

Hilton schools to be sued for alleged abuse

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Suspended Hilton school district principal Kirk Ashton had an elementary student in his office during lunch periods, then would have the boy sit on his lap while he caressed and fondled him, allege legal papers targeting the school district.

This happened between 2017 and this year, and each year a different teacher at Northwood Elementary School, where Ashton was principal, sent the child to the principal’s office, the legal papers allege.

The family is filing a notice of an intent to sue the district, Ashton, and the superintendent; the notice is a precursor to a lawsuit. The boy is identified only by his initials in the legal action, called a “notice of claim,” but the *Democrat and Chronicle* is not using the initials to protect the youth’s identity.

Ashton, 51, is criminally accused of molesting 11 boys from 2017 until this year. The boys were between the ages of 8 and 12, according to prosecutors.

Jeffrey Wicks, the attorney for the family that is bringing the notice of claim against the district, declined to comment. Hilton school district officials said Tuesday they had yet to receive the papers and would not comment on possible or pending litigation.

The notice alleges that, for four years, the boy was called to to the front of the class by the teacher and told that he was to go to the principal’s office for lunch to work and meet with Ashton. Ashton allegedly would then have the boy sit on his lap and fondle him. The meetings with Ashton began when the boy was in the second grade in 2017, the notice alleges.

Ashton would caress the boy’s back, shoulders, legs, and buttocks and touch him “in an area close to his privates,” the notice alleges.

This happened at least five times a year, the notice alleges.

The notice charges that the school district failed to train and supervise its staff. The boy’s grades suffered and he struggled with emotional stress and trauma, the notice alleges.

The notice does not state whether the boy is one of the 11 victims in the current indictment against Ashton, who is now jailed on \$250,000 cash bail and awaiting trial. Prosecutors have said the investigation is continuing and there could be future indictments with more alleged victims.

In a recent interview with the *Democrat and Chronicle*, Hilton District Superintendent Casey Kosiorek said the district is reviewing its policies in the aftermath of the arrest of Ashton, who was principal at the school since 2004. Steps are being taken, such as requiring administrators keep doors open if meeting with students.

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