

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Office of Labor Relations

TO: JOHN MCDONOUGH, SUPERINTENDENT
ROSS WILSON, CHIEF OF STAFF

FROM: KAREN A. GLASGOW, DIRECTOR OF LABOR RELATIONS

RE: INTERNAL INVESTIGATION OF EMPLOYMENT HISTORY
FOR SHAUN HARRISON

DATE: MARCH 23, 2015

Following is an overview of the employment history of Shaun Harrison (hereinafter "Harrison"), former employee of Boston Public Schools ("BPS").

Harrison performed contract work at Excel High School, part of the South Boston High School Complex in a part time after-school support role between December 2008 and July 2010. Harrison co-led with Excel High Staff, an afterschool program providing workshops in peer mediation and anger management for a group of approximately ten students. Harrison was paid a total of \$24,685.00 for the period 2008-2010.¹

During Harrison's time as a contractor at Excel there are no reports of discipline or behavior concerns.

¹ There were statements made, but I could not find any supporting evidence, other than what was on one of Harrison's resumes, that he was part of a program called SCORE where he provided peer mediation services. An internet search and phone call to the Attorney General's office of Community and Information Division, uncovered the fact that SCORE was a program funded by the AG's Office between 1989 and 2009. The AG's office provided grants to local community mediation programs and school communities.

- **Harrison's employment as a full time employee with BPS is as follows:**

Odyssey High School, South Boston, 9/7/2010 – 8/27/2011, Paraprofessional -In School Suspension Coordinator (A Boston Teachers Union position). There are no records of any discipline or behavior problems with Harrison for this time period at Odyssey. At the end of the school year, on June 1, 2011, Harrison received a "Meets or Exceeds Standards" for his overall performance on his evaluation from the Headmaster.

At the end of school year 2010/2011, Odyssey High School closed and Harrison was laid off.

Boston Green Academy ("BGA"), South Boston, 8/27/2011- 8/23/2014 – Community Field Coordinator (a Boston Teacher's Union position). BGA opened in Odyssey's space, as an in district Horace Mann Charter School. Harrison was hired as a way to maintain continuity for the students who were formerly at Odyssey. There were two other employees from Odyssey who were also hired. Harrison submitted four letters of recommendation.

While at BGA there were two documented discipline matters involving Harrison in November of 2012. One involved allegations that Harrison pushed a female student in her back and threw a roll of tape at the student in an attempt to hit her. The pushing of the student was unsubstantiated based on the testimonial evidence received by the headmaster. In context of the incident and the subsequent statements made by the student and Harrison, the fact finder found that this matter did not rise to the level of termination. Harrison was counseled regarding his unprofessional behavior, that it would not be tolerated and he was issued a written warning.

In the second matter it was alleged that Harrison made inappropriate statements to two students and allegedly discussed recreational drug use. An investigatory meeting was held. The headmaster found that Harrison did make the inappropriate statements. However, the headmaster found that the statements pertaining to recreational drug use were not sufficiently substantiated. Harrison received a written reprimand.

In a story dated Tuesday March 10, 2015, the Boston Herald stated that three years before his arrest BGA administrators wanted to fire Harrison but were rebuffed by BPS. The story quoted a member of Board of Trustees as saying "My

understanding is that there was a question to BPS about whether more could be done, potentially even to remove Shaun Harrison, and that we received an answer of no." I spoke directly with the Board member who vehemently denied the statement that BGA was rebuffed by BPS when they wanted to fire Harrison.

Harrison, through counsel, appealed the written reprimand. The Board of Trustees upheld the written reprimand because they concluded that any and all due process procedures established under relevant statutes and agreements were afforded and that the headmaster was correct in his finding, and in his decision not to advance the case to the district level.

At the end of the SY2013/14, BGA exercised its hiring autonomies as an in-district charter school, by excessing Harrison from employment, as he was not performing to the levels that they expected of him.

Orchard Gardens Pilot School, Roxbury, 8/2014 – 1/5/2014, paraprofessional (a Boston Teachers Union position)

When Harrison was excessed from BGA, pursuant to the BTU contract through the paraprofessional assignment process, Harrison was placed at Orchard Gardens as a paraprofessional. Members of the BTU who do not have a position when the school year begins are placed into a vacant position. Harrison performed small group work, provided support for transition from classroom to lunch and he was being trained in data collection.

I spoke directly with the principal who indicated that staff who had worked in the classroom with Harrison both denied any concerns for safety of the children in the class. The principal also denied receiving complaints about Harrison.

English High School, Jamaica Plain 1/5/2015-3/5/2015 – Coordinator (Dean of Academies). In the fall of 2014, English High advertised the position of Dean of Academies, a managerial position. There were approximately fifty applicants, four of which were interviewed by a hiring team consisting of the Headmaster, Assistant Headmaster and two deans. The hiring team deemed Harrison to be the most suitable candidate. Harrison was released from Orchard Gardens and assumed the position as Dean of Academy in January 2015. The role of the dean of academies was to work closely with the student support team in providing the leadership in generating and implementing interventions that support English High students as well as identifying appropriate supports for students with academic, behavioral,

social and emotional needs by making the appropriate in house and outside referrals.

On March 3, 2015 it was reported that Harrison engaged in an altercation with a female student where he said to the student “I will smack the shit out of you” and pushed her. Following an investigatory meeting with the Headmaster, the recommendation was made to terminate Harrison. Harrison was terminated on March 5, 2015.

Conclusions:

Shaun Harrison went through the same hiring process as any other employee that is hired by the Boston Public Schools, including applying, interviewing and providing references for positions as required, with exception of the hiring pool process for BTU members who are excessed, the rules for which were also followed accordingly. He was also subjected to a CORI background check.

When dealing with the discipline of employees, all of the facts and circumstances, along with the applicable collective bargaining agreement, BPS policies, and state and federal law are taken into consideration. Under BPS’ collective bargaining agreements and Chapter 71 of the Massachusetts General Laws, BPS must be able to establish that discipline and/or termination is supported by sufficient evidence to establish “just cause” or in some circumstances “good cause.”

BPS reserves the right to dismiss any employee who has engaged in serious misconduct, which includes inappropriate conduct toward and/or harm to students or others, serious errors of judgment or other similar offenses. In situations which do not warrant dismissal based on the facts and circumstances, BPS will utilize one of the following progressive disciplinary actions: Oral Warning; Written Warning; Written Reprimand; or Suspension.

In the case of Shaun Harrison, an investigation into each of the three disciplinary actions found each decision, under our existing policies, to be the correct and just course of action.

However, in reviewing all of the circumstances of the Harrison matter, it is recommended: that BPS procedures for investigations of discipline matters be fully reviewed by an outside entity with the goal of more stringent guidelines for higher standards of performance and conduct by employees; that when an issue of

inappropriate conduct is reported, a full investigation is completed; when there are references to illegal activity, that appropriate law enforcement personnel are alerted; and, finally, that a review be conducted of the internal processes involving the flow of information to and from schools regarding employee transfers.