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Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Tim With new allegations and evidence, including at least one alleged molestation caught on videotape, Beltran could be facing more charges, police say

Santa Monica teacher held in abuse case was investigated

The educator was not charged at the time because of insufficient evidence, officials

By Tami Abdollah, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer May 8, 2008

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A Santa Monica middle school teacher who allegedly molested five of his female students was investigated by

police, but not charged, in connection with the same crime in 2006, officials said Wednesday.

"There was a lack of evidence at the time to file charges," said Jane Robison, spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County district attorney's office. "But based on new allegations, new victims and more evidence, sufficient evidence was developed to include the previous alleged victim" in this case.



School reacts to Santa Monica teacher's arrest

Teacher charged with molesting 5 girls; D.A. says there's videotape

Lincoln Middle School teacher Thomas Arthur Beltran, 60, pleaded not guilty Tuesday to 14 felony counts of sexual molestation, including eight counts of a lewd act on a child, three counts of continuous sexual abuse and three counts of sexual penetration with a foreign object on a child

under 14.

According to court documents, the alleged abuse of the students took place between Dec. 1, 2004, and April 30 of this year. Police said at least one of the alleged molestations had been recorded on a videotape obtained in a search during the

On Wednesday, officials of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District released a letter dated March 14, 2006, written by then-Principal Kathy Scott to police detailing her response to the earlier complaint. Police gave district officials a copy of the letter this week, said Mike Matthews, district assistant superintendent for human resources.

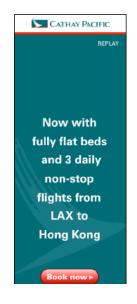
The letter states that a female student reported to a school official that she "felt uncomfortable being in Mr. Beltran's class because of the way he touched her.' Scott's response was to have her removed from the class and to talk to Beltran about the incident, the letter says.

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Beltran "was shocked at the accusation and was upset that his actions had been misinterpreted as inappropriate," according to the letter. Scott wrote that the teacher was warned "not to touch any of the female students in his class in order to protect himself from any further misinterpretation."

Santa Monica police told district officials Tuesday there had been insufficient evidence after an investigation to pursue a criminal case against Beltran. "The letter was not in the teacher's personnel file," Matthews said. "Obviously, the principal and the police were talking. . . . I've examined the entire personnel file and there is no other complaint in there against him.

Matthews said the district was trying to reach Scott. A woman who answered the phone at Scott's office Wednesday said she had no comment.

Police said Beltran, who has no previous criminal history, could face more charges.

"At this point, the investigators are interviewing additional people that have made themselves known either to us" or to the district attorney, said Lt. Darrell Lowe. Beltran, who is married and has worked at Lincoln Middle School for two decades, taught English as a second language. He was arrested Saturday and remains in jail in lieu of \$3.3-million bail.

The teacher, a 30-year school district employee, was taken into custody after a 12year-old student reported the alleged abuse to her parents, police said. Then other students were interviewed

If convicted of all charges, Beltran faces a maximum sentence of life in prison.

"The investigation may disclose that this has been a pattern for an unknown number of years," Lowe said. "That's why we're trying to encourage former students, former parents, etc., to come forward."

School Board President Oscar de la Torre said that he was shocked to hear of a 2006 investigation and that he was never informed of it while he was a board member at that time. Educators are mandated by the state penal code to report child abuse to authorities.

The school district has a four-sentence child abuse reporting policy that requires teachers to report incidents to nurses or school principals, who then "assume

In related news, the Los Angeles Unified School District on Tuesday removed two of its administrators for failing to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct in the case of former assistant principal Stephen Thomas Rooney, 39, who has been ordered to stand trial on charges of molesting three students.

On Wednesday, Lincoln parent Leslie Berliant, like some other parents, e-mailed the school principal and district superintendent about the Beltran case

"I am horrified and saddened to think about what these children endured under the watch of Lincoln's administration," she wrote.

"I would like to know what the school knew and when, and why systems were in place, such as ignoring closed doors, that put our children in jeopardy.'

tami.abdollah@latimes.com

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- 1. I went to lincoln as well and i saw him around and never knew him i just hope that the real truth will be found and everything is settled soon because this is big news and i don't want my former middle school with a bad reputation because of one teacher alone Submitted by: Wacker 9:32 PM PDT, May 8, 2008
- 2. It doesn't surprise me that the reported incident in 2006 was not followed up by the school district and was not shared with the entire school board for review. We pulled our son out (along with other families) of the same school in SMMUSD because of the lack of district policy and follow-through in keeping the student body safe. This is only the tip of the iceberg! Submitted by: Anonymous Parent 5:03 PM PDT, May 8, 2008
- I went to Lincoln Middle School and Mr Beltran taught me. He is the most wonderful teacher and he was the best English teacher I ever had in USA. I will never believe in what they are saying about him!!!

Submitted by: student 11:48 AM PDT, May 8, 2008

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