



A look back at past New Trier homecoming games Page 4

# The New Trier News

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## New Trier's latest sexting scandal

by Ben Portnoy

12 boys between the ages of 15 and 16 have been charged with distribution of harmful material to a minor in relation to the trading of nude photos amongst New Trier students.

Due to ongoing school and police investigations, in addition to the involvement of minors, information is limited as to how the scandal began and what ensued.

In the weeks since administrators discovered the inappropriate photographs, both the Winnetka Police Department (WPD) and the Administration have sent out press releases regarding the incident.

The WPD stated: "The Winnetka Police Department has initiated a criminal investigation after being notified by New Trier High School officials following the discovery of inappropriate material being transmitted via electronic means."

In a letter to New Trier families, superintendent Linda Yonke said, "New Trier administrators recently discovered that some students have taken, sent, or received inappropriate photos of other students or of themselves and were in possession of those photos during school hours."

The official statement read that, "Out of respect for student privacy and due to the police investigation, we cannot share any other details. New Trier staff has contacted the parents of students who have been interviewed."

In the third sexting scandal in four years, New Trier administration has found themselves in another rough patch surrounding sexting and electronics.

Since the 2012 sexting scandal, an investigation which led to the arrests of six minor offenders, the school has incorporated internet safety into the health curriculum.

WPD Deputy Chief Joe Pellus, a proponent of New Trier's incorporation of internet safety to the health curriculum, said at the time of the 2012 investigation, "A friend today that has a photo of you may not be your friend tomorrow."

The 2012 investigation was also handled by the New Trier Township Peer Jury system, as opposed to juvenile court. However, since the trial went through the Peer Jury system, those who were charged maintained a clean record.

"If a kid is not sent to juvenile court and is sent to Peer Jury, it's considered an informal part of the



A student using the AirDrop feature of an iPad, an alternate method of communication on the school's network | Minturn

station adjustment process and kids don't end up with a record as long as they get their sentence done," said Brian Leverenz, the creator of the Peer Jury system. "If they don't, then the peer jury has the authority to send them back to the police department and then send them to juvenile court."

It remains to be seen if the WPD will take similar steps in this case. In

addition, the investigation has made parents more aware in explaining the dangers of sexting to their children.

"That's one of the issues we talked about before school started," said New Trier parent Sarah Lam in an interview with Fox News Chicago. "We wanted to tell him don't, even if people share pictures with you or things, that you know what is right or

wrong."

"Kids don't always realize they've let the community down and they've often let their parents down," said Leverenz, who encourages offenders to write letters of apology to those affected. "The parents are typically the ones who are most upset. Having the kid write an apology letter to their parents, that's powerful."

## Extracurricular Code in the spotlight



Former Lagniappe and Student Alliance board member Jack Levin | Minturn

by McKenna Patterson

"The Code is something that should punish people when they make mistakes," said New Trier senior and former Student Alliance president Jack Levin. "At the same time it should teach lessons, and if no lessons were taught then the school has failed at their job of teaching. It's as simple as that."

Levin was recently demoted from his presidency to a board position due to a violation of the Extracurricular Code while he was working on Lagniappe.

Levin was disappointed in the

school's enforcement of the Code and what he believed to be unjust since he believes he cooperated with administrators.

Levin and several other students came forward in what they believed would be considered a "Voluntary Admission," a clause of the Code in which a student admits his or her wrongdoings to the school administration which "will not result in loss of extracurricular participation, and consequences will be held in abeyance."

According to Levin, "It's [Voluntary Admission] supposed to be an avenue in which you prove that

you're an honest person and that you understand you made a mistake and the school isn't supposed to punish you—it's a test of character. And they [the school administration] did not care."

He goes on to say that the school did not consider his admission to violating the Code because the Lagniappe sponsors had begun the process of investigating the incident the night before he and the other students came forward.

Every student who participates in any voluntary extracurricular activity, athletic or performing art is held to the school's Extracurricular Code.

Located in the school's yearly Guidebook, the Code reads, "[It] seeks to foster health, safety, and welfare of the participants and requires high standards of conduct and citizenship in order to sustain a sound extracurricular program."

Stacy Kolack, New Trier's Student Activities Coordinator said of the Extracurricular Code, "It's a code of conduct so it really is holding students who participate in leadership positions to the high standards that we would expect of any student leader. We would hope that students are making good choices, that are safe and respectful to themselves and others, so it's basically a reminder of that."

A set of guidelines and principles for students to follow, the code outlines the consequences of any transgressions in an attempt to prevent them, including but not limited to, being under the influence of or possessing alcohol or drugs, violations of academic integrity, bullying, vandalism, and suspension.

In signing the Extracurricular Code, each student pledges, "I understand that if I violate the express or implied terms of the Extracurricular Code, or if I engage in any behavior that negatively affects my activity, fellow students, school, or community, I will be subject to disciplinary measures that may include the immediate revocation of my privilege to participate in the extracurricular program."

Levin felt the Code's claim to analyze all "facts, circumstances, and disciplinary measures... on a case-by-case basis," fell short in his case. This means that the rules of the Extracurricular Code will apply differently to each case brought before the school administration based on the context and circumstances surrounding it.

"This was the explanation given to me. One of the reasons behind the punishment was that they wanted to create consistency. This is how student leaders have been punished when they're caught drinking or

breaking the Code in some aspects, so for what I had done, this was the normal punishment, but that goes against the case-by-case basis," Levin said.

In accordance with this case-by-case basis, Levin thought that his past work would have some weight in his punishment. Being the Head of the Events Committee for two years prior to his being elected President, as well as being a student ambassador Levin stated he thought he had, "proved a level of leadership that goes beyond one mistake that I made."

While he doesn't expect to get his presidency back, on returning to Student Alliance as a board member Levin plans to use his time raising awareness about the Extracurricular Code and work for its reform.

According to Kolack, each year the school administration holds a meeting in which members of Student Alliance are invited to share their thoughts on the Code in a collaborative effort to revise it.

"It's [The Code] out there in advance, it's not meant to be a 'gotcha' sort of thing by any means but it is outlining what we as New Trier hope that our student leaders who take on more responsibility would be held up to," said Kolack.

The school administration would not comment for this article.