

LOCAL TODAY

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Thursday, January 17, 2002

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DETROIT

Girl a ward of state for her role in rape

Accepting responsibility for her role in the sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl at a Detroit middle school, 15-year-old Dominique Brown was sentenced Wednesday to three years as a ward of the state.

Brown was taken away to begin serving one year of her sentence at Vista Maria in Dearborn Heights, a residential treatment program for delinquent girls. Brown pleaded guilty Dec. 5 to fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct for her role in the attack May 1 at Hutchins Middle School on the city's near west side.

Wayne County Circuit Judge Patricia Fresard said the plea and sentence agreement worked out between Brown's lawyer, Susan Reed, and the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office was appropriate.

Brown admitted that she helped 15-year-old **Audi Dawson** rape the younger student by holding her down in a secluded area of the school's fourth floor.

"I'm sorry for what I did," Brown said in a quiet voice.

Dawson also was to be sentenced Wednesday, but the hearing was postponed until Jan. 22 because a presentence report was not completed. **Dawson** pleaded guilty Dec. 5 to third-degree criminal sexual conduct under an agreement that normally results in a sentence of 3-5 years in prison.

The pair and two younger students, a 13-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy, were charged as adults with first-degree criminal sexual conduct of a child under age 13. A conviction could bring a sentence of up to life in prison.

However, in plea agreements, the younger girl and boy pleaded guilty as juveniles and are to receive rehabilitation services through the Wayne County Department of Community Justice. Their sentencing is scheduled later this month.

Though convicted as an adult, Brown was given a sentence more suited to her age.

She will continue her education and get counseling at Vista Maria, but she can't leave the premises without the judge's permission for one year. After completing her year at Vista Maria, she will remain under the court's jurisdiction for two more years.

Reed, Brown's lawyer, told Fresard that Brown "admits responsibility for her behavior. She wants the court to know that she's afraid. She's embarrassed by what she's done. She knows it was something she should not have been doing."

The victim and her family were not present at Wednesday's hearing.

By Jack Kresnak

Edition: METRO FINAL

Section: NWS

Page: 2B

Record Number: 0201170356

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