

TABC acts quickly in abuse case

High school brings in social worker to help counsel students

BY LARRY YUDELSON | December 15, 2011, 3:41 am |

The Torah Academy of Bergen County (TABC) is bringing in a social worker to help counsel students, following the discovery that a math teacher engaged in “inappropriate sexual contact” with a student last year.

The teacher was identified as Mrs. Stacey Goldberg by the Jewish Foundation School of Staten Island, whose faculty she joined in September as a fourth grade teacher. She has been placed on “an indefinite leave of absence” by the Staten Island school, according to a letter sent by its dean, Rabbi Richard Ehrlich, on Tuesday.

“There is an investigation that is ongoing,” Rabbi Yosef Adler, principal of TABC, told The Jewish Standard.

In a letter sent to parents earlier this week, Adler wrote, “Several weeks ago, a TABC student confided in a TABC teacher that last year he and another TABC teacher (who for independent reasons left the employ of TABC at the end of last year) had inappropriate sexual contact. The current TABC teacher immediately conveyed the report to me. After communicating with the TABC’s student’s family, I reported the matter to the Bergen County Prosecutor’s Office. An investigation is underway; no formal charges have been made.”

Before joining the Teaneck-based all-boys high school faculty last year, the teacher had served at the Jewish Educational Center (JEC), in Elizabeth. JEC, in a letter sent out this week, said it was first informed of incidents of sexual contact between the teacher and a student at the beginning of the month.

“We first became aware of the allegations regarding a JEC student when an alumnus called us on December 1,” the letter said. “We notified the police of the allegation, as is our moral and legal obligation. At this stage there is only an investigation; no formal charges have been made.

“At no time before December 1 were we aware of any allegations of any improper relationships or actions by this former teacher with any JEC students. We had not previously received any reports of improper behavior, and there were no other indications that would have raised even the slightest concern. While we do not yet know all the facts, it does appear that these alleged acts of sexual misconduct by this former teacher with JEC students occurred off campus.”

Adler told The Jewish Standard that he received “several e-mails from parents thanking the school for being up front, and handling it in the fashion that the law expects.”

In his letter to the parent body, he wrote, “TABC has zero tolerance for this type of behavior by adults. Our priorities are the welfare and safety of our students and the community at large.”□

Adler said that the school is consulting with Hillel Sternstein, a social worker who is the supervisor of Ohel’s program on sexual abuse. He leads the Teaneck offices of the Brooklyn-based Orthodox Jewish social service agency.

“In light of these circumstances,”□ wrote Adler, “TABC will offer support for our faculty, students and parents. For our faculty, we will reiterate what is an appropriate relationship with a student. For our students, we have and will continue to talk to them about relationships, boundaries and personal safety. For our parents, we will schedule a meeting to offer guidance how to facilitate these discussions at home.”□

He asked that anyone with knowledge directly relevant to the investigation to contact Natasha Labon of the Office of Institutional Abuse at 973-977-4066 ext. 217.

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