

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

In the
United States Court of Appeals
For the Eleventh Circuit

No. 24-11570
Non-Argument Calendar

JANELLE QUINN,
individually, and on behalf of her
minor child D.J.Q. Jr.,

Plaintiff-Appellant,

versus

COLUMBIA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT,

Defendant-Appellee.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Southern District of Georgia
D.C. Docket No. 1:22-cv-00051-JRH-BKE

Before NEWSOM, ABUDU, and ANDERSON, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM:

Jannelle Quinn, on behalf of herself and her minor child, D.J.Q., appeals an order of the district court granting summary judgment to Columbia County School District (“the District”) in her suit alleging discrimination and retaliation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. After careful review, we affirm.

I. FACTUAL BACKGROUND & PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Quinn filed this suit in April 2022. In her complaint, she set out two claims: racial discrimination under Title VI (“Count One”), and retaliation under Title VI (“Count Two”). Importantly, Count One was brought on behalf of D.J.Q. and Count Two was brought on behalf of both Quinn and D.J.Q. After discovery, the District moved for summary judgment. Quinn opposed the District’s motion, and the parties submitted various evidence in support of their positions. The evidence the parties submitted, construed in the light most favorable to Quinn, *see Guevara v. Lafise Corp.*, 127 F.4th 824, 828 (11th Cir. 2025), showed the following.

Quinn’s child, D.J.Q., was enrolled at Parkway Elementary School (“Parkway”) for the 2020-21 school year. Columbia County manages and controls Parkway. Quinn was a Military and Family Life Counselor whom Magellan Federal (“Magellan”), a third party, assigned to work at two schools within Columbia County during the 2020-21 school year: Parkway and Greenbrier Elementary School. Quinn and D.J.Q. are both Black. In January 2021, during lunch, D.J.Q. sought the attention of Julie Owens, a White counselor who worked at Parkway, to request a different eating utensil. Instead of providing D.J.Q. with a new utensil, Owens took

24-11570

Opinion of the Court

3

the eating utensil D.J.Q. was holding, placed it in D.J.Q.'s mouth, removed it, and placed it back in D.J.Q.'s hand, telling him to "clean" the utensil he had. Owens then went back to her lunch duties and D.J.Q. continued to eat his lunch with the utensil he already had. Later that day, D.J.Q. told his mother that he had "the worst day ever" and described the incident. He also reported being uncomfortable and anxious to be around Owens going forward.

The next day, Quinn and her husband met with the principal of Parkway, Dr. Michael Doolittle, about the incident. During the meeting, neither Quinn nor her husband expressed any concern that Owens's behavior was discriminatory or racially motivated. Owens, however, apologized to D.J.Q. and Quinn and, in Dr. Doolittle's view, D.J.Q. accepted her apology. Still, Dr. Doolittle reported the incident to his supervisor, Dr. Deborah Williams. Dr. Doolittle, Dr. Williams, and the Superintendent of Columbia County Schools, Sandra Carraway, also reviewed video footage of the incident, and the District instituted efforts to prevent contact between Owens and D.J.Q.¹

¹ The extent of the District's efforts are somewhat disputed. Dr. Doolittle testified that Owens' lunch duty schedule was changed, D.J.Q. was allowed to leave class when Owens came into his class, and Owens was instructed to avoid D.J.Q. Quinn stated broadly that the District "didn't put anything in place to" address the incident or to keep Owens away from D.J.Q. However, she also conceded the District "move[d] forward" with suggestions she had made to prevent contact between Owens and D.J.Q., including: "[Owens] would not be in the lunchroom" and D.J.Q. "would be pulled from class when [Owens] was . . . in [D.J.Q.'s] classroom." In addition, the District sent Quinn

Quinn sent a letter to the Board of Education on January 24, 2021, in which she explained that the incident “was humiliating” and put D.J.Q. at risk due to the pandemic. She also stated that “[a]n apology” was “a far cry from enough.” She “call[ed] on the Columbia County Board of Education to . . . stand up for our children and strongly condemn this sort of behavior,” but she did not specify what action she wanted the Board to take.

Quinn, Dr. Doolittle, and Dr. Williams had another meeting in late February. At this meeting, Quinn reported, for the first time, that she believed that the incident was a racist act. Quinn had no knowledge of Owens ever taking action toward another person based on race or skin color and had heard no complaints from D.J.Q. about Owens before the January 2021 incident. However, Quinn alleged that Owens had made comments in the past suggesting racial animus, such as stating that there were “too many Mexicans in Walmart.” Dr. Doolittle reported that he had never before received a complaint of discrimination against Owens, and Quinn admitted that she had not witnessed any behavior between Owens and other students of any race.

Unsatisfied with the District’s response, Quinn made several additional reports about the incident, including to the Professional Standards Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice. In April 2021, Quinn filed a police report with the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office because she believed that Owens should be charged

a letter in February 2021 noting that, consistent with Quinn’s request, Owens had been instructed not to meet with D.J.Q. one-on-one.

24-11570

Opinion of the Court

5

with either assault or battery. The report to the Sheriff's Office made Owens "distraught" and she was sent home from the school. In April, Dr. Doolittle reported the ongoing situation to Dr. Williams's replacement, Associate Superintendent Michele Sherman. Quinn did not, however, report the incident to her employer, Magellan.

The parties dispute the degree of disruption caused by these reports and Quinn's other actions. Quinn admitted that she was angry and believed that the District should have fired Owens, but denied causing any disruption. Dr. Doolittle explained that he believed Quinn was "causing a disruption because she was everywhere that [D.J.Q.] would go." He believed that Quinn had stopped performing her job responsibilities, which were "to be with students and doing counseling sessions." Dr. Doolittle did not discuss these concerns with Quinn because "she was not [his] employee." However, Dr. Doolittle told Sherman that Quinn was "following her child's class around and observing things in the school outside of her duties as a counselor." Sherman also recalled that, in Dr. Doolittle's view, Quinn had expressed "that the only resolution that would work for [her] was for Ms. Owens to be fired."

The record suggests the District's decision to separate Owens and D.J.Q. was largely successful in that the two only interacted one other time during the rest of the school year. That one subsequent interaction is barely described in the record. In fact, Quinn expressly stated that she did not know "what the scenario was,"

and “all [she] kn[e]w” was that Owens “spoke” to D.J.Q. Dr. Doo-little explained that Owens’s schedule was changed to avoid interactions between her and D.J.Q. and that he instructed her to “have no contact” with D.J.Q. From his perspective, there was no need to discipline Owens because the District had been “making the [requested] changes and doing the things that were done” regarding Owens’s schedule. Williams also did not believe discipline was necessary and did not think that the incident was racially motivated. Quinn, on the other hand, wanted the District to terminate Owens or issue some other form of appropriate discipline. Near the end of the 2020-21 school year, the District granted Quinn’s request for D.J.Q. to change schools before the start of the 2021-22 school year.

As noted above, during this time Quinn had been splitting duties between the Greenbrier and Parkway elementary schools. Prompted by the ongoing situation, Sherman spoke with Beth Welch, another Magellan employee. The District had “no complaints regarding” the quality of Quinn’s work, but contacted Welch to help “calm the situation at the school” and to “have a conversation about what ha[d] transpired.” Magellan, apparently, did not know that Quinn worked at the same school as her son, until the District—through Sherman—contacted the company. Whereas the District had no prohibition on staff working where their children attend school, Magellan had such a policy and its policy was strict—Welch knew of no instance of a Magellan employee working at the same school as their child. Quinn argued that she was unaware of Magellan’s policy and that, in any event, there was

24-11570

Opinion of the Court

7

no conflict of interest because her objectivity was not compromised by working in the same school that D.J.Q. attended.

Welch testified during her deposition that Magellan would have never assigned Quinn to Parkway if it knew her son attended the school. Quinn disagreed with that contention, based on the fact that she was not asked where her son attended school when she started working for Magellan and that Magellan's conflict-of-interest policy does not explicitly address this situation. Yet, she conceded that she did not bring the fact that D.J.Q. attended Parkway to the attention of Magellan at the time she began working there. The record does not show any other incident where a counselor with Magellan worked in the same school as their child, and Welch testified that this was because of Magellan's existing policies. Quinn also explained that Magellan had told her that the District asked that she not return to Parkway.

The Department of Defense, a program covered under Title VI, directs the overall management of the Military and Family Life Counselor program. After speaking with Sherman, Magellan reported the situation to the manager of the Military and Family Life Counseling program, pursuant to Magellan's contract with the federal government. Welch recommended that Quinn complete the remainder of the school year at Greenbrier. The federal government investigated the matter and agreed with Welch's recommendation, and Quinn returned to work only at Greenbrier for the remainder of the year. During the course of the federal government's investigation—April 29, 2021, through May 3, 2021—

Magellan instructed Quinn not to return to Parkway. Magellan paid Quinn’s salary for the rest of the school year, including while the investigation was ongoing, and Quinn was not charged with time off. Importantly, it was Magellan’s role—not the District’s—to pay and supervise Quinn, and to assign her to individual schools. In fact, the District did not have a contractual relationship with Magellan. Quinn continued working for Magellan and was assigned to a different school district during the following 2021-22 school year. Quinn filed this suit near the end of the 2021-22 school year.

The district court ultimately granted the District’s motion for summary judgment as to both of Quinn’s Title VI claims. As to the discrimination claim she brought on behalf of D.J.Q., the court reasoned that there was no direct or circumstantial evidence showing that Owen’s actions were discriminatory, or that the District’s response to the incident constituted deliberate indifference. Finally, relying on *Consolidated Rail Corp. v. Darrone*, 465 U.S. 624, 632 n.13 (1984), the court ruled that Quinn and D.J.Q.’s Title VI retaliation claims failed as a matter of law because they could not show that the primary objective of any Federal financial assistance received by the District was to provide employment.² Quinn timely appealed.

² The district court’s order stated that Quinn and D.J.Q. lacked “standing” to bring Title VI retaliation claims. Understandably, therefore, Quinn focuses her brief on whether she has “standing” to bring these claims. However, “the ‘standing’ at issue here is not the standing label given to the [Article III] subject-matter-jurisdictional doctrine of justiciability.” *Physicians Multispecialty Grp. v. Health Care Plan of Horton Homes, Inc.*, 371 F.3d 1291, 1293 (11th Cir.

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

“We review the district court’s grant of summary judgment *de novo*, construing all facts and drawing all reasonable inferences in favor of the non-moving party.” *Guevara*, 127 F.4th at 828. “Summary judgment is appropriate when no genuine dispute of material exists and a party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.” *Id.* at 828–29. “A dispute of fact is genuine if a reasonable jury could return a verdict for the non-moving party.” *Id.* at 829. “The mere existence of a scintilla of evidence in support of the plaintiff’s position will be insufficient; there must be evidence on which the jury could reasonably find for the plaintiff.” *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 252 (1986). In addition, a “district court’s decision may be affirmed if the result is correct, even if the court relied upon an incorrect ground or gave a wrong reason.” *Alvarez v. Royal Atl. Devs., Inc.*, 610 F.3d 1253, 1264 (11th Cir. 2010).

III. DISCUSSION

On appeal, Quinn argues that the district court failed to draw all reasonable inferences in her favor, which is required at summary judgment. Second, she contends that the district court failed to review her discrimination claim under the proper

2004). Instead, the question the district court answered was “whether the statute ‘grants [Quinn] the cause of action that [s]he asserts.’” *Kroma Makeup EU, LLC v. Boldface Licensing + Branding, Inc.*, 920 F.3d 704, 708 (11th Cir. 2019) (quoting *Bank of Am. Corp. v. City of Miami*, 581 U.S. 189, 196–97 (2017)). This is not a jurisdictional inquiry, but rather a straightforward question of whether she presented a viable claim under Title VI. *See id.* (citing *Lexmark Int’l, Inc. v. Static Control Components, Inc.*, 572 U.S. 118, 128–29 & n.4 (2014)).

deliberate indifference standard. Third, she argues that the district court erred in its assessment of her Title VI retaliation claims. For the reasons that follow, we disagree with each of her arguments.

We address the two types of claims—discrimination and retaliation—separately. In doing so, we reject Quinn’s argument that the district court applied the wrong standard for summary judgment. To the contrary, the district court recited the correct standard for summary judgment and laid out the facts, both those which were undisputed and those which were disputed. The factual disputes Quinn identifies on appeal were either identified by the district court and taken in the light most favorable to Quinn, to no avail, or not genuine and material disputes—that is, none of the disputes she presses on appeal could lead a jury to “return a verdict for” her, “the non-moving party.” *Guevara*, 127 F.4th at 829. In any event, we are reviewing the summary judgment record *de novo* and we agree with the district court’s ultimate ruling based on our review, for the reasons that follow. *Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm’n v. STME, LLC*, 938 F.3d 1305, 1322–23 (11th Cir. 2019) (explaining that we need not reverse harmless errors). We also note, as to both of her claims, Quinn does not argue that the record shows direct evidence of discrimination or retaliation, *see, e.g., Buckley v. Hospital Corp. of America*, 758 F.2d 1525, 1259–30 (11th Cir. 1985) (finding direct evidence of discrimination and distinguishing between direct and circumstantial evidence cases), so we address only the frameworks applicable to circumstantial evidence claims.

A. The District Court Properly Granted Summary Judgment on Quinn’s Discrimination Claim.

As to Quinn’s argument about her discrimination claim brought on behalf of D.J.Q.—that the district court applied the wrong framework—the district court considered the claim under both a *McDonnell Douglas* framework and a deliberate indifference standard. See *Quinn v. Columbia Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, No. 1:22-cv-51, 2024 WL 2265764, at *5–8 (S.D. Ga. Mar. 12, 2024); see also *McDonnell Douglas Corp. v. Green*, 411 U.S. 792 (1973). In doing so, the district court noted that there was some tension in our caselaw on which test was the most appropriate, but that, either way, the District’s motion for summary judgment was due to be granted. Accordingly, Quinn is incorrect to assert that the district court applied the wrong framework, it applied each of the circumstantial evidence frameworks advanced by the parties and concluded they each justified summary judgment. See generally *Tynes v. Fla. Dep’t of Juv. Just.*, 88 F.4th 939, 944 (11th Cir. 2023) (Title VII context) (“*McDonnell Douglas*, in short, is an evidentiary tool that functions as a ‘procedural device, designed only to establish an order of proof and production.’” (quoting *St. Mary’s Honor Ctr. v. Hicks*, 509 U.S. 502, 521 (1993))); *id.* at 947 (explaining a court’s ultimate “analysis turns on the substantive claims and evidence in the case, not the evidentiary framework”); *id.* at 954 (Newsom, J., concurring) (explaining that “the decisive question” is whether “the summary-judgment record reveal[s] a genuine dispute of material fact about whether an employer discriminated against its employee because of a protected characteristic” (quotation and citation omitted)).

Having reviewed the record, we also agree with the district court’s application of these frameworks: the District was entitled to summary judgment on Quinn’s discrimination claim under any circumstantial evidence framework.³

As to the *McDonnell Douglas* framework, the district court correctly concluded that Quinn could not establish a prima facie case of discrimination because she presented no evidence of a similarly situated comparator. We have explained that “a plaintiff proceeding under *McDonnell Douglas* must show that she and her comparators are similarly situated in all material respects.” *Lewis v. City of Union City*, 918 F.3d 1213, 1226 (11th Cir. 2019) (*en banc*). The district court noted that the “only comparator” that Quinn had identified was Owens, who Quinn compared to herself. Yet, as noted at the outset, this discrimination claim was brought on behalf of D.J.Q., and there is no evidence of Owens (or other District employees) interacting with a student of a different race—or a student of the same race—under similar circumstances. Accordingly, the district court properly granted the District summary judgment under the *McDonnell Douglas* framework.

Generally, to show deliberate indifference, a plaintiff must show that a state actor “kn[e]w of and disregard[ed] an excessive—

³ For this reason, we need not answer the question of which evidentiary framework is the best fit for a Title VI discrimination claim, as it does not affect the outcome here. See *STME*, 938 F.3d at 1322–23; *INS v. Bagamasbad*, 429 U.S. 24, 25–26 (1976) (“As a general rule courts . . . are not required to make findings on issues the decision of which is unnecessary to the results they reach.”).

that is, an extremely great—risk to the victim’s health and safety.” *L.S. ex rel. Hernandez v. Peterson*, 982 F.3d 1323, 1330 (11th Cir. 2020) (quoting *Waddell v. Hemerson*, 329 F.3d 1300, 1306 (11th Cir. 2003)). “A school district is not deliberately indifferent simply because the measures it takes are ultimately ineffective in stopping” discriminatory conduct. *Sauls v. Pierce Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 399 F.3d 1279, 1285 (11th Cir. 2005); *see also Gebser v. Lago Vista Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 524 U.S. 274, 290 (1998) (explaining that, in the Title IX context, deliberate indifference is shown by conduct that amounts to “an official decision by the [defendant] not to remedy the violation”). Yet, here, the record shows District’s measures were somewhat effective; Owens was asked to apologize and she and D.J.Q. were separated and were able to complete the school year without any further reported incident. While Quinn argues that the initial lunchroom incident had a significant effect on D.J.Q., that does not show that the District’s response to that incident was necessarily inadequate; a plaintiff can be significantly traumatized by an incident that a defendant appropriately redresses. Quinn argues the district court failed to recognize that the District’s response to the lunchroom incident was prompted by her own measures and that Owens and D.J.Q. interacted after the incident. However, the question for deliberate indifference is whether the District’s response was inadequate, not whether it was prompted by the District alone. For these reasons, the record does not show any material question of fact as to whether the District’s response was so lacking so as to constitute “disregard” of D.J.Q.’s treatment by Owens. *Sauls*, 399 F.3d at 1285; *Geber*, 524 U.S. at 290.

The district court did not separately analyze whether Quinn had shown a convincing mosaic of discrimination, which is yet another approach for assessing a discrimination case based on circumstantial evidence at summary judgment. *McCreight v. AuburnBank*, 117 F.4th 1322, 1335 (11th Cir. 2024) (“[T]he *McDonnell Douglas* framework and the convincing mosaic approach are two paths to the same destination—the ordinary summary judgment standard.”). Yet, many of the same facts highlighted above also show that no convincing mosaic of discrimination is present here. Cf. *Berry v. Crestwood Healthcare LP*, 84 F.4th 1300, 1314–17 (11th Cir. 2023) (Abudu, J., concurring) (noting overlap between the *McDonnell Douglas* framework and convincing mosaic approach in practice). The record evidence about D.J.Q. specifically shows essentially two facts that might bear on a convincing mosaic approach: (i) Owens’s conduct toward D.J.Q. in January 2021; and (ii) Owens’s comments, on other unspecified occasions, that suggested racial animus, including about there being “too many Mexicans in Walmart.” While we agree with Quinn that Owens’s conduct in January 2021 was troubling, there is insufficient record evidence suggesting that her treatment of D.J.Q. was based on his race. The only support for Quinn’s race-based claim is her own testimony, over a month after the incident, that she believed the incident was racially motivated. Yet, this assertion, without more, does not create a genuine dispute as to any alleged bias and, therefore, no reasonable jury could find in Quinn’s favor on this claim. *Guevara*, 127 F.4th at 829; *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 252. Therefore, we affirm

the grant of summary judgment to the District on Quinn’s Title VI discrimination claim.

B. The District was Entitled to Summary Judgment on Quinn’s Retaliation Claims.

We turn next to the two retaliation claims. Quinn’s retaliation claim on her own behalf raises a seemingly novel issue regarding the scope of Title VI.⁴ Yet, we need not resolve that question because, even assuming that Quinn has such a cause of action under Title VI, summary judgment for the District was appropriate. In short, the record fails to show any genuine dispute of material fact as to whether the District retaliated against her.

⁴ The parties debate whether the district court was correct in finding that Quinn lacked a cause of action to bring a Title VI retaliation claim. On the one hand, “employees of federally funded educational institutions” have such a cause of action in the Title IX context. *Lowrey v. Tex. A & M Univ. Sys.*, 117 F.3d 242, 248 (5th Cir. 1997); *Jackson v. Birmingham Bd. of Educ.*, 544 U.S. 167, 171 (2005). On the other hand, the District highlights many cases where district courts have held that parents may not assert Title VI claims on their own behalf. See, e.g., *Jackson v. Katy Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 951 F. Supp. 1293, 1298 (S.D. Tex. 1996); *I.G. ex rel. Grunspan v. Jefferson Cnty. Sch. Dist. ex rel Bd. of Educ. for Jefferson Cnty. Sch. Dist.*, 452 F. Supp. 3d 989, 998 (D. Colo. 2020); *Murray v. Lakeland Cent. Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, No. 16-cv-6795, 2017 WL 4286658, at *8 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 26, 2017); *R.W. ex rel. Williams v. Del. Dep’t of Educ.*, No. 05-662, 2008 WL 4330461 (D. Del. Sept. 22, 2008), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2008 WL 4547192 (D. Del. Oct. 9, 2008). None of these cases cited by the parties address this situation, which falls between the two types of cases cited: Quinn was not an employee, but was also not merely a parent—she was a contractor working with the District. Still, because the retaliation claims fail even if Quinn had a cause of action, we bypass this question and affirm on other grounds. *Alvarez*, 610 F.3d at 1264.

First, Quinn’s retaliation claim suffers from a causation problem—her employer was Magellan, not the District, and none of her supervisors at Magellan are alleged to have acted retaliatorily. Thus, even if we were to accept Quinn’s contention that the District acted with a retaliatory intent in contacting Magellan to help “calm the situation,” it was Magellan who made the decision to remove Quinn from Parkway based on a policy that the District was unaware of. To hold the District responsible for Magellan’s decision, Quinn must show that the District “was the driving force behind” the retaliation she suffered, through what we have called a “cat’s paw argument.” *Harris v. Public Tr. of Miami-Dade Cnty.*, 82 F.4th 1296, 1301 (11th Cir. 2023). Yet the theory fails on these facts. Generally a cat’s paw theory “requires evidence that the ultimate (and manipulated) decisionmaker—the puppet—‘followed the biased recommendation’ of another—the puppeteer—‘without independently investigating the’” situation. *Id.* at 1301 (quoting *Stimpson v. City of Tuscaloosa*, 186 F.3d 1328, 1332 (11th Cir. 1999)). Here the opposite is true: the District informed Magellan of the situation, Magellan realized that a policy was violated and referred the incident to the federal government, who investigated the situation and agreed with Magellan’s recommendation that Quinn be transferred. Quinn has not presented evidence suggesting that either Magellan or the federal government undertook these investigations in a manner that was controlled, or “puppet[ed],” by the District. *Id.* Nor is there any evidence, especially considering the lack of contractual relationship between the District and Magellan, that the District did (or could) pressure Magellan. In fact, it is

undisputed that the District was unaware of Magellan’s policies which prevented Quinn from working at the same school that her son attended.

Second, there is insufficient record evidence suggesting that Magellan’s proffered reason for Quinn’s transfer—Magellan’s preexisting policy forbidding Magellan employees from working at schools their children attend—was pretext for retaliation. *See id.* at 1305 (“If[a] plaintiff establishes a prima facie case of retaliation, and the employer proffers a legitimate, nondiscriminatory reason for its actions, then the plaintiff must show that the employer’s stated reason is pretextual.”). “In assessing pretext, [we] ‘must evaluate whether the plaintiff has demonstrated such weaknesses, implausibilities, inconsistencies, incoherencies, or contradictions in the employer’s proffered legitimate reasons for its action that a reasonable factfinder could find them unworthy of credence.’” *Id.* (quoting *Combs v. Planation Patterns*, 106 F.3d 1519, 1538 (11th Cir. 1997)). Quinn’s argument on this point is that Magellan had not informed her about its policy and that the policy was misplaced because she could remain objective while working at the same school as her son.⁵ As to the latter point, the wisdom of Magellan’s policy is not

⁵ Quinn suggests, at points in her deposition, that perhaps Magellan’s policy was created after the January 2021 incident, or in response to it. However, she also explained that she could not “speak [as to when] Magellan [could] say that they formulated a rule.” Thus, Quinn’s testimony, which goes to what she believed about the policy’s genesis, does not genuinely conflict with Welch’s testimony, which unequivocally stated that the policy existed before the incident. *See Harris*, 82 F.4th at 1301. Moreover, because Quinn admitted that

before us; “[w]e do not sit as a super-personnel department and it is not our role to second-guess the wisdom of an employer’s business decisions—indeed the wisdom of them is irrelevant—as long as those decisions were not made with a [retaliatory] motive.” *Jimenez v. U.S. Att’y Gen.*, 146 F.4th 972, 997 (11th Cir. 2025) (quoting *Alvarez*, 610 F.3d at 1266). As to the former point, there is no evidence that Magellan was applying this policy in a retaliatory manner: Magellan’s employee testified that the policy existed before the decision in this case and there is no evidence any other Magellan counselors were in the same or similar situation as Quinn. Thus, because the policy represents a legitimate non-retaliatory reason for Quinn’s transfer, the sole fact that Magellan failed to inform Quinn of it before the facts of this case, while regrettable, does not suggest pretext. *Harris*, 82 F.4th at 1205.

Quinn’s retaliation claim brought on behalf of D.J.Q. fails for a different reason: Quinn has not identified any retaliatory adverse action that D.J.Q.—as opposed to Quinn—faced. See *Johnson v. Miami-Dade Cnty.*, 948 F.3d 1318, 1325 (11th Cir. 2020) (“To establish a prima facie case of retaliation, a plaintiff must show . . . that he suffered an adverse . . . action . . .”). While D.J.Q. was undoubtedly the subject of the January 2021 incident, which caused him harm and embarrassment, the record does not show he was retaliated against for that incident or for reporting it. In other words, as

she was unaware of this policy, her testimony on when it might have been developed is speculation. *Id.*

the district court found, Quinn’s retaliation claim was based on the District’s treatment of Quinn, not of D.J.Q.

Finally, neither retaliation claim presents a convincing mosaic of retaliation. *See McCreight*, 117 F.4th at 1335. Again, Quinn “failed to provide sufficient evidence for a reasonable juror to infer that [retaliation] was the reason for her” transfer, *id.* at 1339, because, among other things, the facts show independent investigations by both the federal government and Magellan—so “no evidence of a failure to investigate” which might support a cat’s paw theory, *Harris*, 82 F.4th at 1301—a non-retaliatory reason for Quinn’s transfer, and a lack of any contractual agreement between Magellan and the District. Accordingly, while there are some factual disputes, Quinn has not shown that these disputes, even when taken in the light most favorable to her, would allow a “jury [to] reasonably find for” her. *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 252.

IV. CONCLUSION

The facts of this case are concerning, as a parent like Quinn should not have to worry that their child will face a physical altercation with a school employee while at school. However, there is no genuine dispute of fact precluding summary judgment on the claims Quinn brought against the District; the record does not suggest discrimination against D.J.Q., nor retaliation against either Quinn or D.J.Q. The record instead shows that the District attempted to resolve the concerns Quinn raised and appears to have

20

Opinion of the Court

24-11570

been somewhat successful. For the reasons we have explained, we affirm the district court's judgment.

AFFIRMED.