IN THE NEWS: Wednesday, June 12, 2002

Assistant Claims Teacher Abused Students

By TRACY YOSHIDA

East Maine Elementary School Dist. 63 Special Education teacher Cheryl Mix was escorted out of Washington School on Wednesday, June 5 after an assistant teacher allegedly said Mix was physically abusive to two children on three separate occasions.

Michelle Kane is the mother of one of the children that the assistant said Mix abused and she stands firmly behind Mix. East Maine School Dist. 63 recently decided not to re-employ Mix and several parents have expressed their anger and concern about that decision.

"I don't believe it for one second," said Kane, who is a room mother and also a good friend of Mix. She describes Mix as "firm," but someone who would never lay her hand on a child in a negative manner. Kane said her son told her that Mix never hurt him. According to Kane, being called into the principal's office and accused of physical abuse was a total surprise to Mix.

Kane said the assistant claims Mix poked her son in the head and said "How does that feel?"

"I know for a fact she wouldn't do that," said Kane.

Kane said the assistant claimed Mix abused her son on a playground approximately one month ago. Kane wonders why it took a month for the district to take action if they believed she was a danger to the children. The assistant allegedly claims Mix pushed the side of the other child's head on two separate occasions.

"Everything's really suspicious," said Kane, about the claim. "It's plain harassment."

Kane also added that both her son and the other child the assistant claimed she abused are speech delayed, making it more difficult for them to speak for themselves. Kane said her son was very upset that Mix was removed from the school and he did not want to go to school without Mix. Kane has pulled her son out of school and she said the principal

wrongfully thinks it's because he was "traumatized" as a result of Mix's alleged actions.

"I think it's awfully strange that all these accusations come after the non-reemployment," said President of Parent to Parent For Special Students Eva Roberts. "I don't believe she did it."

Roberts believes the district has called the Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) about Mix.

The Journal contacted the assistant who allegedly made the accusation on Monday, June 10.

"I'm in the middle of class and I don't have any comment," she said.

East Maine School Dist. 63 Director of Personnel Michael Johann told the Journal on Monday, June 10 that he could not comment on the situation.

The Journal also attempted to contact Dist. 63 Supt. Kathleen Williams and Washington School Principal Karen Beck, but did not receive a return phone call from either of them.