



BY EMAIL AND FIRST-CLASS MAIL

August 16, 2019







RE: Letter of Response for Grievance #3298 filed on June 28, 2019






Dear 

In accordance with Chapter 24 Subtitle 5-B, Section 2405 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, DC Public Schools (DCPS) Comprehensive Alternative Resolution and Equity (CARE) team has completed its investigation of the above referenced grievance.

Grievance Issues

Based on a review of the information provided, the written grievance raised the following issues under the jurisdiction of this office:

1. **24 DCMR Subtitle 5-B, Section 2405.2 (f)** - Any other violation of a right granted by law that does not have a specific grievance procedure or hearing process provided in this title.
 - a. You allege that your student  was subject to unpleasant hotel conditions while on a DCPS sponsored trip abroad.
 - b. You allege that your student,  experienced poor quality of food while on a DCPS sponsored trip abroad.
 - c. You allege that your student,  endured unnecessarily long periods of walking while on a DCPS sponsored trip abroad.
 - d. You allege that your student,  had her money stolen from trip chaperones while on a DCPS sponsored trip abroad.

2. **24 DCMR Subtitle 5-B DCMR 2405.2 (c)** – Where it is alleged that any student or group of students is being subjected to an arbitrary or unreasonable regulation, procedure, or standard of conduct.
 - a. You allege that on June 24, 2019, Teacher,  physically assaulted  by swinging at and kicking her while on a DCPS sponsored trip abroad. You allege Teacher,  recorded students without permission while they were on a train during the DCPS sponsored trip abroad. In addition, you reported that Teacher,  and Teacher, 

did not provide adequate supervision and organization while on the DPCS sponsored trip abroad.

Investigative Procedure

The investigation included interviews with the following individuals:

1. [REDACTED], Parent
2. [REDACTED] Student
3. Student A
4. Parent of Student A
5. Student B
6. Parent of Student B
7. Student C
8. Student D
9. Parent of Student D
10. [REDACTED] Principal of [REDACTED]
11. [REDACTED] Trip Volunteer

The investigation also included review of the following documents which were either submitted by the complainant, submitted by the school, or accessible via DCPS data systems:

1. [REDACTED] website

General Findings of Fact

The following findings of fact resulted from the investigation:

1. On June 18, 2019, [REDACTED] and seven other students at [REDACTED] embarked on a study abroad trip sponsored by [REDACTED].
2. Throughout school year 18-19, [REDACTED] sponsored informational sessions to help students prepare for the upcoming study abroad trip. These sessions were facilitated by Teacher, [REDACTED].
3. Information about the trip was not provided to students or parents in writing.
4. All travelers and parents had access to the [REDACTED] website which included information about the amount of walking to be expected on the trip, a trip itinerary, type of cuisine offered, hotel assignments, tipping recommendations, and more.
5. According to [REDACTED] Booking Conditions, final tour itineraries are confirmed approximately two months prior to the departure.
6. [REDACTED] cancellations may be made up to 45 days prior to departure to qualify for a refund.
7. While on the trip, Student A explained that students were not asked about their dietary restrictions when eating at restaurants. Other students interviewed during this process supported that claim.
8. [REDACTED], Student A, and Student D reported that the food was [REDACTED] or looked unpleasant. However, Student B and Student C shared no concerns about the taste of the food.

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9. On the [REDACTED] website, travelers are given an option to enter their Dietary Restrictions. It is unclear if this information was given to travelers during the informational sessions.
 10. Student A explained that she endured an unprecedented amount of walking during the trip. [REDACTED] also had a similar complaint, citing that [REDACTED].
 11. However, Student C stated that the walking [REDACTED] and Student B said [REDACTED].
 12. [REDACTED] Student A, Student B, Student C, and Student D all described the hotel accommodations in [REDACTED] as being unpleasant. The students explained that this particular hotel had doors that didn't lock, mold, and were overall unsanitary.
 13. The parents of [REDACTED] and Student A claimed that students had money taken from their bags to be used as a tip for the tour guide without prior approval from parents.
 14. According to the Parent of Student B, during the last 3 or 4 informational meetings, Teacher, [REDACTED] told attendees that they would be tipping the tour guides while on the trip.
 15. Student C explained that in the informational meeting a week before the trip, all attendees were told that they would have to tip the tour guides.

Discussion/Conclusion

1. **24 DCMR Subtitle 5-B, Section 2405.2 (f)** is unable to substantiate. During the course of the investigation, DCPS CARE found the following:
 - a. In regard to the issue of the Hotel Accommodations, each student interviewed expressed serious concerns about the hotel accommodations while in [REDACTED]. DCPS did not select the hotel assignments for this trip. Instead, the [REDACTED] company chose all hotel assignments for the trip. On their company website, [REDACTED] states [REDACTED].
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
It is unclear how the housing assignment in [REDACTED] fell short of meeting these standards. This information has been reported to [REDACTED] so in the future students are not subject to the same unpleasant hotel conditions.
 - b. [REDACTED] and Student A were the only two students that were interviewed that expressed frustration with the quality of food offered while on the trip. Other students that were served the same food expressed satisfaction. This difference in opinion makes it difficult for DCPS CARE to determine if there was truly an issue with the food or was merely about preference. There were multiple students that stated that food allergies were not taken into consideration. If students did not go to the [REDACTED] website and enter in their "Dietary Restrictions" then the food provided by [REDACTED] would not reflect the needs of the students. DCPS should have done a better job of informing students and families to enter in their dietary restrictions on the [REDACTED] website.
 - c. The expected number of miles to be walked during the trip could have been found in the [REDACTED] section of the customers dashboard on the [REDACTED] website. [REDACTED] expressed distress over the amount of walking that was done on the trip. There were

other students on the trip that stated that the walking was not an issue. It is difficult for DCPS to discern at what point is the amount of walking unnecessary and is a safety concern.

- d. Lastly, regarding the issue of money being taken from [REDACTED] some students and parents were made aware through [REDACTED] informational meetings that students would need to bring money specifically for tipping the tour guide. However, this information was not provided adequately to all parents, as there is no evidence to suggest this information was communicated beyond the informational meetings. During the trip, as chaperones held students' belongings, some students knew a portion of the money they brought would be used as a tip for the tour guide while other students did not.

To conclude, there is evidence to suggest that the staff at [REDACTED] could have been more thorough in their efforts to prepare students and provide information to families prior to the study abroad trip. Staff at [REDACTED] claimed to have provided documents and materials to students and families that would aid in their trip preparation. However, DCPS CARE found no evidence of any written materials, documents, or emails that were sent to individuals that had invested in trip.

DCPS has taken the following actions below to address this incident:

1. A referral was sent to Labor Management and Employee Relations (LMER) on June 28, 2019, for the review and investigation of the allegations pertaining to 24 DCMR Subtitle 5-B DCMR 2405.2 (c). Their findings and any disciplinary actions will remain confidential due to employee privacy guidelines.
2. [REDACTED] be required to update and improve communication and planning methods related to all future trips abroad. DCPS CARE will meet with staff and administration by September 30, 2019 to develop a comprehensive plan.

As the complainant, if you are not satisfied with the outcome, you have the right to file an appeal. Appeals must be submitted in writing and received within 10 calendar days of receipt of this notice. Please submit appeal requests to the Office of Integrity via U.S. Postal Mail to 1200 First St., NE, 10th Floor; Attn: CIO or via email at dcps.cio@k12.dc.gov. You may also contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (1-800-421-3481) to report any educational discrimination.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at dcps.care@dc.gov or 202.442.5405.

Sincerely,



Anitra Allen-King, Director CARE

Cc: Principal
Instructional Superintendent