

Betting on tournament is a losing gamble for kids

POOL, From 1A

they are juveniles.

But others applauded the crack-down.

"I probably would've handled it the same way," said another father whose child was disciplined.

A prosecutor in the Waukesha County district attorney's office said he could not recall any office pool ever being prosecuted locally.

Under state law, gambling in settings other than state-licensed

casinos, church bingo parlors and other places permitted by law is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days in jail and \$1,000 in fines.

Alan Kesner, an assistant Wisconsin attorney general, said he once heard of a particularly large Super Bowl office pool that resulted in criminal charges. But he agreed that such enforcement of the law is rare.

He said even employees in some state offices have participated in March Madness pools, although the practice has faded in recent years because of concerns about

the illegality.

"You don't see them too much around here anymore," he said.

North Shore school officials uncovered the student pool and contacted police this week.

All 20-odd students were summoned into a room at the school, given back their \$5 and administered a stern lecture by officers from the Police Department in the Waukesha County community of 8,000.

Schwartz said she wanted police involved because her admonitions sometimes fall on deaf ears.

"They do listen to the police a little bit more," she said.

She added that two boys who started the pool got an extended lecture, and some were warned that they could be banned from a school basketball team for gambling.

Police Chief Robert Rosch said the kids had organized a "fairly sophisticated" system in which students would claim their winnings based on how far their chosen teams advanced in the tournament.

The students used a widely pub-

licized grid of the tournament's 65 college basketball teams to promote the pool.

Rosch said he suspects most of the students were unaware that their actions were illegal.

"Frankly, in Wisconsin it can get pretty confusing," said the chief, noting that gambling is legal in area casinos and such.

Hartland School Board President Susanna Toumanoff said she applauds how the situation was handled, and she hopes each parent will reinforce principal Schwartz's actions.

"It should open up a conversation in each child's home," Toumanoff said.

Schwartz said she found no evidence that teachers were gambling, although she reminded them later to keep any such activity away from school.

The principal said she would not apologize for her crackdown, and she would not try to reconcile the popularity of March Madness gambling elsewhere.

"It's against the law," she said. "But we can only govern what we do here in our school."