

Bettors benched

Police break up eighth-graders' NCAA pool

By **SCOTT WILLIAMS**

of the Journal Sentinel staff

For kids at a Waukesha County school, March Madness is already over.

Police in Hartland have broken up an "office pool" in which about 20 students paid \$5 each to gamble on the outcome of the annual men's college basketball championship tournament.

The shenanigans at North Shore Middle School were not unlike March Madness pools organized in countless workplaces, taverns and other social circles during the heavily hyped NCAA basketball tournament.

But when a teacher caught wind that Hartland eighth-graders were playing for more than \$100, the young gamblers got an earful from police and were forced to write letters of apology to their parents.

North Shore Principal Kathy Schwartz said she wanted the kids to learn that although gambling is tolerated in casinos and elsewhere,

it is not permitted at school.

"We're teaching these kids double messages in society," Schwartz said.

One student complained that North Shore teachers had their own March Madness pool.

And some parents said the school's heavy-handed response was the real madness.

One father said he was shocked to hear the school had called police. He said that although he had advised his son not to promote the pool at school, he never considered it could be illegal.

"You see it everywhere," said the dad, who acknowledged he is in a March Madness pool this year.

"These were just a bunch of kids."

Another parent wrote the principal a letter complaining angrily about the school's move to discipline students, who aren't being identified by the Journal Sentinel because

"We're teaching these kids double messages in society."

Kathy Schwartz,
North Shore Middle
School principal

"You see it everywhere. These were just a bunch of kids."

**Father of one
of the students**

Please see **POOL, 8A**