and I met with [REDACTED] so that we could receive as much detailed information as possible

As we discussed, when we receive allegations of this nature it puts you and the school system in a very awkward position. Mrs. McElroy and I discussed the fact that we have an obligation to the students in our school system as well as to you, but that the school district's top priority is to make decisions that are in the best interest of the students. We discussed that if the student is willing to share more information or there is evidence that there is validity to inappropriate things happening, that the school system would have to take action that is in the best interest of the student. We also discussed that if students are feeling uncomfortable with your actions that you need to examine your practices and actions. We discussed the fact that you have a grave responsibility in working with students age fourteen to eighteen.

We also discussed the conversation that you and I had in April, 1999 in relation to several girls on the soccer team being uncomfortable around you. When we met at that time I explained to you that the girls had requested that I talk with you about the way you worked with them in the weight room and the way that you touched them when giving them direction in soccer skills. During our discussion in April, 1999 you were asked to examine your practices and to make sure that you did not do anything that would make the girls uncomfortable

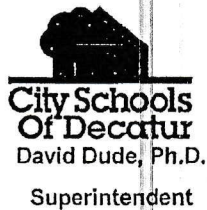
Last year in order to help the perceptions of the students you made a plan to add a female coach, which you have done for the girls' varsity and junior varsity soccer teams for this spring. In our conversation you let us know that you have communicated with the female coaches to let them know that you welcome their feedback and critiques and that you do not want to do anything that could be misinterpreted. You also stated that you have let the parents know that they are welcome to observe practices at any time.

Mrs. McElroy and I discussed with you that you also need to do the following things in order to be more effective. It is imperative that you adhere to the items outlined below and that you understand that if they are not followed that we will have no other recourse but to move towards disciplinary action that could result in your termination

1. You shall never have students in your home.
2. You shall not give rides to students in your car.
3. You shall never be alone with a female student (In your classroom if you must work with an individual student then the door should be open)
4. You shall not physically touch students even though it is typical in the confines of coaching. Let the female assistant coaches help instead.
5. You shall rethink wording that you use in talking with students. Statements with sexual overtones need to be eliminated. Nicknames with any sexual connotation need to be eliminated. There needs to be a clear line of distinction between you as the teacher and the students

6. There shall be no retribution against [REDACTED] and her family. This means that no public comments should be made to anyone about them nor should you approach [REDACTED] or her parents
7. When you take a field trip or an athletic trip you shall have a reliable female chaperone in attendance and present at all times

Copies to: Dr. Ida H. Love, Ph.D.
Mrs. Pat McElroy
Personnel file



Vision

City Schools of Decatur will be one of the top ten community school districts in the nation.

April 12, 2017

Mr. Jon Reese


Mr. Reese,


Effective today 4/12/2017, you are being placed on paid administrative leave. You will remain on leave pending the completion of our ongoing investigation related to the events that took place on the field trip on February 25, 2017 and other student and parent concerns that have been brought to the attention of the school district.

Given that we are actively involved in an ongoing investigation, it is imperative that you adhere to the items outlined below:

- You are not to return to Decatur High School, or any other CSD school, until you have received authorization from my department or the Superintendent to do so.
- You may not have any work-related or investigation-related communications with parents, students, or CSD Employees until the investigation is completed and you have received confirmation from my office or the Superintendent.
- You must maintain confidentiality during the duration of the investigation.
- Keys to the building, laptops, tablets, or other CSD properties in your possession will remain with Ms. Williams for the duration of the investigation. While on leave, you may not access any CSD computer account or network, including, but not limited to, any written or electronic student publications.

Any questions that you have or that may arise over the duration of the investigation should be directed to my office.

Sincerely,-


David Adams

Human Resources Director
404-371-3601 x1012
davadams@csdecatgur.net

cc: Dr. David Dude, Superintendent City Schools of Decatur

Received: 

Anne P. Caiola
Chair

C. Garrett Goebel
Vice Chair

Bernadette J. Sears
Board Member

Lewis Jones
Board Member

Tasha White
Board Member



David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>


Chaperone

1 message

Arlethea Williams <awilliams@csdecatur.net>
To: David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

Tue, Mar 21, 2017 at 1:57 PM

David,

The name of the chaperone is .

Arlethea

--
Arlethea Williams
Principal
Decatur High School
310 N. McDonough Street
Decatur, GA 30030
404.370.4170 ext. 2112



David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

Fwd: Teacher Concern

1 message

Arlethea Williams <awilliams@csdecatur.net>
To: David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

Thu, Mar 16, 2017 at 9:39 AM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, Feb 27, 2017 at 2:01 PM
Subject: Teacher Concern
To: "awilliams@csdecatur.net" <awilliams@csdecatur.net>
Cc: [REDACTED]

Ms. Williams,

I am writing out of concern about something I heard from my daughter and another student yesterday afternoon. As you may know, Mr. Reese took a number of students on a retreat to north Georgia as part of his media / journalism program this past weekend. When I picked up my daughter [REDACTED] on Sunday afternoon following the retreat, she and a friend relayed an incident involving Mr. Reese that, if true, would be deeply troubling.

As I understand it, on one night as the kids were getting ready for bed, Mr. Reese knocked on and then, without waiting, immediately entered the room where the girls were changing. At the time he entered, one student was in nothing other than a towel while another was in her bra. Upon entering the room where the girls were in various states of undress, Mr. Reese reportedly engaged in conversation with the girls before eventually leaving.

My daughter [REDACTED] did not witness this incident herself as she was in the shower at the time. Because this information is only second hand, I hesitate to jump to firm conclusions without hearing all of the facts. That said, the information as relayed to me gives me great cause for concern and merit further questioning and discussion with those who were there. Needless to say, if Mr. Reese is in fact walking in on young girls while they are showering and changing clothes during off-campus retreats, that would be a very serious problem, both for the school and more importantly the kids.

To that end, I am enlisting your help to better understand the facts here and, if necessary, to take the steps necessary steps to ensure that our kids are adequately protected from this sort of inappropriate behavior. If you would like to talk to me directly about this incident, please feel free to call me on my cell [REDACTED]. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]



David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

1:15 today. Debra and Mack coming also

1 message

David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 11:53 AM

To: Arlethea Williams <awilliams@csdecatur.net>

1:15

David Adams
Human Resources Director
City Schools of Decatur
125 Electric Ave
Decatur, GA 30030
404-371-3601 x1012

On Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 10:54 AM, Arlethea Williams <awilliams@csdecatur.net> wrote:
I can come over after 1:00.

On Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 9:43 AM, David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net> wrote:
Do you have availability before 2:00 today to debrief the interviews you conducted?

David Adams
Human Resources Director
City Schools of Decatur
125 Electric Ave
Decatur, GA 30030
404-371-3601 x1012

--
Arlethea Williams
Principal
Decatur High School
310 N. McDonough Street
Decatur, GA 30030
404.370.4170 ext. 2112



David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

JR - PLEASE READ

1 message

David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>
To: Arlethea Williams <awilliams@csdecatur.net>

Fri, Mar 17, 2017 at 12:11 PM

Why don't you make arrangements for you and he to come over. I will interview him with you present and get an initial statement.

David Adams
Human Resources Director
City Schools of Decatur
125 Electric Ave
Decatur, GA 30030
404-371-3601 x1012



David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>


Chaperone

1 message

Arlethea Williams <awilliams@csdecatur.net>
To: David Adams <davadams@csdecatur.net>

Tue, Mar 21, 2017 at 1:57 PM

David,

The name of the chaperone is 

Arlethea

--
Arlethea Williams
Principal
Decatur High School
310 N. McDonough Street
Decatur, GA 30030
404.370.4170 ext. 2112

Notes for 5/3/17 Interview

This is in regards to an investigation that was launched in response to a complaint about an incident with the girls in attendance at the Calvin Center retreat. I have thoroughly reviewed all relevant information available to me and have a series of questions I need your responses to. It is important that you answer truthfully as your responses will help inform my final decision regarding this investigation.

1. What was the purpose of the retreat to Calvin Center?
2. How did you choose the location?
3. How did you choose the participants?
4. What do you believe is the role of the second chaperone?
5. How did you choose the chaperone for this trip?
6. Describe your relationship with [REDACTED] and any interactions you've had with her since she graduated from DHS.
7. Describe the events that occurred around midnight on Saturday evening of the retreat.
8. Which facility at Calvin Center were you in (Geneva Lodge, Hicks Lodge)?
9. Describe or diagram the facility.
10. Describe any situations where you have transported a student in your car this school year.
11. Describe any situations where you have been alone with a student this school year.
12. Describe any written or verbal communications you have had with students this school year that, upon reflection, may have been interpreted as inappropriate by a reasonable person.
13. Describe any physical interactions you have had with students this school year.
14. Have you ever had a romantic relationship with any student or former student?

15. Describe your recollection of any conversations, verbal or written, with Karen Eldridge that may be pertinent to the review of this complaint.
16. Does the name [REDACTED] mean anything to you?
17. In April of 2000 you were counseled by Karen Eldridge. In March you received a letter documenting that conversation. I'll read that letter and give you an opportunity to respond when finished.

The following are my initial findings.

- Many students truly appreciate the academic education you provide to them, but they struggle to balance an internal conflict they have between learning from you and discomfort with being around you. Older students report achieving this balance by avoiding being alone with you and avoiding field trips with you.
- You have not established appropriate professional boundaries with all of your students. Many reported there is a difference between "classroom Reese" and "field trip Reese."
- You have had inappropriate physical contact with students that they do not welcome, such as giving shoulder rubs to students during class.
- You have made inappropriate comments to students with sexual overtones, such as a joke made at the retreat about a male student spanking his girlfriend.
- You entered the girls' dorm room at the retreat while they were preparing for bedtime without giving them appropriate notice that you were entering. You failed to utilize the female chaperone to address the issue of your concern, as would have been appropriate. You remained in the room while several girls were in various states of undress and were extremely uncomfortable with your presence.
- You have caused students to fear retaliation for reporting concerns about you.
- You have failed to follow the directives given to you by Karen Eldridge earlier in your career that are directly related to this investigation and included a warning that failure to follow said directives would force the district to take disciplinary action that could lead to termination of your employment.