

FOND DU LAC SCHOOL DISTRICT

72 W Ninth Street, Fond du Lac, WI 54935
920-929-2900 • fonddulac.k12.wi.us



Date: September 5, 2024

Michelle Izzo



Michelle Izzo:

Effective immediately, you are being placed on non-disciplinary paid administrative leave pending an investigation into possible misconduct. This leave is non-disciplinary in nature, and you will remain in paid status. Please note that you are not to take any steps that would constitute interference with the upcoming investigation, including but not limited to, contacting anyone regarding this investigation by phone call, text, email, or other means. During this administrative leave, you are to remain available via phone during your normal working hours. The phone number we have on file for you is [REDACTED] please inform Human Resources immediately if a different number applies.

Also, you may be asked to come to the school or district offices on short notice during your administrative leave to meet with the investigator. During this administrative leave, you are not to report to the worksite unless you have received prior authorization from the superintendent, from your supervisor, or from me.

I know that this can be a difficult time, and I encourage you to contact the Fond du Lac Employee Assistance Program at (920) 924-0614, or the Care Coach, Joe Pietrangelo at (877) 322-2427 extension 4378. If you have any questions about this matter, please contact me, Director of Human Resources Marisa Lombardo, at (920) 906-6441 or lombardom@fonddulac.k12.wi.us.

Sincerely,

Marisa Lombardo

Director of Human Resources - Fond du Lac School District



CHANGING OUTCOMES IN OUR COMMUNITIES



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

September 19, 2024

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dr. Jeffrey Fleig, District Administrator
Fond du Lac Area School District
72 West Ninth Street
Fond du Lac, WI 54935
fleigj@fonddulac.k12.wi.us

RE: In the Matter of the License of Michele Izzo
DPI Case No. 24-TL-087

Dear Dr. Fleig:

Yesterday the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) received a license review referral from Marisa Lombardo, Director of Human Services, regarding former special education teacher Michele Izzo. The referral alleges that Ms. Izzo resigned from the Fond du Lac Area School District following reports from multiple staff members that she engaged in physical assault and physical maltreatment of several special education students in her care. Based on this information, we have opened an investigation to determine whether to revoke Ms. Izzo's educator's license(s).

Ms. Lombardo has already provided a complete unredacted copy of Ms. Izzo's personnel file and investigation materials regarding the current allegations. See Wis. Stat. § 115.31(3)(a). These files will remain confidential during the course of DPI's investigation. Wis. Stat. § 115.31(6)(b); Wis. Admin. Code § PI 34.100(1)(c).

I may be contacting you by phone during the course of the investigation to gather additional information about the allegations. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Angela Day
Educator Licensing and Legal Investigator
Office of Legal Services
Department of Public Instruction

P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841
Angela.Day@dpi.wi.gov
(608) 266-0890



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
LICENSE REVIEW REFERRAL
 PI-1620 (Rev. 04-22)

INSTRUCTIONS: Respond to all questions. Indicate "NA" if not applicable. Complete two copies. Retain one copy at district. Return original to:

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
ATTN: JENNIFER KAMMERUD, DIRECTOR
LICENSING, EDUCATOR ADVANCEMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT
PO BOX 7841
MADISON, WI 53707-7841

This form is available on the Web at the following location:
<https://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/licensing/background/mandatory-reporting>

Today's Date Mo./Day/Yr.

GENERAL INFORMATION

School District Fond du Lac School District	Mailing Address Street, City, State, Zip 72 W. 9th Street, Fond du Lac, WI 54935
Employee Name Michelle Izzo	Last 4 Digits of Social Security No.* [REDACTED]
Position Held Special Education Teacher	Entity No. 658545
	License Held 1830, 1810, 1811

FINDINGS

Alleged Misconduct Physical and verbal maltreatment of students	Date of Alleged Misconduct Mo./Day/Yr. 9/3/2024
Status of Criminal Proceedings Unknown - police and CPS are aware, mandatory reporting completed	County of Prosecution <i>if any</i>

Employment Status with School District
Resigned 9/8/24

School Contact Person Regarding Disposition Marisa Lombardo	Title Director of Human Resources	Telephone Area/No. (920) 906-6501
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Has the school district conducted any investigation regarding the allegation?
 Yes *Attach a summary of your investigation.* No

What, if any discipline has the district imposed as a result of the allegation?
 None - resigned before any action could be taken

Additional Information. Include any additional information you believe may be useful to the Department of Public Instruction.
 Pre-hiring reference checks did not reveal similar prior behavior. I don't know if other reports have been made.

SIGNATURE

Signature of School District Administrator/Designee <i>Marisa Lombardo</i>	Date Signed Mo./Day/Yr. 9/18/2024
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*Collection of social security number is a requirement of s. 118.19(1m) and (1r). The social security number may be released to the Department of Justice, Department of Revenue, and the Department of Workforce Development. Such information is made available to these governmental agencies for official purposes only.

Name: Michelle Izzo

Entity #: 658545

We have been investigating multiple reports from school staff that allege that Michelle Izzo both physically and verbally mistreated students. Initial reports were received by Roberts Elementary School principal Cathy Prozanski on September 5, 2024 from school staff saying that she was physically rough with students, yelled at them, restrained them, and created an environment in the classroom that left students feeling upset and afraid. Michelle did not file any seclusion or restraint reports for any of these incidents.

Michelle Izzo started working for the Fond du Lac School District on August 20, 2024, and school began on September 3, 2024. She has been licensed as a Special Education since July 1, 2015, with licenses in EBD, SLD, and Intellectual Disabilities. She was hired as a teacher in our Essential Elements program to work with students with Intellectual Disabilities.

Principal Cathy Prozanski contacted me by phone on September 5, 2024 and said that some staff members told her that they thought Michelle was abusing the students. We designated the TOSA to go immediately to the classroom to supervise Michelle while Cathy gathered more information about what was actually happening. Within a few minutes she received written documentation by email from the reporters, which she forwarded to me. Director of Pupil Services Jason Gahan arrived at the school. I instructed her to escort Michelle from the building and tell her that she was on paid administrative leave, and that she would be hearing from me about next steps. She and Jason addressed this with Michelle and collected her keys, keycard, and computer. Michelle removed all of her personal belongings from her room before being escorted out by Jason Gahan. Michelle asked him if she could just resign, and as she was leaving the building she said she was resigning. I sent her a paid administrative leave letter to her by both work and personal email.

Cathy Prozanski contacted all parents by phone and let them know that we would give them more specific information in a followup call, which she did following our employee interviews on September 6th. Jennifer Streeter (Instructional Assistant) contacted the Fond du Lac County Child Welfare Division by phone as a mandated reporter. Brianna Robertshaw (Instructional Assistant) also contacted the Fond du Lac County Child Welfare Division by phone as a mandated reporter; she had to leave a message and was waiting for a return phone call.

Staff interviewed on September 6th stated that Michelle's behavior was so severe that they would not have wanted her to work with their own children. They stated that she raised her voice with the students; they used the words "screamed" and "yelled" repeatedly in their statements to describe the behavior. They reported that her behavior varied widely and they were never sure what reaction to expect from moment to moment, and one described it as "manic".

Staff stated that she was not gentle with the students, forcing them to do things by grabbing them by the arms, hands, and face, pushing and shoving them to get them to walk or sit down, and that children were

restrained, dragged, and lifted off the ground. One new staff member stated that Michelle told staff that they needed to not be so gentle with the students, and that they needed to "let them know this is how it is". Staff reported that the children seemed uncomfortable with Michelle, and that when taken into other rooms, they behaved very differently and did not require physical contact to do most tasks.

That afternoon (9/6/24) I contacted Michelle by phone to verify that she was resigning. She said she thought she was probably going to resign, but she still wanted to come in for a meeting with me to find out what was going on. I told her that staff members had reported verbal and physical maltreatment of the students. We set up a meeting for September 9, 2024 and she was told she could bring a representative, and I also sent her the district's resignation form. On September 8, 2024 she emailed me and let me know that she would not be attending the meeting as she had submitted her resignation from the district. Due to her resignation over the weekend, she has not been interviewed.

██████████ mother, ██████████ posted on her Facebook page on September 6, 2024 about what was alleged to be happening in Michelle's classroom, and falsely said that Michelle had been moved from Roberts to another school building. The parents of ██████████ also asked for a meeting, which was held on September 9, 2024, and attended by the parents, Cathy Prozanski (Roberts principal), Matt Steinbarth (Chief Academic Officer), Marisa Lombardo (Director of Human Resources), and Officer Keywon Brown (School Resource Officer).

On Tuesday, September 10, 2024 Brittany O'Donnel (Social Worker, Fond du Lac County Department of Human Services) emailed Dr. Fleig the following information:

Good Morning,

Our agency received a report of alleged maltreatment by a staff member at Roberts Elementary School regarding another child, ██████████. Our State Standards require we notify the School District of the outcome of the reports.

The report was screened out with the following screening explanation: Michelle Izzo has resigned from the Fond du Lac School District so will not have access to this child. The District is currently handling the allegations of physical abuse to several children by this particular teacher and they will be notified of this report as well.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this.

Additionally, it was reported to the Head Custodian Celestine Beaster that the Custodial Trainer (Michael Graves) was working with a new staff member during the afternoon/evening of September 3, 2024 and that they cleaned up a large amount of blood from the trapezoid table in room 100 (Michelle Izzo's classroom). The following day Celestine asked Michelle about it and Michelle said it was strawberries. Celestine said that there is a very clear difference in what dried blood and dried strawberries look like, and she does not believe an experienced custodian would not know the difference.

Celestine reported that in the cafeteria she would "manhandle" the kids when they were coming in. She knows that sometimes you have to grab on to the kids for safety, but this was hard, throwing them around, whipping them around.

The following staff were interviewed on September 6, 2024 (unless otherwise indicated):

- Alissa Best - Instructional Assistant
- Jennifer Streeter - Instructional Assistant
- Brianna Robertshaw - Instructional Assistant
- Sarah Steenberg - New Teacher Support and Retention Supervisor
- Tammy Cartwright - Instructional Assistant
- Hope Coulter - Health Room Aide
- Celestine Beaster - Head Custodian
- George Cooke - Special Education Teacher
- Jennifer Krueger - District Nurse (interviewed September 16, 2024)
- Michael Graves - Custodial Trainer (interviewed September 16, 2024)

The following information is specific to each child that was in the classroom with Michelle Izzo, and what was witnessed by the staff members interviewed:

- Reported by Brianna Robertshaw - Incident date 9/4/24
 - He was pinned down on the floor by Michelle, and he was saying "ow" and that he wanted his mom. Michelle was next to him, he was curled upon the ground on his back and Michelle had her hands on top of him.
- Reported by Hope Coulter - Incident date unknown
 - Michelle didn't "throw" him to the ground, but put him on the ground because he didn't do what she wanted. She had him restrained with arms wrapped around him and [REDACTED] expressed "you're hurting me".

- Reported by Jennifer Streeter - Incident dates 9/3/24-9/5/24
 - The teacher was guiding [REDACTED] by the arm and had a grip so tight that the IA thought there would have been red marks left behind.
 - [REDACTED] went into the bathroom and Michelle was upset about this and said to [REDACTED] "this is insane, you know what you are supposed to be doing".
 - [REDACTED] was on the ground and Michelle grabbed [REDACTED] by one arm and one leg and lifted her off the ground.
 - By the end of the day Wednesday, [REDACTED] refused to go in the room at all and would drop to the floor outside the door.
- Reported by Tammy Cartwright - Incident date unknown
 - Michelle could sit behind [REDACTED] and put her arms around her because she wouldn't sit and do homework (restraint).
- Reported by Hope Coulter - Incident date unknown

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- o [REDACTED] was on the ground and Michelle grabbed [REDACTED] by one arm and one leg and lifted her off the ground.

- Reported by Brianna Robertshaw - Incident date unknown

- o [REDACTED] will kick and hit. Michelle would get down on her level and pin her down.

[REDACTED]

- Reported by Alissa Best - Incident date unknown

- o He fell when Michelle was pulling on his arm. He was pulling away and she let go and he fell and hit his head.

- Reported by Jennifer Streeter - Incident date unknown

- o Michelle told him "God gave you feet, you choose if you use them or not". She dragged him across the room and his feet were dragging behind him.

- Reported by Sarah Steenberg - Incident date 9/5/24

- o When it was time for him to transition to another class, he was excited and stood up and jumped. Michele grabbed onto the top of his arms with her hands and pushed him down.

- Reported by Tammy Cartwright - Incident date unknown

- o He would go into the back corner of the room and Michelle would grab him by the arm and drag him back over.

- Reported by Hope Coulter - Incident date 9/3/24

- o Michelle dragged him by the arms because he wasn't listening. This happened both when [REDACTED] was standing and when he was on the ground. She grabbed him hard enough that Hope worried about bruising. She would pick him up and yank him around.

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[REDACTED]

- Reported by Sarah Steenberg - Incident date 9/5/24

- o Michelle sat behind the student. When she wanted him to identify a letter, she turned his head with her hand by putting her hand under his chin. Sarah told her to be careful about putting hands on students and that she should only put her hands on kids when safety is an issue. Michelle agreed and stopped for a moment but then began doing it again
- o When Michelle grabbed the student's face, Sarah said "if you're concerned about losing your credentials, you need to stop putting your hands on kids".

[REDACTED]

- Reported by Brianna Robertshaw - Incident date 9/4/24

- o He had fallen to the ground in the hall. Brianna said she would stay with him and give him time. Michelle was grabbing him and pulling him up forcefully. Brianna told her to take her hands off him and Michelle looked right at Brianna and didn't stop. Brianna told her she needed to take her hands off him right now. Michelle did back away and told Brianna "you're not the teacher". Brianna told her she knew she wasn't the teacher but she was worried that she was going to dislocate [REDACTED] shoulder. She stopped. Brianna told the student to come with her and he did.

[REDACTED]

- (no behavior related to this student was mentioned in interviews)

[REDACTED]

- Reported by Tammy Cartwright - Incident date unknown
 - [REDACTED] would rock and hold his ears because of the volume of music and yelling in the room.

[REDACTED]

- Reported by Hope Coulter - Incident date unknown
 - She pulled him out of the swing so hard that Hope was worried she would pull his arms out of the sockets.

**Fond du Lac School District
Office of Human Resources**

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael Gerlach, Business Services
FROM: Marisa Lombardo, Director of Human Resources
DATE: September 9, 2024
RE: Resignation

Michele Izzo, special education teacher at Roberts Elementary School, has submitted retirement paperwork effective September 8, 2024. Her last day of work was September 6, 2024.

Please make the necessary payroll and benefit arrangements.

ML:es

cc: Personnel File



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

March 11, 2026

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Mr. Matthew Steinbarth, Superintendent
Fond du Lac Area School District
72 West Ninth Street
Fond du Lac, WI 54935
steinbarthm@fonddulac.k12.wi.us

RE: In the Matter of the License of Michele Izzo
DPI Case No. 24-TL-087

Dear Mr. Steinbarth:

I wanted to inform you that Michele Izzo has agreed to surrender her licenses to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Ms. Izzo no longer has a valid license from DPI and has agreed to never apply for a license from DPI in the future. As a result, the DPI has closed its investigation in this matter.

In accordance with Wis. Stat. § 115.31(6)(c), DPI will maintain a record of this investigation and its outcome. This notice is provided to you pursuant to Wis. Admin. Code § PI 34.101.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kyle Olsen".

Kyle Olsen
General Counsel
Office of Legal Services

Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, WI 53707-7841
Kyle.Olsen@dpi.wi.gov
(608) 264-6718