

## **Fired Middle School Teacher Files Lawsuit; Legal Claim Accuses District Officials Of Racism, Harassment**

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Former Congress Middle School math teacher Wayde King is suing Palm Beach County school officials, claiming he was harassed, held back and fired because he is black.

"They trumped up some stuff -- in my opinion -- they suspended him and then took away his teaching job and then terminated him," said King's attorney, Bill Julien.

King is asking for compensation for loss of income, violation of civil rights and emotional distress, though he doesn't say in the suit how much money he thinks he deserves. That's up to a jury, Julien said. On Tuesday, the school district hadn't received a copy of the lawsuit, spokesman Nat Harrington said.

According to the suit, which was filed Friday, King began complaining in 2001 that black students and teachers were treated unfairly at the Boynton Beach school. Black students were more likely to be disciplined, and black teachers didn't get the good assignments, the suit says.

King spearheaded an effort in the black community to oust Principal Carol Blacharski. Instead of adequately addressing his concerns, the suit says, school district officials targeted King as a troublemaker, suspended him and then fired him. The school district, Blacharski, Superintendent Art Johnson, area Superintendent Elizabeth Decker and Paul LeChance, who supervises school personnel investigations, are named as defendants.

King was suspended and sent home in December 2002 after Blacharski accused him of insubordination, unprofessional conduct and creating a hostile work environment. He later was fired for abandoning his job because school district officials said they couldn't reach him during their investigation.

After King's suspension, another teacher, Anthony Ascì, was suspended for sending an e-mail titled "Top Eleven Things I Will Miss About `Mista Kang," which referred to King as "Ghetto Boy." Ascì was later fired because of the e-mail.

"The e-mails were distributed amongst at least 16 teachers," Julien said. "There was this racial undercurrent permeating the school."

Blacharski was reprimanded after a school district investigation concluded she hadn't responded properly to Ascì's e-mails. She later transferred to Loggers Run Middle School west of Boca Raton. She could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

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