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## Sexual abuse case against teacher ends in mistrial

### Jury is unable to agree on verdict; judge will set a new trial date

By RENÉE C. LEE Copyright 2006 Houston Chronicle  
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CONROE - After 26 hours of jury deliberations and 59 jury questions, a Montgomery County judge Thursday declared a mistrial in the case of a former Conroe teacher accused of sexually abusing four female elementary students.

Jurors could not reach a unanimous decision on the 14 charges — 13 counts of **aggravated sexual assault** and one count of indecency with a child by **sexual assault** — against Jorge Estrada Landeros, resulting in a **hung jury** after three consecutive days of deliberating. The trial started May 9.

District Judge K. Michael Mayes, of the 410th court, will set another trial date. Landeros will remain free on \$70,000 bail until then.

The jury of seven women and five men voted 10-2 in favor of acquittal on the sexual assault charges and 11-1 in favor of

acquittal on the indecency charge, said Landeros' attorney, Steve Jackson.

"I thought it would end like this from the very beginning," Jackson said. "Because of the hysteria, people want to believe it but when the facts come out, it's too improbable to believe."

Jackson said the witnesses' statements had too many inconsistencies, which likely held up deliberations and prompted the amount of jury questions.

Montgomery County District Attorney Michael McDougal, who helped prosecute the case, said having a bilingual attorney might have helped in questioning the students and their parents, who spoke primarily Spanish. "There were a lot of translation problems," McDougal said. "I know some points were lost **in translation**."

A grand jury indicted Landeros in June, about three months after the students accused him of abuse. One girl said the abuse happened in the 2003-04 school year and the others said they were abused in the 2004-05 school year.

Landeros was a bilingual teacher at Anderson **Elementary School** and had worked for the district since 2003, according to school officials.

The students' mothers, who sat in the front row, did not show reaction when the mistrial was declared. Assistant District Attorney Sylvia Yarborough later explained to them what had happened.

Mayes commended the jurors and told them they should be proud of what they did. "These are difficult issues to reach resolution on," he said.

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