


CONFIDENTIAL

TO: O'DELL HENDERSON, DIRECTOR
LABOR MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

FROM: JEANINE RILEY, COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATOR
COMPLIANCE AND INVESTIGATIONS 

SUBJECT: DUAN WRIGHT, PRINCIPAL AND [REDACTED] AND
[REDACTED] 2nd GRADE STUDENTS, HARTSTERN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2020

Allegation: On October 28, 2019, the office of Compliance and Investigations received a request for an investigation from Child Protective Services (CPS). According to the request, CPS received a referral alleging that [REDACTED] a student, was sent to Mr. Wright's office regarding discipline issues. Following his visit to Mr. Wright's office, [REDACTED] was rubbing his shoulder and stated, "Mr. Wright punched me." [REDACTED] did seem to be in pain; however, there were no signs of injury. [REDACTED] reported that on another occasion, prior to this incident, he and another student, [REDACTED] were sent to Mr. Wright's office for discipline. [REDACTED] reported that during that time, Mr. Wright showed him a gun that was in his desk drawer. [REDACTED] reported that Mr. Wright told him and [REDACTED] that he would "feed them to the wolves if they did not get their act together." Based on the referral, the date of the incident is unknown. CPS representative, Wendy Baird-Magdaleno will be investigating the allegation of physical abuse to [REDACTED] and the allegation of "Risk of Harm – neglect," to both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Compliance and Investigations addressed the allegation of inappropriate discipline and unprofessional behavior concerning the reported allegation. The office of Security and Investigations addressed the allegation of the gun. The office of Security and Investigations immediately went to the school to see if there was a weapon in the principal's office. There was no weapon found.

Findings: On November 12, 15, and 26, 2019, and December 19, 2019, interviews were conducted regarding the allegation received. Wendy Baird-Magdaleno, CPS representative, was present for the interviews conducted. In addition to the interviews conducted with this investigator, Ms. Baird-Magdaleno

In addition to the interviews conducted with this investigator, Ms. Baird-Magdaleno conducted independent interviews with both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on October 28, 2019.

The initial interview with [REDACTED] conducted by CPS, was conducted at Hartstern Elementary School, and the interview with [REDACTED] was conducted at his home, as he was absent from school on October 28, 2019. Ms. Baird-Magdaleno reported that she talked to [REDACTED] first at Hartstern Elementary School. After the interview, she reached out to [REDACTED] mother concerning the allegation. Ms. Baird-Magdaleno reported that as she was talking to [REDACTED] mother on the phone, Mr. Wright was also trying to call [REDACTED], [REDACTED] mother. Ms. Baird-Magdaleno reported that she then went to the home of [REDACTED] and conducted the interview with him. Ms. Baird-Magdaleno reported that [REDACTED] mother informed her that regardless of what was alleged, she does not have any concerns with Mr. Wright and the manner in which he interacts with [REDACTED] or his sibling.

Ms. Baird-Magdaleno reported that during her initial interviews on October 28, 2019, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both gave consistent accounts of the alleged incident. Furthermore, Ms. Baird-Magdaleno reported that the students maintained their account in the subsequent interviews that this investigator was present for, as documented below.

[REDACTED] student

After a brief conversation to build rapport with [REDACTED] he was asked specifically about the type of discipline utilized by Mr. Wright when he is at school. [REDACTED] was initially reluctant to speak on this subject. He asked the investigators to "promise not to call the police." [REDACTED] stated that Mr. Wright is a "good man" and that he does a lot to help out his mother. [REDACTED] stated that he does not think Mr. Wright would ever do anything to hurt him or any other student. During his interview, [REDACTED] stated that he is sent to Mr. Wright's office "a lot" because of behavior issues. [REDACTED] stated that his mother gave Mr. Wright permission to "whip him" if he is "bad." [REDACTED] stated that there was one occasion during the 2018-2019 academic year when Mr. Wright whipped him. When asked what Mr. Wright used to whip him, [REDACTED] stated, "an orange paddle."

According to [REDACTED] on one occasion he was sent to the office for not listening to his teacher. When Mr. Wright was talking to him, Mr. Wright poked him in the area of his clavicle.

[REDACTED] reported that on another occasion, he was sent to the office with [REDACTED] because they were fighting in their classroom. [REDACTED] stated that when they arrived at Mr. Wright's office, Mr. Wright made him and [REDACTED] sit in a chair together on one side of his desk as Mr. Wright sat behind his desk and

addressed them. ██████ stated that ██████ was not trying to listen to what Mr. Wright had to say, so ██████ sat in the seat with ██████ and ██████ covered his ears with his hands. ██████ stated that Mr. Wright became more upset with them and started yelling at them. According to ██████ Mr. Wright pulled a gun out of his desk drawer and laid it on his desk. ██████ stated that Mr. Wright told them "if they do not get it together, he was going to feed them to the wolves." During his interview, ██████ stated, "I think it looked like a fake gun." When asked to describe the gun, ██████ stated that it was black. When asked why he thought the gun was fake, ██████ stated, "Because a principal would not have a real gun."

During his interview, ██████ stated that he was scared, and both he and ██████ were crying during the incident. When asked if he has ever been scared at school before, ██████ stated, "Yes, when Mr. Wright was going to get "Mr. Baboo" on us." When asked to explain who "Mr. Baboo" was, ██████ stated, "I think he is like a monster." ██████ further stated that "Mr. Baboo" stays behind the doors on the other side of the plant operator's office, referring to the boiler room.

During his interview, ██████ stated that he has been praying to have better days. ██████ stated that he has been trying not to "be bad" anymore.

████████ student

During his interview, ██████ initially did not want to talk about the alleged incident. Initially ██████ repeatedly stated, "It was brutal." After further prompting to explain the situation that took place in Mr. Wright's office concerning him and ██████ reported that on the day of the incident, he and ██████ got in trouble with their classroom teacher, and they were sent to the office. ██████ stated that Mr. Wright escorted them to the office, and while en route, Mr. Wright was holding onto their hands and was squeezing them tightly because he was upset with them. ██████ stated that once in Mr. Wright's office, Mr. Wright made him and ██████ sit in the same seat while he talked to them. ██████ reported that Mr. Wright got in their faces and was yelling at them before he went and sat behind his desk.

████████ reported that as he was sitting at his desk, Mr. Wright pulled out a gun from his desk drawer and laid it on his desk as he was talking to them. ██████ stated that he was "very scared" at this point. According to ██████ he and ██████ were both crying. ██████ reported that Mr. Wright told ██████ that he was going to feed him to the wolves. ██████ stated that ██████ responded by crying. ██████ stated that Mr. Wright placed the gun back in his desk drawer. During his interview, ██████ stated that he was scared at the time, but now he thinks the gun was fake because Mr. Wright would never do anything to hurt them.

████████ stated that during the incident, Mr. Wright was just warning them that they had better stop playing around in class. ██████ reported that Mr. Wright is also

nice at times, and Mr. Wright helps his mom "make sure everything is smooth."

Christy Turner, teacher

Ms. Turner stated that she observed [REDACTED] rubbing his shoulder when he returned to the classroom after returning from the office for behavior he displayed. Ms. Turner stated that she inquired about what was wrong with his shoulder. [REDACTED] reported to Ms. Turner that Mr. Wright had hit him in his shoulder when he was in his office talking to him regarding his behavior issues.

Ms. Turner reported that [REDACTED] did not have any redness or other signs of injury to the area of his shoulder, which he was rubbing. Ms. Turner reported that she asked [REDACTED] if anything like that has happened before and it was at that time that [REDACTED] reported to Ms. Turner the alleged incident involving the gun, when he and [REDACTED] were sent to Mr. Wright's office.

Ms. Turner reported that in a separate and independent conversation, [REDACTED] told a consistent story about the incident of when he and [REDACTED] were sent to the office for fighting.

Jill Proffitt, assistant principal

According to Ms. Proffitt, she had no knowledge of the alleged incident. Ms. Proffitt stated that she handles discipline issues for many of the students; however, Mr. Wright deals with specific students, including [REDACTED]. During her interview, Ms. Proffitt reported that no students or parents brought the allegation regarding Mr. Wright having or showing students a gun to her attention. During her interview, Ms. Proffitt reported that she has never observed Mr. Wright or any other staff member with a gun on campus, and she has no knowledge of any toy guns being confiscated this 2019-2020 school year.

Ms. Proffitt stated that she was aware of [REDACTED] making a claim that Mr. Wright poked him in his chest. According to Ms. Proffitt, on the day of that incident, she had returned from a meeting when Mr. Wright was in the office with [REDACTED]. Ms. Proffitt reported that she observed Mr. Wright somewhat agitated, and [REDACTED] was standing nearby, visibly upset. Ms. Proffitt stated that Mr. Wright told her to take [REDACTED] with her. According to Ms. Proffitt, she walked [REDACTED] to her office so he could calm down, and she could address the issue. Ms. Proffitt reported that while processing with [REDACTED] he alleged that Mr. Wright poked him in his chest, really hard. Ms. Proffitt reported that there were no marks or signs of injury in the area where [REDACTED] said he was poked.

Duan Wright, principal

Mr. Wright declined to have representation present for his interview. According to Mr. Wright, typically, he does not deal with behavior issues; however, both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have intense behavior issues, so he did intervene during the incident with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Mr. Wright reported that he has been dealing with [REDACTED]

and his behavior issues for some time. According to Mr. Wright, [REDACTED] mother requested for him to address [REDACTED] behaviors rather than having Ms. Proffitt deal with [REDACTED] (due to previous concerns [REDACTED] mother had regarding Ms. Proffitt). Mr. Wright stated that [REDACTED] has been sent down to him numerous times, and at no time has he hit [REDACTED] in the chest or shoulder area, as alleged. Mr. Wright stated that [REDACTED] does become emotional when he is dealing with him; however, [REDACTED] does not ever appear to be fearful of him.

According to Mr. Wright, on the day of the alleged incident involving both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] he brought [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to his office because they were in class fighting. Mr. Wright stated that he does not recall having both students sit in a chair together. Mr. Wright reported that he does not recall either student crying while he was addressing their behavior. Mr. Wright reported that at no time has he had a gun in his desk or shown a gun to students, as alleged. Mr. Wright reported that he did own a gun; however, it was stolen while he was in St. Louis in October 2019. Mr. Wright confirmed that following Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) being notified of the allegation, Michael Terry, executive administrator of schools, and James Hearn, coordinator in-school security, came to Hartstern Elementary School and searched his office and working area to confirm that there was no gun on campus.

When asked about the behavior management strategies he utilizes with the students, Mr. Wright stated that he does give stern talks to students. Mr. Wright denied that he had ever spanked [REDACTED] or any other student. Mr. Wright stated that he knows some parents may tell their students that Mr. Wright will spank them if they are bad, and he is okay with that; however, he denies that he has spanked any student. When asked about the report of him telling students that he will get "Mr. Baboo" on them if they are bad, Mr. Wright stated that Mr. Baboo "died three years ago", meaning that they no longer talk to the students about "Mr. Baboo". According to Mr. Wright, the "Mr. Baboo" scare tactic was utilized prior to him becoming principal and continued in the beginning of his tenure. Mr. Wright stated that that it was in fact a scare tactic; however, they also used to tell the students that "Mr. Baboo" was there to protect everyone while at school. Mr. Wright stated that he has not spoken about "Mr. Baboo" in years and that the character derived from a story read in one of the Emotional Behavior Disorder (EBD) classrooms.

In reference to the allegation that he told [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] that he would, "feed them to the wolves" if they did not get their behavior in order, Mr. Wright denied making the statements. According to Mr. Wright, he does not recall making the statement and making such a statement is not in accordance with how he typically communicates with the students.

When asked about the fact that he reached out to parents and talked to the students after CPS came to conduct the initial interviews, Mr. Wright stated that

the administration always checks in with students to make sure they are okay following a CPS interview.

During Mr. Wright's interview, Ms. Baird-Magdaleno addressed the concern of this practice with Mr. Wright. Ms. Baird-Magdaleno advised Mr. Wright that the practice of reaching out to parents to notify them that CPS had come to the school to speak to their child could be viewed as impeding an investigation and/or potentially putting a student at greater risk. Mr. Wright responded that he did not look at it through the investigator's lenses; rather he viewed this practice as maintaining a good relationship with his parents. It should be noted that the CPS concerns were shared with his supervisor and addressed.

Additional Notes:

A review of the Behavior Detail report for both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] showed that they both received discipline for fighting another student on September 26, 2019. Based on the information gathered, it appears that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were sent to Mr. Wright's office together on that day.

CPS notified JCPS of the allegation they received on October 28, 2019. On October 29, 2019, Mr. Terry and Mr. Hearn went to Hartstern Elementary School and "checked Mr. Wright's work areas and found nothing to lend credence that the allegation made was factual" (Attachment A).

Conclusion:

Allegation 1: Mr. Wright utilized inappropriate discipline by striking [REDACTED] in his shoulder while addressing [REDACTED] disruptive behavior.

This investigator finds the allegation that Mr. Wright utilized inappropriate discipline with [REDACTED] to be inconclusive. Based on the interviews conducted, there is no evidence or witness corroboration to support the allegation that Mr. Wright struck [REDACTED] in the area of his shoulder while [REDACTED] was in Mr. Wright's office for discipline matters. Upon returning to his classroom from Mr. Wright's office, [REDACTED] was observed rubbing his shoulder area by his classroom teacher, Ms. Turner; however, he did not disclose or show any signs of injury. [REDACTED] reported that it was just himself and Mr. Wright in the office at the time of the alleged incident.

Allegation 2: Mr. Wright displayed unprofessional behavior and inappropriate discipline toward [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] when the students were sent to his office following a fight the students had with one another.

This investigator finds the allegation that Mr. Wright displayed unprofessional behavior and administered inappropriate discipline when addressing [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] during the incident on or about September 26, 2019, to also be inconclusive. There was no evidence of the incident nor additional witness

corroboration. However, it should be noted that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] provided similar and consistent accounts of the alleged incident in various independent interviews. Additionally, his classroom teacher observed [REDACTED] rubbing his shoulder upon his return to his classroom immediately after being seen in the office for behavior issues.

JR:gdl

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