

# Palmetto High teacher accused of 9-month sexual relationship with student

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For nine months, a 17-year-old Palmetto Senior High student carried on a relationship with her music teacher as if they were dating. They had sex at least 10 times, going to a local hotel, and twice behind locked doors in the school's music room, the female student told police.

Last week, Palmetto High music teacher Christopher Scottlevin Best, 28, was arrested by Miami-Dade police and charged with 10 counts of unlawful sexual activity with a minor.

Police said he confessed to having a private “boyfriend-girlfriend” relationship with the student, but denied having sexual relations with her.

Best was booked into Turner Guilford Knight Correction jail on Friday. His bond was set at \$75,000 and he was released by Saturday. Best's phone number on the arrest affidavit was disconnected. A call to his cellphone was not returned.

“As of today, he is no longer an employee of Miami-Dade Public Schools,” said Miami-Dade School's Chief Communications Officer Daisy Gonzalez-Diego.

Police are asking parents of students at Palmetto High, 7460 SW 118th St. in Pinecrest, to speak with their children to make sure they weren't victimized.

Best spent two years as Palmetto's music teacher and had clean evaluations, Gonzalez-Diego said. A call to Palmetto High Principal Allison Hurley was not returned. Police and public school's personnel said little on Monday.

Miami-Dade Detective Alvaro Zabaleta said Monday that the alleged victim and the music teacher had sexual relations between September 2014 and last week.

The girl said they “grew feelings for each other” over time, according to the police report.

Zabaleta said at some point the student's parents became concerned about the relationship. It wasn't clear Monday how police were notified of the alleged trysts.

Best isn't the first male music teacher to get into trouble at Palmetto. In 1997, the school's music teacher George Crear III was acquitted after a high-profile trial in which four Palmetto High female students claimed he wooed them into having sex — often in his car — with promises of leaving his wife. One girl, 16, committed suicide before the trial. In testimony it came up that she killed herself after being spurned by Crear.

Later that same year Crear was found guilty of similar allegations by a Michigan jury, where he had taught music before moving to Pinecrest. During the lengthy trial in Miami-Dade, a lawyer for one of the Palmetto students castigated the Miami-Dade School District for not thoroughly investigating tips about Crear from his time in Michigan.

Also Friday, five Allapattah Middle School students were arrested and charged with aggravated battery for allegedly beating up a boy who told a teacher he saw a couple having “consensual” sex in a gym locker room.

A male student at Allapattah Middle flagged down a teacher after catching the couple in the act. The teacher told

authorities who questioned the students who engaged in the sex. The girl admitted to having sex with a boy, a source said. It's not clear if they are involved in a relationship.

Later in the day, the boy who reported the activity was approached by five males, who beat him up because he snitched. The boy didn't need to be hospitalized. School police arrested five male students and are looking for a sixth. Gonzalez Diego couldn't say if one of the boys was the one involved in the sexual activity. None of their names have been released.

"Our school district has zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior of any kind and we commend the student who came forward to report the incident," said Gonzalez Diego. "The offenders have been suspended with a recommendation for expulsion."