

Complaint filed against ZCES first-grade teacher

By Kathryn Reed

An alleged whack of a first-grader's knuckles that left a mark sparked an investigation into the behavior of a teacher at Zephyr Cove Elementary School.

"I'm not interested in speaking to you about this. The matter has been handled," teacher Brenda Capshaw told *Lake Tahoe News* before abruptly hanging up.

Amber Prevost, the mom of the 6-year-old, had plenty to say. She is still furious with how things were handled at the local level and district office.

It was the child's word against his teacher's because there were no witnesses.

A second incident occurred that same week in September, Prevost said. Her son asked to use the restroom and was denied to the point he almost wet his pants. This had her livid. A formal complaint was filed.

The district conducted an investigation. And while the conclusion was the knuckle incident did not take place, safety plans for the child are now in effect.

"They said there was no wrong-doing from the teacher. They dismissed it all," Prevost told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This isn't the only time a spotlight has been shined on Capshaw. Other parents and students have had run-ins with her through the years. More than one parent even wrote a letter to the board of education in response to the Prevost incident to express their experiences and concerns.

Principal Nancy Cauley and Superintendent Teri White said because it is a personnel issue they cannot talk about what may have happened, the outcome of the investigation, or any changes that were a result of this case.

What Prevost wanted as a solution was to move her son into the other first-grade class. She was told by Cauley that couldn't happen because other parents would want to do the same thing.

The child told his parents the pencil whack was because he didn't get into line immediately with the other kids. He was at his desk playing with the pencil and Capshaw reportedly took it and hit him with it.

The youngster repeated this story multiple times to authorities.

"What I told him is he is standing up to a bully," Prevost said.

The child was scared to go back to school and was crying about the thought of it. His parents kept him out for two weeks. Prevost said the superintendent sent a letter threatening to take action related to truancy laws.

This has been the second week he has returned to school. Things are better in spite of being in the same class.

To make him feel safe he is allowed to leave the classroom at any time without permission. He has an adult staff member who is his "safe" point of contact if he needs to talk to someone.

"He said ever since the teacher had to sign a paper she has been nice," Prevost said, adding that the yelling in class has subsided as well.

So, while the district says nothing happened, it did implement some rudimentary safeguards.