

# North County teacher charged with abusing student, hiring hitman rejects plea deal

From Elementary school teacher to inmate. After Deonte Taylor was arrested for molesting a student, police say he tried to hire a hitman to kill his victim



ST. LOUIS COUNTY, Mo. — In court Monday, Deonte Taylor decided to take his chances with a jury, turning down a 20 year plea deal from St. Louis county prosecutors.

Without that deal Taylor faces at least 35 years behind bars for charges of sodomy, conspiracy to commit murder, witness tampering and exposing someone to HIV.

Taylor was largely silent, and a bandage and bruises could be seen on his forehead. According to Taylor's attorney, Venus Harry, Taylor believes he is innocent and wants a trial by jury.

## Police ignore child abuse allegation

In 2015, Taylor was a teachers aid in the Hazelwood school district.

Prosecutors say he took a 7 year old student out of class at Lusher Elementary and molested him.

The second-grader reported it and police collected some evidence but an I-Team investigation revealed that's where the police involvement ended.

When questioned about why the case was not investigated, Former Florissant Police Chief Tim Lowery admitted, "We made a mistake, we made a huge mistake."

By 2018, Taylor was teaching at Walnut Grove Elementary in the Ferguson-Florissant school district.

Around that time, the child he was accused of abusing in 2015 reported it to a new teacher.

That's when Florissant police finally arrested Taylor, matching his DNA to what was recovered from the child three years earlier. Taylor was charged with sodomy.

# Schwent steps down from director post at Edwardsville Children's Museum

Children's museum plans farewell event



EDWARDSVILLE — Dr. Abby Schwent has decided to step down as executive director of the Edwardsville Children's Museum.

A longtime educator, Schwent will take the time to home school her three sons — 9-year-old Jack and 7-year-old twins Henry and Oliver — after three years in the position.

“We are going to miss her,” said Kristen Fries, a board member of the Edwardsville Children's Museum. “Through her leadership, Abby reconstructed the children's museum. She enlisted sponsorship of all the exhibits to make the museum financially viable. It has been transformative.”

Although she is leaving her daily role as executive director, Schwent will remain with the museum as a consultant.

Schwent was previously an art teacher in the Hazelwood School District for five years before she resigned to have her children. Prior to her position as executive direction, she was education director for six years at the museum.

She received three undergraduate degrees in art, art history and art education from the University of Missouri St. Louis. Her master's degree is in elementary education from the University of Missouri St. Louis and her doctorate degree in education leadership from St. Louis University.



# Back-to-School Drive-Thru Fairs - Armstrong Elementary

Saturday, August 14 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

This event will be held in all three corridors simultaneously: Hazelwood Central High School, Hazelwood East High School, and Hazelwood West High School.

Hazelwood School District will host its annual Back-2-School Drive-Thru Fairs at all three high schools on August 14. The goal is to safely provide students with resources for the upcoming school year and celebrate our wonderful district. FREE backpacks and school supplies will be provided on a first come first serve basis until supplies are gone. In addition to that, performances and familiar faces will be featured along the drive-thru routes. We want to thank our local fire and police departments and community partners for providing backpacks and school supplies for the fairs.