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Former South-Western teacher sentenced for sexual contact with student

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COLUMBUS, Ohio (WCMH) – A former Franklin County middle school teacher who pleaded guilty to having sexual contact with an underage student was sentenced Monday.

Online court records show Benjamin Rutan, 42, [pleaded guilty](#) in January to two counts of unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, a third-degree felony. One other unlawful sexual conduct with a minor and four sexual battery charges were dropped in exchange for the plea.

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A judge approved a plea agreement in which Rutan will serve six years in prison. He will have to register as a Tier II sex offender and will also undergo supervised control once released for up to two years. Prior to his plea agreement he was facing up to 10 years in prison.



“You’re the only person in this room that I was afraid of every fiber of my teenage being. I was afraid of you.”

She also said that children should be protected from predators. Sparks has also filed a civil lawsuit against Rutan, the school district, and



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Sparks said. “And I bought into it with Madison was.”

Sparks has also filed a civil lawsuit

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Court records say [the abuse began in 2013](#), when the student was 14 years old and Rutan was her language arts teacher, track and basketball coach at Norton Middle School in the South-Western City School District.

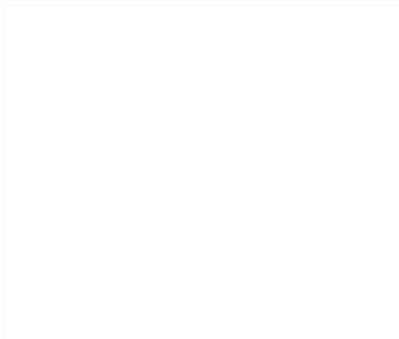
Arrest documents state the sexual contact continued for approximately five years, until the Sparks was 19. Police said the contact happened several times a week and took place on school grounds, in Rutan’s classroom, his coach’s office, in the school’s parking lot, and other locations throughout Franklin County.

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Police said Sparks first contacted authorities on Nov. 17, 2021, and was given a recording device on Dec. 2, 2021, with which she allegedly caught Rutan admitting the sexual contact several times during a conversation.

Rutan, who was arrested on Dec. 8, 2021, was placed on administrative leave the same day.

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Before his sentencing Rutan addressed the court, admitting that everything Sparks said was true, offered an apology, and said he would pay for this for the rest of his life.

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