

(Soka Gakkai) NYC Principal In Hot Water Over 'Buddhist Chants'

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Parents At P.S. 24 In Riverdale Say Philip Sharper Led Chants Against Teachers On Alleged "Hate List"

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By JOSH LANDIS, CBS 2 HD News

NEW YORK (CBS) A public school principal is facing charges of major misbehavior.

Education officials are looking into a reports that the man led religious chants against people he considered enemies.

CBS 2 HD spoke with outraged moms — and the principal.

Parents at P.S. 24 in Riverdale say their principal is unprincipled.

"It all comes down to his lack of competence as a leader," said Unjoo Trebach of the school's parents association.

Philip Scharper is under investigation by the city's Department of Education for potentially crossing the line between church and state with Buddhism.

"He has tried to recruit staff members to be part of his faith and he has also hired a couple of people from his temple," parent Tracy Shelton said.

The Department of Education is taking the allegations very seriously. Among them — that Principal Scharper handed out Buddhist chant cards while on school property.

The complaint, filed by someone at the school, said Scharper also led "Buddhist chants" against teachers on a "hate list."

"We are not here to judge him. We're asking him to address these allegations to the school, to the staff, to the parents," Trebach said.

So far Scharper has refused.

"There's no comment until the investigation is underway," said Scharper, who also denied having ever received complaints.

Scharper is a former ballet dancer who came to P.S. 24 after attending New York City's Leadership Academy.

Regardless of the outcome, parents said the students are already suffering.

"Whether or not the hate list or the cards being passed is secondary; it's the climate that it's creating in the school of distrust, of secrecy," Joanne Jurcic said.

"It's a great, wonderful place and we're afraid for it," Shelton added.

After running P.S. 24 for nearly two years, many parents said Scharper deserves a failing grade.

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