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NEWS RELEASE

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Charter School Founder, Son Plead Guilty to Misappropriating Public Funds

The founder and director of a South Los Angeles charter school and her son pleaded guilty today to funneling about \$200,000 to a company that submitted fake invoices for a shell company, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Kendra Uzoma Okonkwo (dob 10/22/65) and Jason Chiazom Okonkwo (dob 9/7/87) entered their plea to one count each of misappropriation of public funds.

The elder Okonkwo was immediately sentenced to formal probation for five years and ordered to perform 220 hours of community service. Her son was placed on formal probation for three years and ordered to perform 180 of community service.

A restitution hearing is set for Dec. 6 in Department 134 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center.

Deputy District Attorney Stefan Mrakich of the Public Integrity Division is prosecuting the case.

The elder Okonkwo founded Wisdom Academy for Young Scientists more than a decade ago. She no longer worked at the charter school when it was determined she had a conflict of interest.

Between 2012 and 2014, about \$200,000 was transferred from the school to a business run by Kendra Okonkwo. Jason Okonkwo approved fake invoices for purported school supplies and food from the shell company, the prosecutor said.

The money was deposited into the company's account and then transferred into Kendra Okonkwo's personal bank account, the prosecutor added.

Case BA457205 was investigated by the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.