

Office of the State Attorney
Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida
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MELISSA W. NELSON
STATE ATTORNEY

311 West Monroe Street
Jacksonville, FL 32202-4242
TEL: (904) 255-2500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: David Chapman

Phone: (904) 255-3004

Cell: (904) 524-6626

ChapmanD@coj.net

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JEFFREY CLAYTON PLEADS GUILTY TO CRIMES AGAINST STUDENT

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces Jeffrey Clayton has pleaded guilty to the court to two Offenses Against Students by Authority Figures; Indecent, Lewd, or Lascivious Touching of Certain Minors; and Unlawful Use of Two-Way Communications Device, all related to his job as a high school teacher. With the plea, Clayton faces a range of nearly three years to 40 years in Florida State Prison. The Honorable Tatiana Salvador will sentence Clayton at a June 14, 2024, hearing.

On the afternoon of March 17, 2023, a 16-year-old student at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts went to a one-on-one singing lesson with Clayton, a longtime music teacher at the school. Clayton, 65, sat next to the student and professed his romantic feelings for her before he rubbed her thighs and leaned in to kiss her multiple times. The victim confided in a friend about the incident, which led to a Department of Children and Families representative and Clay County Sheriff's Office deputy visit to the student's home, which then alerted the victim's parents. The Duval County School Board Police then became involved. On March 21, 2023, law enforcement set up a 30-minute controlled call between the victim and Clayton, in which he made numerous incriminating statements relating to the incident and potential future romantic gestures he wanted to pursue. The victim also provided law enforcement text messages Clayton had sent her.

Further investigation revealed additional female students who came forward upon hearing of Clayton's actions and arrest and gave information about their interactions with him. As part of an agreement, they will also have the opportunity to address the court during Clayton's sentencing to provide impact statements.

The case was investigated by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorney Anna Hixon.