NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

NEW YORK POST, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2001

PRINCIPAL HAD GUN IN CAR, COPS SAY

By JOE CUNNINGHAM, PHILIP MESSING and CARL CAMPANILE

An assistant principal at a Brooklyn junior high — known at his school as stern with the children and hard-working on the job — yesterday was busted for packing a loaded, illegal .22-caliber pistol in his car.

Arthur Alex, 60, of Flushing, Queens, was on his way to IS 349 in Bushwick at 7:45 a.m. when he allegedly blew through a stop sign at Wilson Avenue and Troutman Street near the school.

Police pulled him over and saw the pistol in plain view, officials said. He was charged with two counts of weapons possession and cited for passing a stop sign.

Board of Education officials said Alex, a tenured teacher, began his teaching career in 1997 at PS 86 in District 32 in Brooklyn and had a clean record. They said he would be reassigned to the superintendent's office — and barred from consideration for any future supervisory job.

At the school, staff and students were shocked, but had different views of the man.

"This has shocked all of us," said one school worker who asked not to be named. "Everyone hears the name 'Bushwick' — it's become a very bad name. People feel like they have to protect themselves when they come here.

"He's new," the employee said of Alex. "But when I first came here, I was scared, too."

Parent Gina Vasquez, who owns a beauty salon and has a 12-year-old daughter, Tamayra, at the school, said she was disappointed, but understood.

"If someone was threatening me or something, I would bring a gun to school. He's defending himself," she said.

Her husband, Nicholas Vasquez, was less forgiving.

"I think they should ban him from school," he said. "This just brings another element of danger to the school. I think it's the wrong message to the kids."

Eighth-grader Justin Vasquez, no relation to the family, said he thought Alex was "just paranoid."

"I don't think he's in any danger," he insisted.

Alex, who lives about a block from Queens College, was described as a good neighbor and "a wonderful man," said Catherine Alcazar, 74.

"I called him for Hanukkah," she said. "He's a very old-fashioned man. It's not nice to have a gun to protect yourself ... but the way things are going, people have no respect. He's the best. Everybody's close to him."

CITY_21MC100_013367798

NYC-WTC_000416544