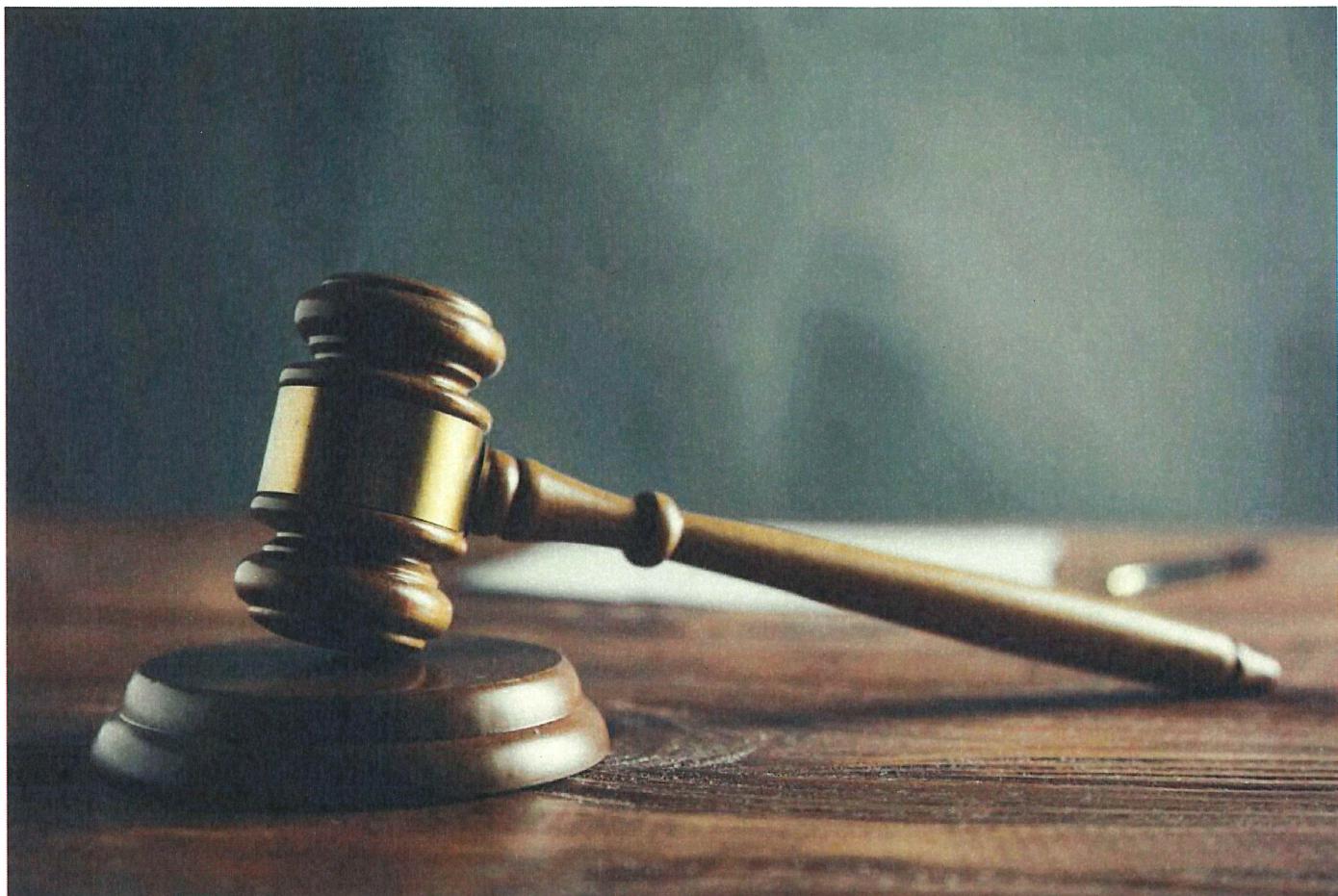


Plymouth, Crime

Judge Rejects Bid to End Probation Early for Ex-Plymouth Teacher

— Daniel Tepfer, 1.21.2026



NEW BRITAIN — Two Plymouth families whose daughters were among a dozen children sexually abused by their fourth-grade teacher said they were shocked to learn that the teacher, who avoided prison time with a plea bargain, was now asking a judge to terminate his probation.

The families appeared before state Superior Court Judge Julia DiCocco Dewey on Tuesday to object to the request by James Eschert.

While Eschert's lawyer argued that Eschert was no longer a danger to the community, the judge denied the request to end his five-year probation early.

"We are very disappointed that Mr. Eschert would even think of applying for early termination of his probation," the family's attorney Douglas Mahoney, of Robinson Mahoney in Fairfield, said. "We are grateful that the court denied it. Mr. Eschert abused so many girls in the Plymouth school system."

Eschert was not in the courtroom during the brief hearing and could not be reached for comment.

Eschert, a teacher in the Plymouth school system for 23 years, was accused of fondling and acting "inappropriately" with 13 female students from 2017 to 2021.

Arrested and charged in January 2022 with multiple counts of risk of injury to a minor and fourth-degree sexual assault, Eschert later agreed to a plea bargain in which he pleaded guilty to one count of risk of injury to a child and was given a suspended 10-year sentence with five years probation.

Despite protests from the victims, Eschert was also not required to register as a convicted sex offender.

Four employees of the school system, including school principal Chrystal Collins, were arrested and charged with failing to report the abuse. They were subsequently granted accelerated rehabilitation, a pretrial diversionary program and the charges against them were later dismissed.

According to Eschert's arrest warrant affidavit, several parents and former female students complained to administrators for years about inappropriate behavior by Eschert, which included pulling fourth-graders to sit on his lap, rubbing their shoulders to see whether they were wearing bras and taking pictures up their skirts. However, the affidavit states that administrators said the incidents were misunderstandings or told parents the situation would be handled.

More than a dozen former female students spoke to police, detailing similar incidents of misconduct, according to the warrant affidavit.

“There wasn’t a day when there wasn’t a girl on his lap,” one girl told police, the affidavit states.

In December, the town of Plymouth agreed to settle a lawsuit involving one of Eschert’s former students. Details of the settlement were not released.

According to court documents, during the 2017-18 school year, the girl was assigned to Eschert’s fourth-grade class. While the girl was in Eschert’s class, Eschert would induce her to sit on his lap “every day,” sometimes with another girl, while he would shake his foot and wrap his hand around the girl’s waist.

While other kids were playing outside during recess, the plaintiff and her female friends would usually stay back in Eschert’s classroom with him, documents state. When this happened, Eschert would ask the girl to engage in gymnastics and to flex her arm muscles for him so that he could feel them.

Court documents state that Eschert also took pictures of the girl and other girls in his class in various poses.

“The plaintiff continues to endure ongoing effects and challenges stemming from Eschert’s improper contact and abusive behavior. The plaintiff suffers from “nightmares,” feels fearful and has “trust issues especially with male teachers,” the lawsuit states.

In September 2021, according to court documents, another student came forward alleging a similar course of misconduct by Eschert, including that he had induced her to sit on his lap and made her “feel uncomfortable in a sexual way” while she was in his fourth-grade class.

Superintendent of Schools Brian Falcone reported the allegations to the state Department of Children and Families, which substantiated the allegations of abuse and neglect from multiple students of Eschert. Eschert then resigned.

Court documents state that the school’s principal, Collins, had been informed about Eschert’s inappropriate behavior toward young female students but never did anything about it.

Plymouth school officials did not return calls and emails for comment on the case.

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