

California 'Teacher of the Year' Sentenced to 30 Years for Student Abuse

Jacqueline Ma, a former San Diego County "Teacher of the Year," received a 30-year prison sentence on Friday for sexually abusing two male students under the age of 14.

Ma, 36, taught fifth and sixth grade at Lincoln Acres Elementary School in National City. Authorities arrested her in April 2023 after a mother discovered inappropriate messages and letters Ma had sent to her 12-year-old son.

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In February, Ma pleaded guilty to two counts each of forcible lewd acts on a child and possession of child sexual abuse material. The abuse spanned a 10-month period and involved grooming tactics, including sending explicit images and requesting sexual content from the child.

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Prosecutors also revealed a prior grooming incident involving an 11-year-old boy.

At her sentencing, Ma expressed remorse, stating, "I am deeply ashamed of my actions. Instead of following the path of what a teacher should be, I let my selfishness override the boys' best interests." The judge condemned her behavior as a deliberate and prolonged pattern of abuse, far beyond a mere lapse in judgment.

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Neither victim nor their families attended the court proceedings. However, the prosecution relayed one mother's shock and betrayal over the abuse, emphasizing the breach of trust Ma had committed.

Deputy District Attorney Drew Hart highlighted the significance of the case. "We think this plea deal sends a message to the community, not just about sex offenses on children, but when you leverage a position of trust, when you leverage good faith with parents in the community and you do this to their children, there will be significant penalties to pay," Hart said according to Fox 5 San Diego.

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