

Hilton district faces suits over abuse allegations

3 legal actions pending against school principal

Gary Craig

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

A lawsuit alleges that former Northwood Elementary School principal Kirk Ashton sexually abused a boy on school grounds in the 2013-2014 school year — allegations that predate the current criminal charges of abuse that Ashton faces. Ashton is now jailed, facing charges of sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of children. He allegedly abused 11 boys between the ages of 8 and 12, all on school grounds over the last four years.

A lawsuit filed June 2, however, alleges that Ashton abused a fourth grader in the 2013-14 school year and continued with the abuse until the boy went to middle school, extending the period over which the abuse at Northwood is alleged to have occurred.

The lawsuit, filed in state Supreme Court, is now one of at least three pending legal actions against Ashton, the school district and its top officials. Another lawsuit was filed federally Friday, and there is also a pending notice of an intent to sue — and the attorney in that action says a lawsuit will be forthcoming.

The state Supreme Court lawsuit alleges that in some instances Ashton abused the boy when he was in an emotionally fragile state.

“There were two different incidents when he was in the office crying and he was taken advantage of in a very vulnerable state and cried throughout the entire event,” said local attorney Kelly Wolford, who is representing the boy, who is now 16, and his parents.

The investigation into allegations of abuse by Ashton is continuing, and more criminal allegations could be forthcoming. He is now being held in the Monroe County jail, and has pleaded not guilty.

the lawsuit alleges.

The abuse happened at least five times a year, the lawsuit alleges. Wicks said he is aware of further grand jury proceedings with the case against Ashton, but declined to comment further.

Local attorney Langston McFadden also has filed a “notice of claim” — a notice of plans to sue — and said a lawsuit will be forthcoming. All of the legal actions maintain that Ashton would invite individual boys to his office, and fondle and caress them there. Ashton would allegedly have the boys sit on his lap in the office.

“Principal Ashton would select boys ... as a kind of reward for being a good student or a good individual and you’d get to hang out with the principal or you’d get to eat lunch with the principal,” McFadden said.

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 already being taken, such as requirements that administrators keep doors open if meeting with students.



Ashton

“My client is cooperating with law enforcement,” Wolford said, but said she could not discuss specifics because of the ongoing criminal investigation.

School district officials were not immediately available for comment and have declined to comment in the past about pending legal actions, including those involving Ashton.

On Friday attorney Jeffrey Wicks filed a federal civil rights lawsuit on behalf of a boy who alleges he was sexually abused by Ashton at the school from 2017 until this year. The boy was in the second grade when the abuse began,



Hilton School Superintendent Casey Kosiorek talks about the arrest of Northwood Elementary School Principal Kirk Ashton. Ashton faces charges of sexual abuse. JAMIE GERMANO/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

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